

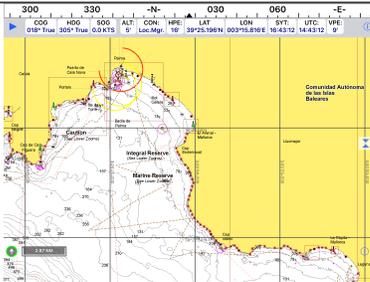
Exploring Mallorca ...One Cala at a Time

S/V At First Sight
August 11, 2020

*"Consider this your home
base in Mallorca."
Comandante, Porto Pí*



Casting off our lines from Porto Pí



The dotted brown line going back and forth in Bahia de Palma shows our track beating to windward. We sailed ~47nm to make ~22nm.



This is just practicing before the real siesta, which would come a few hours later.

Porto Pí to Playa Trench

We got underway from Porto Pí shortly after noon on 26 July, a little ahead of schedule, and did a "vuelta" around the inner harbor in Palma, passing by the mega marinas with their mega yachts and taking in the skyline of this beautiful harbor town. Then we left for the open Bahia de Palma, where we quickly set sail, intent on reaching the picturesque Cala Pi (not to be confused with Porto Pí). We beat back and forth to windward across the bay for most of the day, and it was delightful - 12-15kts of wind, 1m swells. Taking our queue from other big sailboats (who we hoped knew what they were doing), we rode the catabatic wind lifts on the starboard tack sometimes almost up to the rocky cliffs of Cap Blanc before tacking back out to sea on the port tack.

Unfortunately, Cala Pi had two boats already at anchor when we arrived, and it didn't look like there was room for a third, so we backtracked around Cap Blanc, and anchored in front of Playa Trench, near Ses Covetes. We ended up sailing ~47nm that day to make ~22 on the rhumb line from Palma to our anchorage.

Playa Trench is reputed to be one of the best beaches in the Balearics, and we can't disagree. The water below us was a brilliant turquoise with a sugar white sandy bottom. The next morning, I went for a long slow swim while Vicki took Saylor for a ride on her inflatable kayak. After lunch, we couldn't resist the call of a traditional siesta.

Setting our sails for Cabrera Nature Park

We weighed anchor from Trench at 17:00 and then motored about a mile along the coast before setting just 2 sails, *jib & jigger* (one of our favorite combinations), for the 12nm crossing of Feur de Cabrera Strait to Puerto de Cabrera, the site of a former military command post but now the park headquarters.

With 15kts of wind on a close reach, we made 6.5-7.5kts all the way to the entrance to Puerto de Cabrera. AFS was perfectly balanced, and we didn't need to make a single course correction. It was definitely one of the most relaxing sails of all time.



Departing the beautiful setting at Playa Trench.



Relaxing on the fantail under *jib & jigger*.



>7 kts under *jib & jigger*. Look, no mainsail.

In fact, everything felt so right we briefly tried sailing all the way to the mooring field in the harbor, but the wind was being funneled between the cliffs and right on our nose. So, we quickly doused the sails and motored to a yellow mooring ball in the in the assigned area for vessels our size. Vicki made securing the mooring pennant look easy, and a short while later a park official came by to confirm we had a reservation. We launched our dinghy, *2nd Sight*, before dinner so she'd be ready to take us ashore the next morning.

A little bit about our tender, *2nd Sight*

Our tender or dinghy, *2nd Sight*, is a 10' 1982 Oxford with a rigid fiberglass hull, from Maryland's Eastern Shore. She is a rather uncommon style of dinghy. Most cruisers nowadays have rigid inflatable boats (RIBs) for dinghies, usually powered by outboard motors. By contrast, *2nd Sight* has a hard fiberglass hull. But the real differences lie in her means of propulsion. She has a smallish outboard motor, of course, but she also rows great and we actually row her more often than we use the outboard. And she also has a gaff-rigged catboat-type mainsail.



Rather than row ashore, we opted to sail into the *bustling* village of Puerto de Cabrera, which is really nothing more than the park headquarters and a small but popular cantina.

On this day, we opted to sail the half-mile into shore for our hike around Cabrera National Park. We arrived at the landing around 11am, got our bearings, and then hiked up to the 17th century castle fortress on the headland overlooking both the open strait between Mallorca and Cabrera and the harbor. We returned to the landing a

couple hours later, enjoyed a snack at the small cantina, signed up for a guided hike to the lighthouse on the other side of the island from 1800-2100, and then boarded 2nd *Sight* at 14:00 for the ½-mile sail back to *At First Sight*.



*"You have to go out...
You don't have to come back."
Unofficial motto of the U.S.C.G.*

Our not so fun adventure aboard *2nd Sight*

For those that have never sailed a catboat, they do not handle the same as a typical sloop with a mainsail and jib. This lesson was brought home to me after we departed the landing under sail and entered the open water of the harbor. The wind quickly freshened (we learned later to ~20kts) and was coming from the general direction of AFS. And try as we might, we were unable to beat effectively into the wind to make progress toward the safety of our mother ship. In fact, we were getting blown slightly more downwind on every tack.

Fortunately, sort of, the wind set us into a somewhat protected little cove off the main harbor – rather than out the harbor inlet and into open-water strait between Carbrera and Mallorca! The downside of the cove was it was packed with small boats at anchor and strewn with rocks that were awash in the choppy water. It seems we had the Hobson's choice of hitting a boat or hitting a rock.

We tried to avoid both, of course, but in the end our rudder hit a rock – snap! – and just like that we were a vessel in distress unable to set any course. Fortunately, another cruiser had watched everything unfold, and he was there in no time with his large outboard-powered RIB. He took our bow line and towed us (into a stiff breeze) back to AFS. The wind continued to blow hard the rest of the afternoon; and with our confidence shaken as it was, we opted not to row ½-mile into the wind for the evening hike. In fact, the wind was still howling the next morning, which kept us pretty much confined aboard AFS until it was time to depart. We noticed that the mooring field had cleared out by noon. Maybe they knew something that we didn't?



We hiked up to the summit to see the 17th century castle, and then returned to AFS, after a snack at the cantina. Unfortunately, you can't go inside the castle due to COVID distancing measures.



This is not the proper way to sail a catboat. Haha. We were struggling to sail *2nd Sight* to weather. We eventually needed a tow back to AFS after we backed into a rock and broke her rudder.

Return sail to Mallorca

We spent a few hours on the phone and internet trying without success to extend our stay in the park by a day or two. Unsuccessful with this effort, we got underway shortly before 15:00 and were immediately seeing 18-20kts, even while still within the confines of the anchorage. We had set the mizzen while still on the mooring to keep our bow pointed into the wind, and we set the full 140% genoa as made or way down the short cliff-lined Puerto de Cabrera channel. Not long after clearing the headland we had 20-25kts at ~45 degrees off the starboard bow, and we were once again enjoying a great ride on a close reach under jib & jigger, this time with boat speeds between 7.5 and 8.7kts! We were excited to catch up with and pass a newer, high performance sailboat, and we even kept pace with a fishing boat that crossed obliquely in front of our course.

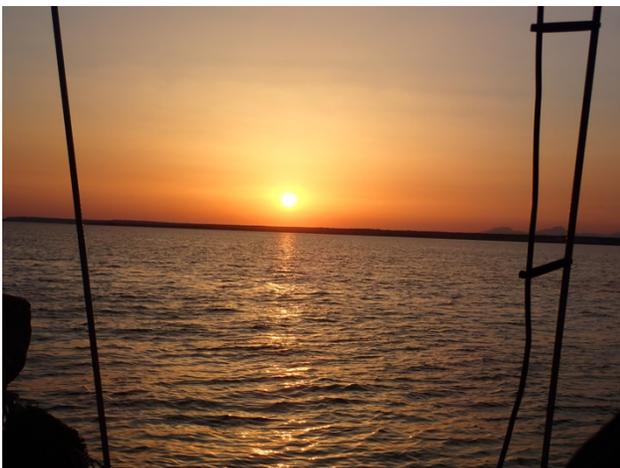


This fishing boat had to struggle to overtake us.



That's right, 8.7kts!

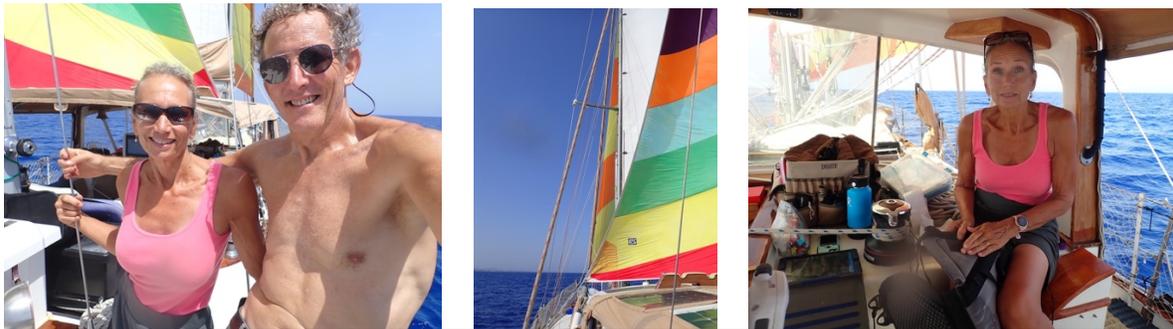
We crossed the Feur de Cabrera Strait in no time and began looking for anchorages south of Colonia de San Jordi. We tried two, but they had more rocks than sand in all the open spots. By now it was 1800ish, and we decided to make a beeline under motor for Ses Covetes, near where we had anchored the night before our crossing to Cabrera. We dropped the hook in 15' of crystalline turquoise water with a sandy bottom. Mission complete for this day; just in time for a relaxing evening at anchor.



We spent the next several days anchored off Ses Covetes. On the first morning, we rowed and paddled in formation for quite a distance south to the town of Colonia de San Jordi. We secured *2nd Sight* and Vicki's kayak to a seawall next to a boat ramp beside a resort hotel, dropped off the garbage in the hotel's dumpster, and then found a cozy little restaurant for breakfast. Afterwards, we stopped at a small *supermercado*, which was more of convenience store than a supermarket; but they had everything we needed in the way of fresh fruit and veggies. We made it back to *AFS* just in time for lunch, a short swim call, and a short siesta (which is becoming somewhat of a habit). We repeated the process the next day, except I rowed northward to La Rápita, while Vicki and Saylor paddled "*una vuelta*" on the kayak around the crescent-shaped beaches of Ses Covetes.



Once we were both back aboard *AFS*, we made rapid preparations for getting underway, which we did ~13:30. After motoring out from the anchorage, we noticed a large ketch closer in to shore. Even though winds were light, we saw they were sailing, so we did, too - and we're grateful for those unknown sailors who enticed us to sail. Although we only made 2.5-4.0kts for the rest of the day, it was fantastically relaxing. We were on a broad reach for most the day, with wind from 120-160 degrees (relative) first on a starboard tack, until jibing after rounding Cabo Salines.



Winds were calm all day when we got underway from Ses Covetes, and we were likely to have motored to a cala had we not seen a big ketch under sail closer to shore. Although we never made more than 4kts all day, and then only briefly, we couldn't have asked for a more relaxing way to have spent the day.

A lovely (but unexpected) anchorage.

The highlight of the day, though, was anchoring in Cala Sa Nau, also called Cala Arsenau on some charts. We dropped the hook in ~20' of water over sand and rock. It seemed to be holding well. And then Vicki hopped in 2nd Sight and took a stern line to a big rock. We had intended to put a chain around the rock, secured with Dynema (a synthetic rope that is stronger than steel and very resistant to chafe), but she saw that someone had mounted a couple of mooring rings on top of the rock, so we used them.



This side branch of Cala Sa Nau was barely 3 boat-widths wide, but with a large rock off our port side. Using 2nd Sight, Vicki was able to take a heavy stern line ashore that kept us nicely centered in the cala.

We seemed to be holding quite well between the anchor forward and the stern line to the rock aft. Truth be told, though, we thought we were in Cala Mitjana, right next door, until we double-checked our position after we got settled. How something like that happened, we'll never know, because we had 2 paper charts open to the area and 2 GPS devices with detailed electronic charts for confirming our location.

Regardless of how it happened, we followed all this excitement with a relaxing, romantic, and delicious dinner on the fantail. "What a day!"

The next day was quite a day, too, but in a totally different way...