

MY BOAT - *Black Butterfly*

By Jerry Brown

Jerry and his partner Glenda Neild made the unusual decision of buying their new XP44 in Denmark and go and pick it up themselves, undertaking a Baltic cruise after making the purchase. They explain here what they were thinking.



Jerry & Glenda

Why an XP44?

Our current boat, a Beneteau First 41s5 (*Sea Hawk*) which we've had since 2006, is great as it has enabled us to race as well as go cruising with the kids and grandchildren. However I would like to race at Div. 1 level but still use the boat for cruising. Thus we selected the X-Yacht XP44 because it: (a) was the most recent design and comparable cost to other new boats, (b) was a fast racer cruiser, (c) was respected for high quality construction, (d) could be easily sailed single handed and also by two people and (e) had twin steering wheels and a large cockpit.

X-Yachts have been built in Denmark since 1979 and they only make 150 boats a year.

Specific items that we added to make the Xp44 easy to sail with the two of us were electric halyard and jib winches, single line reefing and ball bearing cars for the main. These items enabled Glenda to raise, lower and reef the main herself as well as tack the jib.

Pick Up the Boat from Denmark

We decided to pick the boat up from the X-Yacht factory in Denmark and cruise the Baltic as this was not going to cost anymore, except our flights over. If we did not like the Baltic, we could still ship the boat back to Australia at the same cost as if we had it delivered direct to Australia.

Baltic Cruise

We arrived on April 23, the agreed date the boat would be ready. We spent about a month with the boat in Haderslev as unfortunately Denmark had the worst winter for years and consequently the yard was 3 weeks behind schedule. This time was put to good use stocking the boat with food and drink and everything else needed for cruising as we had a totally empty boat, and also enabling X-Yachts to complete the boat. One item that we were not familiar with that was completed in this time was covers for the windows in the bedrooms. Daylight is long in the Baltic during the summer, typically setting about 11pm and rising at 2am.

We left Haderslev May 18 and began our cruise from Denmark to Sweden and then Norway. To plan a day's travel, we looked at harbours about 40 nm as the crow flies, select a few then look at the wind on the day and choose the one that puts us closest to our goal. If we wanted to cut the trip short, there was no shortage of ports to stop at.

We travelled north to Juelsminde then Samso Island, Anholt Island, all of which are in Denmark and then crossed to Varberg, Sweden, our first port of call in Sweden. We then continued north along the west coast of Sweden from Varberg to Styrso Island, then to Marstrand, Smogen and then Stromstadt. Typically we would sail one day and then stay at that port for the second day to sightsee.

The west coast of Sweden is a mass of islands and rocks. This type of sailing is quite nerve racking but with Glenda closely watching the iPad, we found our way through.

Our final sail from Stromstadt Sweden to Fredrikstad, Norway was on June 4th. It was typical of sailing in this area and is described below:

We left Stromstad with clear blue skies into a cold wind and initially motored for about 30 minutes as the wind was blowing 20kn on our nose (higher than the predicted 10 kn) and the channel was narrow. When we were able to bear away sufficiently we started sailing with a reef in the main and a partially furled jib. The area was beautiful, rocky with trees and intermittently, houses built down to the shore.



Raising the Norwegian flag

We had a busy time tacking but due to the deep water we were able to come within a couple of boat lengths of shore. The gusts were often up to 25 knots so the close proximity of a rocky coast line makes you nervous.

We arrived at the southern entrance to Fredrikstad which is the estuary for the Glomma River, the largest river in Norway. The flow from the river was slowing us by 2 knots until we entered the branch of the river towards the town centre then found the current was 1 knot with us.

We motored for another 20 minutes until we came to the Krakeroy Bridge which according to the charts, would open. We did not know how to make this happen and in the process



Black Butterfly



of working out our next steps, a guy on a moored Bavaria told us that the bridge was broken and he gave us a hand to moor our boat. We discovered it cost us nothing to tie up where we were as well as free power and water from the service station and hence was a very cheap place to stay. Another successful day sailing and we slept well with all the fresh air and sunshine.

The purpose of going to Norway was to have the invoice for the boat stamped by Norwegian Customs (Norway is out of EU) and hence avoid paying 25% VAT on the boat and other purchases we had made. Norway has tight regulations on people bringing in alcohol and we knew our beer and wine quantities exceeded their limits and hence we may have had to 'lock the stock up' while in Norway. Following a 20 minute walk to Customs, we found the customs officer was not very concerned and was very obliging and not authoritarian as can sometimes happen with some customs officials.

Tejia, the Norwegian ex-ferry man who helped us moor, took us around that afternoon to visit the 'Old Town' inside an elaborate moat and wall system. We met friends of his (Swedes he met in Thailand!) unexpectedly and were invited into their old cottage. They have the same problem we have with heritage listed buildings they can only do so much. It was an interesting day.

After about a week in Norway we sailed back down to Sweden and then back to the east coast of Denmark as we had entered to sail the

X-Yachts Gold Cup in Copenhagen at the end of July. After the Gold Cup, we sailed some more of Sweden and Denmark and even did some bike riding across Sweden but that can wait for another edition.

Future Plans.

In September, the boat was returned to the X Yacht factory in Haderslev for winter storage. We have already booked our return fares in April 2014. We will then sail south through the Kiel Canal to the west coast of Germany. We will then travel south along the coast of the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal and into the Mediterranean.

We would like to do the 2014 Atlantic Rally which leaves the Canary Islands in late November and should arrive in the Caribbean about 2 weeks later. Plans after that are vague but likely continue sailing west through the Panama and across the Pacific. 



Water Wheel near Fredrikstad

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