

Voyage with Silmaril:

1st Report, 19 July

Dear friends

You probably received a report in German! That was a mistake on my part. Of course I do not expect you to read German. So here our news in a more comprehensible form for part of you!!

As you probably know, we are renting our home in Effingen for three years. Getting ready for the tenants was a major effort, it drained all our energy and left us exhausted with lots of preparations in view for our departure from Hamburg with Silmaril. It took us the better part of a month to prepare Silmaril and install more electronic equipment and a few vital "household" gadgets, to return home (staying with family and friends) for last visits before our trip north, and to celebrate the belated name giving to our floating home with a small circle of new friends and acquaintances in Hamburg.

We are now, finally, on our way.

The very first leg took us to Stade on Sunday July 6, a small town not too far from Hamburg Wedel, a few miles up the river Schwinge. A dear friend from Hamburg came with us on this first day and we had a wonderful time, no wind, but lots of fun! He left us in Stade and a colleague of Alex's came on board, the same person who accompanied us on the first days of our very first trip with Vingilote. He is still with us and we enjoy his company and his help.

We left Stade for Cuxhaven, at the mouth of the river Elbe. But lots of wind against the outflowing tide that created very short tall waves forced us to take refuge in Brunsbuettel, at the entrance to the Kiel Canal. The bad weather made us change our route. We had planned to visit the isle of Amrum and the Hallig Hooge in the tidal waters north-east of the mouth of the Elbe. But navigation with so much wind in waters that leave harbors dry twice a day and with extremely narrow approaches and the 2m draw of Silmaril would have been too much of a risk for near-beginners! So, we headed through the canal toward Kiel (scary sluicing situation as the last boat next to a huge container ship and terribly close to the imposing sluice doors!) and Kappeln, another small town up the river Schlei. It was a very nice stay, we took walks in the old town, stocked the fridge and the wine cellar and bought a good book on harbors and anchor sites in eastern Denmark. The crowning event of the day was our meal at the "Bierakademie", an old-fashioned place that serves spare ribs (Speer Rippen!!) far too large for any plate and hardly manageable for a "normal" stomach.

Next stop Sonderburg, first harbor in Denmark. The town celebrated a huge affair with great numbers of horses and uniforms and bands, even bagpipes, Don!!

We watched and marveled at the patriotic performances with flags and marching patterns (?) and salutes and dead serious faces! And everything in wind-driven rain!

And again we left the harbor for another day with lots of wind and the personal speed record at the helm of our friend, Paul, with 9.3 knots. Our destination on the isle of Fuenen, the small town of Assens is not very impressive tourist-wise, but a modern and safe harbor.

The weather forecast is not good, too much wind for comfort, rain showers and low cloudes. We decide in the morning, whether we sail at all and where, if we muster the courage.

And this is it for the moment, more later.

We send our very best and will write again some time soon.

Ursula and Alex