

Trip to the Golfe Du Morbihan

Ruth and Tim Tayler Kittiwake 722

Inspired by our son's girlfriend's wish to improve her French and reports of the bi annual La Semaine du Golfe Morbihan (a week in May where there are 1500 Old Gaffers of all shapes and sizes) we decided to take Kittiwake to France for 2 weeks. We were due at a party in Brittany after 9 days so arranged for our son and girlfriend to pick up the boat from the visitors pontoon in Port Blanc so they could get in 5 days sailing. I had bought an I-pad under the proviso that it would be cheaper than a chart plotter!! , it was great we had bought Navionics for Europe (£40) and downloaded the area as well as a chart and pilot book. Navionics allows you to set your route but also shows your track with the ability to photo places on the chart, this was very useful for the others when we only had txt handover!

We also found Nemo on the way to Auray ,a large black tri which we caught on camera!

Launching and leaving the camper van and trailer needed to be identified so it didn't cost us an arm and a leg. Martin from Salt Horse was very helpful having been there a few times and got the t shirt. Port Blanc seemed ideal with a good slip(half tide and above) and parking for 900 cars including about 80 without a height Barrier and free. We arrived with boat from St Malo at half tide. The slip was busy when we arrived with a crane and a small car ferry as well as other boats launching. Not being fazed (we were glad that all the food and bags were in the boat!!) we set to launching. We were pleasantly surprised to be helped by Olivier (Shrimper 15) who lives and keeps his boat in Ile aux Moines and suggested we picked up a mooring later off the bay he keeps his Shrimper. Mast still down I moored on the visitors pontoon whilst Tim did his bit with the trailer and the van.

Thus started a beautiful(mixed bag of weather) week cruising the Golfe. We soon realised that it was more important to go with the tide than the wind and sometimes it felt you were spun in a washing machine but the water always flowed between the islands and rocks so you were never in any danger. We visited Olivier's bay on Ile aux Moines, sandy beach and a nice walk to a little town with a shop to top up on provisions, a lovely anchorage on the south east of the island (sand and pine trees)where it seemed you could pick up an empty buoy or anchor inside the moorings.

An anchorage on Isle D'Artz came recommended by friends with a fin keel boat, it was a short walk from town, a few odd bars and a Spar, a sandy beach and was very pretty. Unfortunately the weather was poor and we had a wet roly night, it was like being on a merry go round and not being able to get off!

Martin had recommended mooring in Le Passage, the entrance to a pretty river,we did try to navigate to the upper reaches but turned back when we went aground, we spent two nights here, visiting each side of the inlet by foot, pretty quiet hamlets with lots of church's but no provisions although there was a good shellfish hut on Le passage side and water.

Water and provisions are not always easy to find, we spent 3 nights moored in bays away from it all and realised that we had to stock up on tins , water etc and fill the solar shower when we had the opportunity.

We made use of the tide to go up to Auray and Vannes ,arriving on market day which makes it interesting. Vannes is approached by a swing bridge which is open on the half hour/hour a few hours either side of high water, we were confused by the pilot but arrived at the waiting pontoon and were given advice and coffee by a friendly French boat. Vannes is twinned with our local home town so we had heard a lot about it, a beautiful old town. Moored right up by the town we were aware that the walk around the Golfe (177 Kms) was taking place, there seemed to be runners and walkers finish times seemed to be all night! Auray, again the pilot book seemed a little confusing mainly due to the fact that it is written for fin keel boats and there is a bridge 14 m high on the approach.No problem for a Shrimper , mooring is just off the harbour of St Goustain with lovely bars. A short walk up the hill takes you to the town, a walk along the river takes you to the little attractive drying harbour of Le Bono where we found another Shrimper (922) in the river,we noticed the main sheet had come adrift so Tim jumped aboard on our way back down river and armed with string tied it up as the shackle had come undone.

Arradon on the mainland which seems to have the only yacht club in the Golfe! was an interesting anchorage, the chart was not quite accurate , there was a small passage into a pontoon amongst the moorings marked by a red buoy, we were told by a local to moor up and then visit the Capitaine to be allocated a mooring. Water and showers here but 15 minute walk to town. Posh restaurant on the front which we thought our dress code would not allow!

We returned to meet up for the last day on the boat with our son, they had been graced with better weather for their week than us and had really enjoyed the boat and their attempt at making a double bed seemed to be semi successful! The joys of youth!

Returning by ferry from St Malo made us look forward to the planned International Shrimper Week next year, we also plan to return to the Golfe in 2015 for the La Semaine du Golfe.



Drew and Sarah



Vannes



Port Blanc