

Elba Island Sailing Log

8/27/10 Piombino to Portoferraio Elba

Our trip starts from the ferry terminal at Piombino on the mainland and in less than an hour we're in Portoferraio making our way to our hotel Relais delle Picchiaie a 5KM drive from Portoferraio on the road to Porto Azzuro with stunning views overlooking the bay. This 4 star hotel has beautiful grounds and common areas, but, disappointingly, our room was a little more tired and worn than we expected. We must say, however, it was more than compensated for with fantastic service, great outdoor facilities, and great grill buffet served for dinner.

8/28/10 Portoferraio

After our continental breakfast, we head to the not very attractive Edilnautica Marina to check in with Sun Charter. Provisioning is easy at the local Coop supermarket with everything imaginable you need for a bareboat charter including beautiful limes for the sundowners. Being able to get the car close up to the boat docks makes loading the boat easy.

Our boat is a 40 foot Jeanneau, a little older than most charter boats, but appears to be in acceptable condition. The base facilities are meager and there is no office or even reception area. Our check-in and area briefing starts late in the afternoon and isn't as good as we have had in the past, but, with persistent questioning it is sufficient. Unfortunately, by the time we finish, it is clearly too late to depart for our first night's anchorage, especially, given the forecasted wind direction. Then, even before we settle in for a night at the marina, the forecast update calls for high winds and big swell over night leading to a strong recommendation to depart in the morning. Every single charterer in the fleet has opted to stay put for the night and most all are out on stern deck enjoying their first boat meals by candlelight, us included.

8/29/10 Portoferraio -> Barbarossa

Heading out of the marina you need to follow the very narrow channel through the shallows then navigate the mega-yachts and ferries before finding open water. Given the forecast of the next few days we choose to head-up the north east coast of Elba aiming to go around the south part of the island. Sailing with some good, constant NW wind, we round the cape and continue south without stopping for lunch to enjoy a beautiful sail that includes dolphin sightings. Our objective is to get to our night destination 16 miles away from the base early enough for a nice swim. During the passage we can see that Capo Castello and Cala del'Alga look like beautiful day anchorages though open to northern winds. We anchor in Barbarossa bay, about a mile east of Porto Azzuro, in 13m over sand in light wind. Given it is not a large bay, the early arrival was wise to be able to tuck well in for good evening protection from the NW. It's a gorgeous peaceful night with minimal roll. We discover that the boat refrigerator works quite well and even made ice for our sundowners!

8/30/10 Barbarossa -> Lancona

It's a blustery day with winds between 20-25kn making for a fantastic sail down the east coast and then along the southern coast of Elba passing Porto Azzuro and the Ripe Alta in the Tuscan Archipelago National Park. We arrive at Lancona Bay forewarned that it is heavily used for day tripper water sports, but, we find it relatively empty, no doubt due to the winds. We nestled up to the northeast corner of the bay just outside the swimming buoys and anchored in sand with excellent holding which proved necessary with the steady 16kn blowing throughout the night with gusts to 25kn. It is quite a rolly evening.

8/31/10 Lancona -> Fetovaia

It's another great day of sailing along the southern coast of Elba with a must stop at Marina Del Campo to reminisce younger days sleeping on the beach as a student. It sure is completely different now, but is an adorable village with good provisioning opportunities. As we sail, it becomes apparent that the main furlor is not working properly making it difficult to extract the very last bit of the sail. As pulling out the sails are not usually part of the check-out, this wasn't noted when we went through our checkout with Sun Charter.

We arrive at Fetovaia a small, beautiful, but crowded bay and anchored in 10m over sand with great holding. Here too, relatively early arrival has paid off. It is another blustery night with winds in excess of 18kn. There is some slight roll no doubt wrapping around the southwestern tip of Elba.

9/1/10 Fetovaia -> Cap Corse

Today's objective is the north coast of Corsica, 42M northwest of Elba, requiring a dawn departure. Unfortunately, we have to traverse the Tyrrhenian Sea under power as the wind has decided to take a break. With a full day of navigation ahead, out comes the fishing pole and the hope that we'll be able to catch dinner en route - unfortunately no luck.

Arriving just shy of Cap Corse, we stop for lunch at a beautiful open bay at the tower ruins north of Iles Finocchiera. This is the clearest and bluest water we have seen on this trip and our stop is not without plenty of disturbing roll, making it "more exciting". We then head up to the northern most point of Corsica, Punto Agnello on Cap Corse in calm conditions where we decide to anchor and go for a swim to gather sea urchins ("ricci") that will be dinner. It's our primary reason for coming to Corsica as gathering ricci is currently prohibited in Italian waters due to marine control for replenishing. The sea is full of small jelly fish which make ricci gathering a challenge, but, with me keeping the jelly fish away with my fins and holding the collection net and Marcello diving to collect the ricci we succeeded to gather a good catch.

Cap Corse -> Iles Finocchiera

It's off to the eastern coast just south of the Finocchiera Islands for our evening anchorage. We anchor in 8m over sand with great holding. The big bay has many large buoy like flotation devices which actually look like they could be part of some fish farming. Cleaning the ricci to prepare them as our

evening “antipasto”, we have many fish nibbling all around the boat. It’s a chilly night, with a lot of roll with the bay completely open to the East, but, it’s well worth the discomfort with the clear evening sky blanketed by thousands of stars.

9/2/10 Iles Finocchiera -> Cala Mortara, Capraia

Back to Italy, we’re sailing in 10-15kn to the Island of Capraia, most of which is a protected nature reserve. We sail up the eastern coast past Porto Capraia to Cala Mortara, a drop dead gorgeous bay with super clear water on the northeast corner of the island, a great stop for a swim and lunch.

9/2/10 Cala Mortara -> Porto Capraia

Since we can’t anchor anywhere off of Capraia for the night, we head to Porto Capraia to claim a mooring outside the sea wall in the buoy area where we had reserved for the evening (25 Euros). It’s one of the most interesting mooring arrangements we’ve ever witnessed with lines off of a single mooring to secure the bow as well as each side of the stern. We’re not sure what to do, so we call the harbor master for assistance, which comes quickly. Once secure, we use the dingy to head into town for a seafood dinner on shore at the Vecchio Scorfano which was good, but not great. The little marina town though is quite adorable as a little sleepy style fishing village. During the evening we see that several sailing yachts anchor in very deep water just in front of the port entrance not far from the no anchoring permitted sign. We were told by the young man who helped us with our tie-up that the coast guard regularly came out most evenings to issue substantial fines to the offenders. Additionally, he confirmed that that in this corner of the island they often have sudden weather changes and substantial gusts that also render the deep anchorage risky.

9/3/10 Capraia -> Golfo Viticcio

Leaving early morning with no wind we motored the whole 24 miles back over to Elba. With the sea like glass we were hoping to see dolphin again, but no luck. It’s a lunch stop before heading back to Portoferraio so we decide to anchor off of Sansone in the Gulf of Viticcio in 4.5m over sand. The bay is quite big and shallow starting from very far out. The water is a crystal clear Mediterranean blue, just gorgeous, a great way to end our 1 week bareboat charter in Elba with a beautiful swim and a nice lunch.

9/3/10 Sansone -> Portoferraio

Back to EdilNautica Marina for our last night on the boat and check out the next morning. Refueling is relatively easy at the station just on the west side of the old port squeezing in between some of the super big yachts. Given the limited maneuver room, the petrol station workers are very helpful in pushing us off stern out in a guided manner using super long gaffing poles. We easily find the channel back into the marina. Our check out is smooth, albeit we have a long list of boat issues we left with SunCharter – it’s a good thing the fridge made ice. We enjoy a delightful evening visiting the old port area and fortress.