

OUR INTREPID ADVENTURE

Andre and Maria Baxter
June 2004, The Ionian Sea

Sunday 20h June 2004

Vikho, Lefkas

Arrive Vikho and find our hosts decorating Intrepid with balloons to mark our honeymoon (or maybe they are warning signs to other boats!). Inside we find champagne and roses, a truly lovely touch very typical of the genuine and friendly nature of all at Sail Ionion.

We meet Tony, our teacher and good food guide, in the Yacht Club. We're shot away from the journey and the wedding so god knows what Tony must think of us complete novices! A few beers, a few tales and a few warnings later we board Intrepid.

Spartakhor, Meganisi

Under motor with Tony leaving earlier than normal as need to clear the quay. We both check out how to steer and start to learn our new language – fenders, cleats, port, starboard etc. *Important lesson number 1 – Don't get Tony wet especially after a shower.*

Tony parks, bows-to, lazy line anchor. Excellent help from Babis in putting us in the most difficult spot on the quay. First words of wisdom from Tony "Don't ever let me catch you two doing that!"

It's only a short trip but already we can see how beautiful it is, like misty mountaintops in water. No wonder Tony tells us he has the best job in the world. It's a lovely quay and bay – will come back.

Monday 21st June 2004

Spartakhor, to Vathi, Meganisi

Left quay Tony at helm (another new word!). He teaches us to be confident to stop in neutral and get the boat ready for sea. "Eliminate the variables just in case" so fenders in, ropes tied.

Good practice at helm, different speeds, turning round, stopping etc to get weight of the boat. Into Vathi, helping Tony park, Andre drops anchor, Maria throws guides (that's our jobs allocated for the rest of the week, Andre Skipper, Maria Crew). Beer!

Vathi to Sivota, Lefkas

Turn the engine on!!! *Lesson number 2 – Don't forget the obvious just because your head is full of new words and actions.* Wrote 2 checklists – leaving and entering the quay, wont make any silly mistakes like that again! Motored to Sivota taking turns and care to keep Tony dry.

Sivota – took our time, got the boat ready before going in (fenders, guide ropes, anchor) – remove the variables. This makes us calm and confident and should also chill out any neighboring boats. Its unnerving if you're rushing around last minute for all concerned.

Scanned the quay, taking our time, going very slowly, checking out all possibilities and looking out for dangers (people swimming, ropes in the water, which other boats are on the move). Picked our spot, go back round again and be calm. Go for it – then let Tony park cos he's let you have too many beers!!

Great quay, we love Sivota as well. Good bars and restaurants, fab fish soup. Even England win the football.

Tuesday 22nd June 2004

Sivota to Fiskardo, Kefalonia via Kioni, Ithica

Before leaving time to fully park without Tony on board. Where'd the f***ing quay come from! Practice makes perfect, be calm, be very slow and talk to each other. You don't make silly mistakes twice.

Confidence high we're out to sea for our first sail with Tony. Bit choppy, Tony gets Maria on sail duty much to Andre's horror 'She cant do that" but she did. Long sail to Kioni, way past our self imposed deadline to be in the quay before 5.00pm latest. *Lesson number 3 – Get up earlier.*

Kioni gets very full with flotillas. *Lesson number 4 – Set a plan before you leave but be flexible to change destination if need be.* Helped with Tony's espionage into the Neilson radio frequency we re-route to Fiskardo. Arrive 8.30pm way late but Tony can get Intrepid into the smallest of spaces. Not sure about the enormous Cat that wants to follow us in though.

Crew on the Cat over estimate space and drag our anchor line twice. All look a bit mad rushing and shouting – can see what Tony means about the importance of keeping calm for others. Or maybe they are just pissed at Tony for offering to park it for them!

Fiskardo is fantastic, picture postcard, fabulous food, will definitely come back one day. Meet Ian on his own 6 month sailing adventure.

Navigation with a fag packet – Tony passes on years of navigation training with the use of the chart and a packet of Marlborough Lights – its that easy! Coupled with the technology of the GPRS and navigational compass we'll be ok. *Lesson number 4 – Read the Pilot Book before you set off, know the quay but also know the approach, most are well hidden and the book points out landmarks, even if you do disagree.*

Wednesday 23rd June 2004

Fiskardo, Kefalonia to One-House Bay, Atoko

Lesson number 5 – Don't forget your own lessons (ie number 3 and get up earlier).

Long sail to One-House Bay. Andre puts up main sail and genoa sailing to tip of Ithica. Mainsail problem with second reef not staying on so Tony ties down with spare rope. *Lesson 6 – Don't panic and be resourceful – no problem.*

Past the northern tip of Ithica the wind direction changes as we head across to Atoko. Drop the main sail and use only the genoa with the wind behind us all the way. *Lesson 7 – Look at the other boats, see what sails they have up and where they are going/coming from to help judge what to do with sails.*

Hit 7 knots!!! Vvvv fast. Too fast for Intrepid. Tony tells us we should reduce the genoa before we turn into a submarine! Back to 5 knots. (Intrepid's hull speed, she's 27ft, is 6.5 knots max).

One-House Bay front anchor drop. Look at depth finder, Intrepid needs 5 meters. Drop front anchor and let Intrepid sway in the wind (and it really is unbelievably windy) until she finds her line. Keep checking 20-30 minutes to make sure she's held. Dinghy to our hosts on Blue Spirit for lunch (its about 5pm really should have got up earlier!)

One-House Bay, Atoko to Kastos

SOLO!!

We depart for the first time just the two of us, Skipper and Crew. Farewell waves from Blue Spirit, Tony, Chip, Katie and friends shadow us to Kastos. They tack north to sail but we decide, nervously, to motor direct.

Harder to control Intrepid in the strong wind and waves, maybe it's the nerves. Andre's steering eventually adjusts to compensate – adjusting the steering on the

crest of a wave rather than when the bow makes contact with the sea. Maria develops strange arm movements.

We both realize we could ease the movement of Intrepid by raising the main sail but we had our plan and it was too windy. *Lesson number 8 – Don't rush yourself, there's plenty of time to get confident with the sails tomorrow.*

Parking at Kastos

- 8.30 pm – well past our deadline
- Quay is very very full
- We're on our own on the boat!

Tony gives advice from the quay – there's no room! Ha ha ha

Plan is to go in at 45 degrees to the end of the quay wide of the last boat. Tony, Chip and Tristian will pull us round to hang off a very large German yacht. *Lesson number 9 – Be nice to your neighbors they can really help you out.*

Lesson number 10 – Don't listen to anyone shouting from other boats or the quay – unless its Tony.

Very difficult approach between two anchored boats approaching the quay. About to drop anchor when, perfect approach and timing, a grumpy Englishman shouts "You can't drop anchor there" – abort park! Hmmn, Tony's angry, grumpy Englishman is parked in the wrong place – go again. This time remember *Lesson number 11 – "We are fully aware of the situation thank you"*. Works a treat, shuts up grumpy man and gives us the confidence to approach. Good park but first attempt would have been perfect. Damn that bloke!

Tony's pleased with us but not surprisingly his only remaining advise is to "Never let me catch you doing that again".

Manage to coincide our arrival on Kastos with their only island saints days and opening of the village church. More singing and dancing by the locals then when Greece knocked out France.

It's a great village, good showers, worth all the hassle parking. Decide to take it easy tomorrow. We've had 2 big sails coming in late. Plan to play around tomorrow, sails up/sails down etc.

Thursday 24th June 2004

Man over board practice!

Tony advises it's a good idea to think about and practice what to do in a man over board situation so we do. Our man is an empty water bottle and our drill

works sufficiently well that we are happy. Man still floating in the Ionian sea just off of Kastos presumed dead.

(We are happy with about turn at speed and returning to our man. Decide to keep a fender readily available to throw in the first instance giving a floatation device quick before turning. Life rings, ropes, ladder all checked and practiced to help bring our man back on board).

Practiced also with sails but not much wind in the channel so no real sailing done. In the calm waters we can reflect and prove to ourselves that we have taken an awful lot of information and skills on board in a very short space of time. It's been good to have a real slow day of practice.

Head early to Kalamos mainly to relax after the 2 hectic(ish) days sailings but also to avoid any quay jams! Tony's final words of advice still ringing in our ears "Don't listen to anyone on the quay – unless you are in Kalamos and its George".

Approached Kalamos slowly and readied the boat for parking. Having checked the Pilot Book we motor in and pick our spot. What luck, its empty save for a fellow 27ft boat bows-to off the main quay. Even better luck, lots of large tyres strategically places on the quayside.

Using the already moored boat as a good guide for distance, and a suitably large tyre as an aiming point, we decide on our approach. Turn around, ready speed and angle, even have a fag .. ok we're ready to go.

What's that someone's shouting from the opposite quay and motioning us in. "Don't listen to anyone on the quay", we motion thanks and precede, perfect park stopping short of the tyre. Maria has to jump off to secure guide ropes then back on again as no one around to ask. We are both very pleased with ourselves, its an enormous sense of self satisfaction – our very first park with no Tony at all and it was spot on.

That deserves a beer. Hit the first bar "Georges", Oh now what was that Tony said about the only man of the quay but him? Oops never mind.

Chilled out on a good beach a short walk out of town in readiness for England v Portugal. Shouldn't have bothered – same old story. Roast lamb and potatoes in oven at Georges (well we had to). Maria to make a mental note not to feed poor looking ginger cat with sad eyes to avoid being surrounded by every sad cat on the island.

With sadness in mind we head back to Intrepid. Damn that David Beckham.

Friday 26th June 2004

When we wake with a very full quay Andre notices we have a crossed anchor line with our neighbor. They are English and clearly well experienced. They slacken their line to enable us to pull clear and all works to plan 'good neighbors'.

We head out and follow the coast of Kalamos southbound round the tip and up and across to Meganisi. Sails up past the tip and we're off – well for a little while, there's not really any wind.

Plan to go to Atheni, one of three large bays on the far end of Meganisi. We're a little early so decide to change plan and go on further back to Spartakhor, there's plenty of time to meet our 5.00pm deadline and those fabulous king prawns are calling.

This is where we stayed on our first night. Bay is clear and we approach quay as usual. One of Babis' crew motions us in. No anchor drop as it's a lazy line which is weird. We are given a spot exactly opposite the difficult spot that Tony was given on our first night. Looks pretty close to the rocks – don't they know we haven't got Tony on board!

Going in nice and slow, perfect. Babis' mate looks a bit bored, blimey this could be the slowest park in history. He motions us in with more urgency, obviously has something better to do, whatever, we don't listed to people of the quay and we're just fine .. even if he is asleep by the time we moor.

King prawns, beer, heaven.

In an adventurous frame of mind we take the dinghy and Andre rows to the beach. Bit of snorkeling, should have brought the breathing bit instead of leaving it on the boat, never mind. Too many wasps on the beach so back to the boat.

Showers, food and football, Greece go ok. Every man, scooter and his dog celebrate round the island as Greece win again.

Saturday 26th June 2004

Our final day. Wake up late, never did get the hang of that lesson.

Ask for help from Babis in getting out – we are very close to the rocks on further inspection and Intrepid does not really reverse. All set to go. Need to call Tony later on our final approach into Vikho so Andre puts the phone on charge and accidentally switches the aux button when plugging in the inverter. This switches on the lights bow and stern but never mind, we're moving, we can turn them off in a minute once we're out, we cant go below decks now. Mad German woman in the water has other ideas. If she shouts another 20 times we might just reverse over her!

Babis's mate spins us on a sixpence and we are off. Go to the middle of the bay, fenders in, ropes tied, lights off – cheers mad German frauline.

Early afternoon we head into Vilko. Katie, Skip, well just about everyone from Sail Ionion, have told us that no matter how good you are all week, just about everyone messes up the final park – the quay at Vikho. Great, we'll get in early so there's not so many people about.

Our mobile is not working and we can't seem to raise Tony on the radio. We can see the Sail Ionion area on the quay so make the decision to go in anyway. Our approach is spotted by Chip and we've given our spot. With Tony, Chip and Tristian looking on we make our final park, and we're more than happy with it (even if Maria did practically lasso Tony with the guide rope).

We head for the Yacht Club for beer and food and to reminisce on our adventure. We've had the most fantastic time ever. A holiday and honeymoon that we'll never forget and have vowed to return to (assuming Sail Ionion will take us back). We join Tony on his Spey Lass, a fine old boat, at gin and tonic time and tell him of our tales. We think he's proud of us. Later we're invited onto Blue Spirit with all our other counterparts and its just a perfect end to the week.

Sunday 27th June 2004

Hung over and very sad we leave for Sivota Mourtos for our second week. A week relaxing on a beach at a Neilson hotel. We'll wear our Sail Ionion shirts with pride and agree never again to go on a lunch out beach holiday. Sailing - we're hooked.

Maria & Andre, June 2004