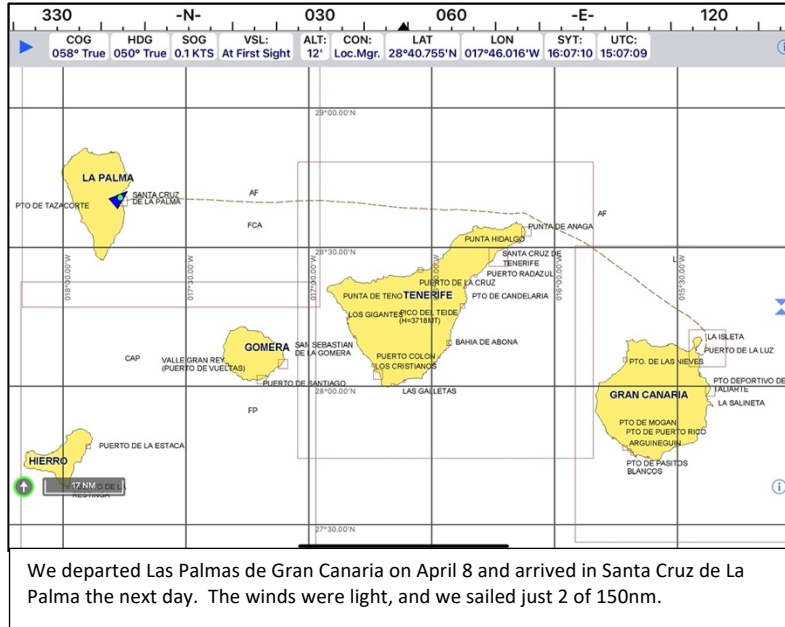


# Aboard SV AT FIRST SIGHT: Las Plamas to La Palma, April 8-15, 2021 Our Last Voyage and Days in Spanish Waters



Our final view of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, a great blend of cosmopolitan chic and laid-back island cultures.

Vicki and I do these posts mostly for our own enjoyment to chronicle our travels together. They'll serve as useful memory aid devices when we're old(er), and our memories start to fail us... Haha. That said, we also enjoy the feedback we often receive from family and friends when we make the post public, as well as the recent comments we've received asking for an update. Thank you!

If you read our last post, you know how and why a few extra barnacles may have attached themselves to *At First Sight's* hull while we were docked in Las Palmas. A few days stretched in to more than a few weeks, and we were worried about overstaying our welcome at Arsenal Naval de Las Palmas, despite reassurances from the CO and XO that we could stay *forever* if we wanted/needed to. Nevertheless, we're pleased to report we got underway from Las Palmas (de Gran Canaria) at midday on April 9 for an overnight passage to Santa Cruz (de La Palma), arriving in early afternoon the next day. The flipside was saying our sad goodbyes to CAPT Carlos Múgica of Arsenal Naval de Las Palmas, CDR Antonio "Coco" Ugarte and their spouses, Sesi and Blanca. They were truly phenomenal hosts, all.



Base XO, CDR Antonio "Coco" Ugarte, waves goodbye from the main seawall of Arsenal Naval de Las Palmas as *AFS* got underway for La Palma, her final port of call in Spain.



Ignacio Peñuelas, son of Juan and Paloma, joined us in Las Palmas. He would sail with us to La Palma, and then across the Atlantic.

Joining us for the passage was Ignacio Peñuelas, the younger son of our friend Juan, both of whom have sailed with us before. We were elated to be underway again, even if we sailed just 2nm out of the 150 miles between the two ports, giving us a fantastic sea trial of our newly rebuilt fuel injection pump (to look at the bright side).

The forecast was such that we knew we would have to motor for the first few hours while we rounded *La Isleta* at the north end of Gran Canaria. But we had hoped we would be able to sail *close hauled* or hard on the wind between *Isleta* and *Punta de Agana* at the northeast tip of Tenerife, then round the northern tip of the island, and turn left for a downwind reach or run to Santa Cruz de La Palma. But that didn't happen. The wind seldom exceeded 8kts, and while 8kts can move us through the water at 2-4kts, we wanted to make faster progress than that.

Still, it was a wonderful albeit a short passage. We noted in our logbook the serenity and majesty of simultaneously seeing 4 glows scattered around the horizon – the lights of Tenerife off the port quarter, the distant glow of La Gomera off the port bow, the glow of La Palma (our destination) just to the right of the bow, and dawn's morning light breaking astern.



Pictures don't do justice to the serenity of a calm evening at sea with no nearby traffic and only the glow of distant islands illuminating the horizon around us.

And a beautiful sunrise was ushered in by a pair of dolphin frolicking in our bow wave for what seemed like 20 minutes, if only to tease Saylor.



Land ho! The beautiful island of La Palma on the morning horizon. On a peaceful morning like this, it's hard to imagine the island experiencing a volcano causing a large landside and triggering a tsunami that would be felt along the U.S. Atlantic Seaboard, as some scientists theorize could happen in the near future.



Arriving in Santa Cruz de La Palma under sunny skies, light winds, and calm seas. We weren't alone, however, as our neighbors included a Swedish training tall ship and a Germain cruise liner.



In Santa Cruz de La Palma, entry into the inner harbor requires close coordination with the local port authority, which must lower a steel door for a boat to pass. With the door lowered, the ocean swell inside the marina is quite persistent and uncomfortable. Once inside the marina and with the door raised, the water is flat and like glass.

We arrived in Marina La Palma shortly after 14:00h, and immediately topped off our tanks with 520 liters of diesel so we'd be ready for our upcoming transatlantic passage. Entry in the marina is a rather interesting process, because they installed a fully submersible steel door between the outer (commercial) port and the inner marina to reduce excessive swell inside the confines of the latter. It's doubly important, then, to contact La Palma Traffic 3-5nm out to ensure the door is fully lowered giving 4m clearance – which was still unnerving when passing over it because the water was so clear it looked as if our keel would hit it!



Marina La Palma was an idyllic port of call from which to stage our transatlantic crossing.



Our five days in Santa Cruz de La Palma – not to be confused with Santa Cruz de Tenerife or Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, all in the Canary Islands – went by in the blink of an eye.



Santa Cruz de La Palma makes for lovely morning and evening walks. Besides its near perfect climate, it is known for its numerous public plazas, its narrow, cobblestone streets, and its ornate wooden balconies.

Which is too bad; because like its neighbor, La Gomera, ~10nm to the southeast, it is a subtropical paradise in every respect. Pristine waters lapping at beautiful black sand beaches. Rugged rocky cliffs. Lush green mountains. Charming historical pueblos (Columbus slept here, too). Great food. Friendly locals. We worked out every morning, did what sightseeing we could squeeze in, sampled the local cuisine, provisioned from the local markets – and also got PCR-tested for COVID, the results of which were required for entry into St. Lucia in the Caribbean, the chosen destination for our transatlantic landfall. But we also made final preparations for our 2,800nm voyage, which will be the topic of our next post.

