

# LOGBOOK 2009

## CREW:

Otto - Skipper  
Matthias - Chief Mechanic and Co-Skipper  
Heribert - Navigator  
Robert - Stewart

## YACHT:

*ELENA*  
Beneteau Oceanis 43  
Year of construction: 2008  
Equipped with furling genoa and battened mainsail  
Motor: Yanmar 54 PS

## REGION:

From Athens, Kalamaki (Alimos Marina) through the Cyclades to Astypalea and back

## TIME:

Saturday 11.4.2009 till Saturday 25.4.2009  
Image 01

## DAY 1 (SUNDAY, 12.4.2009)

*FROM ALIMOS MARINA TO ORMOS KOUTALA AT SERIPHOS (70.7 NM)*

Image 02

After checking in at the yacht and getting all necessary provision we leave the berth shortly after 9 o'clock in the morning. As expected, we encounter uncertain winds from north-easterly directions near Athens. The sky is almost fully overcast but there is no rain all the day. Temperatures are agreeably fresh. We either go under full sail or with one reef. At about 2:30 pm, as we leave the protection of the Saronic Gulf behind, the wind gets significantly stronger and reaches 6 Beaufort. Before we know it, we need a second reef and *Elena* sprints ahead at eight knots.

We would have been happy about this if Skipper and Co-Skipper weren't feeling the first symptoms of seasickness. All the ginger they ate has obviously not been powerful enough. While Otto's condition is not bad at all, Matthias is suffering seriously. Wind force is still increasing and although we are not sailing at close reach the heeling of *Elena* is already alarming. When wind force reaches 30 knots it is clear that we need a third reef - if we only had it! Fortunately we don't need to sail near to the wind so we can strike the main sail. *Elena* chases under the shortened genoa still at 7 knots towards the first line of Cyclades islands.

According to our plan we should pass by Seriphos to sail between Siphnos and Milos and to head directly for Sitia at eastern Crete. With this wind we would be able to reach Sitia within 30 hours. However, Matthias isn't doing any better at the time and Otto doubts that his stomach would hold up for a night ride with 6 Beaufort. Additionally there is the problem with the mainsail. If there is no way to use it above 30 knots of wind this ship cannot go near the wind at a higher wind speed. On the way to Sitia that wouldn't be a

big problem, provided that the wind keeps blowing from northeast. But on the way north from Crete there would be problems for sure, if we had to strike the mainsail.

Therefore we decide to head for Ormos Koutala at Seriphos to spend the night there. Our bellies would be grateful for that and we would have still 170 nm to Sitia. Around 7:00 pm we are anchored for a quiet night in offshore Seriphos.

## DAY 2 (MONDAY, 13.4.2009)

*FROM ORMOS KOUTALA AT SERIPHOS TO KARAVOSTASI AT PHOLEGANDROS (57,8 NM)*

Image 03

We enjoy a pretty chilly but marvellous morning at the foot of the impressive mountain ridge of Seriphos shimmering light green in the morning sun. The bay lies wrapped in haze and we are the only human beings around. After breakfast we weigh anchor and start for the next leg around 9:30. At first we continue with a stiff north-easterly and a second reef. At 11:00 the wind turns to south and slows down significantly. We just need only one reef and continue easily tacking south.

Although everybody feels much better than yesterday, we decide to give up reaching Crete on this tour: For Thursday the forecast predicts strong winds from north and none of us want to steam for 80 nm against 6 or 7 Bft, if conditions get too hard again for our two reefs.

Later the wind decreases even more, so that we even have to motor for a while. Approaching Pholegandros we admire the white city perched at the edge of the cliff. We are happy that we still have daylight while manoeuvring between the Rocks at the harbour entrance. The little port has space enough for us to go alongside and at a quarter to eight we moor at the pier tired and hungry like wolves. The little village around the harbour seems uninhabited, not to mention that it's obviously impossible to get anything to eat here. The only business open is a car rental office that seems to have a private meeting. After some negotiation we can rent a small car for 10.00 Euro and a friendly local agrees to bring us to the "Chora", where we are lucky to find some open restaurants. After a delicious dinner in the breezy heights we walk back by foot to the port for some kilometres. We just feel well.

## DAY 3 (TUESDAY, 14.4.2009)

*FROM KARAVOSTASI AT PHOLEGANDROS TO ASTYPALEA (88,4 NM)*

Image 04

Since the idea to sail as far as Crete has definitely been abandoned, we don't need to follow any scheduled route. We decide to show up at Santorini first. If we like it we can stay for the night. But we could also go as far as Anaphi which can be reached easily the same day. This fairly unknown island should be very laid-back. A monolith in the eastern part of the island, over 300 metres high, can be climbed and should provide a spectacular view.

After Breakfast and a morning walk through the sleeping harbour village we take off at around 9:30 and sail into the morning sun. A fresh south to south-east is blowing and, to make ourselves comfortable, we sail with wind abeam using only the genoa. Sikinos is passing in the North and before long Santorini rises above the horizon. We enter the crater through the north-western entrance and soon we hoist in sails to concentrate on the picturesque scenery of the crater wall and the white towns perched on the cliffs. Offshore the harbour we see a big cruising liner anchored and we don't feel very much like going ashore today. We stay motoring for some time within the crater while we have cold lunch. Around 2:00 pm we leave the crater and hoist sails for the southernmost tip of the

island. We'd like to have a look at Vlychada marina, maybe we could still spend the night at Santorini.

The strong Southwest continues blowing when we show up at the entrance of the marina. A nasty short sea is breaking far away from the coastline. The marina is almost empty and the inlet seems to provide lots of trouble under the current conditions. Therefore we decide to sail for the next island, although we don't have very much hope that the situation in the only harbour of Anaphy would be any better. It is also open to the South and will not provide very much shelter against southerly winds.

Image 05

In a bright, warm evening sunshine we approach Anaphi and, just as we anticipated, strong swell stands into the little harbour which lies abandoned before us. We make a round to have a closer look, but soon we can observe that there is not one single boat present. Not even a small caïque lies at the pier or at anchor in the flat bay. We don't want to be smarter than the locals: if they leave the place they certainly know why.

There is another broad open bay in the South of Anaphi mentioned as an anchorage in the pilot book. But still it is too turbulent for us so we decide to sail on to Astypalea. Soon after leaving Anaphi we encounter a marvellous sundown. Upcoming cumuli draw bizarre images of light and shadow in the sky. The rest of the trip turns out to be calm and, after the Southwest loses some of its force, it starts to drizzle a bit.

We reach Astypalea shortly after 10:00 pm and after some seesaw we decide to go along-side in the outer basin. The pilot book and we don't know that there aren't just fisher boats soaking in shallow waters behind the embankment of the inner mole. There are now up to 15 berths for sailing yachts built with all the comfort of a modern marina. We discover this the next morning. During the night we are often busy with our mooring lines and we are very uncomfortable in the heavy swell.

## DAY 4 (WEDNESDAY, 15.4.2009)

*REST AT ASTYPALEA*

Image 06

After a first double espresso we move our *Elena* to the newly built marina. A German skipper, who also has spent the night sleepless in the outer harbour basin, gives up and leaves for Kalymnos. Our ship lies quite secure now and a first balance shows that we sailed some 220 nm within the first three days. So we decide to stay here for now. Perched on the slopes around the harbour a pretty white village rises to an impressive fortress. We want to explore the deep bays of this butterfly-shaped island with a rented land vehicle and there are some minor repairs to be done: one compass light isn't working, also the position light at larboard has a loose contact. These and some other minor defects have to be fixed. – But that has time until tomorrow!

Today we climb up to the fortress and the old town centre to get an overview. The first glance wasn't deceptive: Astypalea is a pretty, heavily jagged island with one neat town and a handful of smaller villages. We discover a highly productive pastry shop and some promising restaurants which we want to test during the next two evenings. In the afternoon we rent a small car and start for a round trip. We soon realize that we would hardly need the car for 24 hours – there are just some 50 km of roads on this island. An interesting place is the isthmus between the two "wings of the butterfly", it is less than 100 metres wide and rises just a few metres above sea level. We visit some beaches and a few obligatory orthodox chapels, before spending a relaxing evening in an Astypalean tavern.

## DAY 5 (THURSDAY, 16.4.2009)

*REST AT ASTYPALEA*

Image 07

Early in the morning – fortunately there is coffee available already at the harbour's coffee shop! – we leave the town by car to take some pictures in the clear light of sunrise. After this first excursion we have a more extended breakfast before taking care of *Elena*. We fill up our freshwater tanks. Being the only vessel around and maybe because we are the only sailors since long who stay around for more than a day, we don't have to pay for the water. We do our minor repairs before practicing with the newly bought sextant. Unfortunately the astronomical tables have been left home at the desktop, therefore we can just measure the angle but we cannot construct a line of position. But on this journey it should be by far sufficient to use terrestrial methods of navigation and we still have our GPS, of course – just in case!

We spend the last evening at the island at the promenade of Livadia, the neighbouring village to Astypalea where there are some little pensions and a few restaurants, creating even some kind of tourism. The fish plate for the four of us is both tasty and filling.

## DAY 6 (FRIDAY, 17.4.2009)

*FROM ASTYPALEA TO LEVITHA (34,3 NM)*

Image 08

Because there is no heavy leg to go for today, we allow ourselves a relaxing breakfast in our regular coffee shop (yes, one gets used to it rather quickly!). Around 12:00 we cast off from Astypalea on this bright Greek Good Friday. I feel that this has not been my last visit to this likeable, little island.

The more the sun glows this afternoon, the weaker the southern breeze. The sea turns glassy but as long as there is a breath that carries us along we don't want to mess up this peaceful day with diesel noise. Far and wide there is no other vessel visible and we snooze north at two or three knots. At 3:00 pm the wind is gone and we start the motor to enter, at 4:30, Ormos Levitha.

It is my third visit to this tiny islet that is so ideally situated for short stops between Patmos, Kalymnos, Astypalea and Amorgos. The deeply carved southern bay provides a maximum of protection at any weather condition and the owner of the only farmstead that is not yet abandoned has laid out mooring buoys, most welcome to the yacht skippers. If one is spending the night at Levitha he charges a small fee, for those who leave after a short walk the mooring is free. The tavern run by the family – besides an organic farm, sheep and goat farming and taking care of the navigational light at the north-eastern tip of the island – is not yet opened to the public. It's still too early in the year.

We go for an evening walk to the highest point and watch the sun go down behind the mountain ridge of Naxos.

## DAY 7 (SATURDAY, 18.4.2009)

*FROM LEVITHA VIA KINAROS TO STAVROS AT DONOUSSA (35,5 NM)*

Image 09

During a short morning walk we find old architectonic structures made of worked stone. The island must have been fortified in the past to protect the valuable natural harbour against intruders. In the bright morning sunlight this pile of stone, that is so vast during the hot summer months, looks like a lush, flowering garden.

After a filling breakfast we say goodbye to the friendly islanders and sail away, heading west with a light morning breeze. After less than an hour the gentle breeze falls asleep completely. What follows is a day under motor. A few miles before our destination some wind arises and we can still sail for a little while.

But first we make a short stopover at Kinaros. This steep rugged rock between Levitha and Amorgos looks completely uninhabited. Just the goat herds seem to get visits of their owner from time to time. On the south side of Kinaros a narrow fjord cuts deeply into the cliffs; if necessary, it would be possible to spend the night there. We take a close look at the bay and we continue our trip to the west. The rest of the leg and the mooring at Agios Stavros, Donoussa flows smoothly. At the pier we meet the other crew from Vienna whom we already know from the harbour of Pholegandros. They tell us that they arrived at Anaphi the same evening just two hours behind us and that they dared to moor at the ferry slot. They haven't slept very much that night but the boat survived the torture unharmed.

Because it is Good Saturday in Greece there is just fish and no meat at the only open restaurant, but we don't care very much. The staff says "good night" early in the evening because of the nocturnal Easter service in church.

## DAY 8 (SUNDAY, 19.4.2009)

*FROM STAVROS AT DONOUSSA TO NAOUSSA AT PAROS (74,2 NM)*

Image 10

Just in time for sunrise, fireworks and firecrackers chase us out of the bunks. The Greek are celebrating Easter morning! We use the inconvenience to break up early, because once more the day promises a longer leg to the island of Paros. It seems that none of us wants to pay any visit to Naxos. Last year we passed this big and certainly lovely island at the eastern side, this year we'll round it in the north to arrive at Paros.

In the morning there is some light rain which doesn't bother us much. As the day goes on, weather conditions change frequently, and so does the wind. We get breezes from southerly directions, often deviated or shielded by the high mountain ranges of Naxos (we knew it: Naxos just gets into the way of our course!). Like two days ago we keep our patience and wait until the breeze has mercy with us again to drive us along for some more miles. In the northwest of Naxos, somewhat offshore, we finally find a steady wind flow from southern directions which freshens during the afternoon. This wind let us tack briskly into the evening. In the end we have sailed some 70 miles for a stretch of 30 but we have had a marvellous sailing day.

As we approach the newly built marina of Naoussa, the harbour lanterns are already lit. This would be very useful had there been mooring lines laid out. As it is, the limited space is cramped by the bow anchors of less than ten yachts. We have difficulty finding a pol-lard to fasten our mooring line.

In the evening we mingle with the Greek celebrating with their families in the many restaurants and bars of Naoussa, this touristic but still picturesque and relaxing little town at the north side of Paros.

## DAY 9 (MONDAY, 20.4.2009)

*FROM NAOUSSA AT PAROS TO ERMOUPOLI AT SYROS (25,2 NM)*

Image 11

A hazy day with low hanging clouds. We are ready for rain, but the weather stays dry. We leave rather late because we take advantage of the good infrastructure to get a hearty breakfast with opulent omelettes and some tasty mochas. After we leave, the southwest

is as erratic as yesterday. Twice within a little more than 25 miles we need the motor to keep going. But we don't let this spoil our mood and do some navigation exercises with the sextant. The measuring of elevation angles on lighthouses turn out precise enough to approximate our position as close as one cable length to the coordinates provided by GPS!

There is not much else happening this day and at around six we call at the spacious port of Syros as the biggest town of the island with the same name is also called. There is some excitement when the Ferry docks some twenty metres besides our yacht, with turbines producing a lot of whirl. But our anchor is holding like a charm and the spring lines are also doing their job. We hardly feel anything when the ferry leaves the next morning.

## DAY 10 (TUESDAY, 21.4.2009)

### *FROM ERMOUPOLI AT SYROS TO CAPE SOUNION ON MAINLAND ATTIKA (NIGHT RIDE)*

We spend the day sightseeing. A considerable number of Roman Catholics populate Ermoupoli where they have built a Capuchin monastery at one of the two steep hills overlooking the town and bay. Accordingly, there is a magnificent Greek orthodox basilica erected at the opposite summit. To show our religious autonomy, we decide to visit both temples. From the hilltops there are superb views over the town, the harbour and the surrounding Cyclades islands.

After loading water and diesel supplies in the afternoon, we start for the night drive at about 10:30 pm. Without tacking, we have some 60 miles ahead of us and we hope to arrive at cape Sounion not too late. We start off with one reef. Matthias and Heribert are in charge of the first watch, the second watch will take over at 4:00 am.

## DAY 11 (WEDNESDAY, 22.4.2009)

### *FROM ERMOUPOLI AT SYROS TO CAPE SOUNION, ATTIKA (77,7 NM)*

Image 12

Until change of shifts the breeze from northeast to east holds out. Then, flashes of lightning begin to unsettle us, partly because there has been no word of thunder storms in the weather forecast. Before 5:00 am the wind direction turns towards south and finally to southwest. Before long it gets impossible to steer the course and the lightning at the horizon approaches us directly. When it becomes clear that we will be moving straight into a storm front if we keep heading west for Attika, we turn southwest towards Loutra at Kythnos, take away the sails and open the throttle.

This decision was made just in time. We touch an offshoot of the tempest; a few lightings with thunderclaps, some ten minutes of downpour and it's all over. Just enough to make our going for the oilskin pay off.

The sunrise behind the storm front compensates for this little detour. The wind, however, turns even more to the west so that we have to tack for the rest of the leg.

At 13:05 we are anchored the first time, but soon we realize that we are too near to the shore, considering the strong swell that remains from the thunderstorms of the previous night. We change to the other bay, closer to the ruins of the temple of Poseidon rising into the sky over the cliffs of the eastern cape. After some failed trials to get the anchor set in the ground of sea weed it finally holds. Nevertheless we are not content with this new place and decide to move back to our old place but with greater distance to the shore. Still we are lying uncomfortably in this bay, open to the south. In the breaking of night we watch a colleague, who has even more trouble getting his anchor set. After eight futile trials we stop counting; anyhow, in the morning the yacht lies unharmed under the temple hill.

## DAY 12 (THURSDAY, 23.4.2009)

*FROM CAPE SOUNION, ATTIKA TO AEGINA (34,5 NM)*

Image 13

After we have learned what purpose the anchor alarm of our GPS was made for (it took a while to find a balance between the needs for sleep and security), we hoist anchor at mid-morning to our penultimate leg. A brief rain shower in the morning has little impact. It merely rinses some salt from the body of our ship. We skip a visit to the temple ruins as none of us feel like getting wet in the surfs ashore just to visit "Poseidon's playpen", as Matthias disrespectfully calls the quadrangle of columns.

Despite this blasphemy, we initially sail quite swiftly, heading northwest until the wind abandons us once again shortly after noon so we need to use the ship's motor once more. At Aegina we make two attempts before the anchor sets in the hard sandy ground. But then we are moored well and safe and we are able to devote ourselves to our last evening on a Greek island. By coincidence our yacht lies alongside the boat of Robert's current boss who just came over from Lavrion.

## DAY 13 (FRIDAY, 24.4.2009)

*FROM AEGINA TO ALIMOS MARINA IN ATHENS, KALAMAKI (30,4 NM)*

Image 14

The last day also starts with a weak breeze which calms down around midday. To experience something else than just motoring from Aegina to Athens we make a detour to see the huge freighters lying in big numbers offshore Piraeus. It seems that there are much more of them now than during our trip in 2005; maybe this is one of the signs of the global economic crisis.

We take a close look at some of the steel colossuses before we head for the centre of Athens to see if we can get a glimpse of the Acropolis. We also foster the hope that the spring sunshine has warmed up the mainland sufficiently to find some thermal wind near the coastline. The thought turns out dead right and we can conclude the last day of our trip with some fine sailing manoeuvres.

Neither the landing nor the return of the yacht caused any problems. From Petros, the base manager, we learn why *Elena* has almost 1000 hours of motoring on the clock and why she shows traces of heavy use although she is practically new: This February a party of three guys rented her for four weeks: They chased her from Athens as far as Turkey, from there as far west as Italy and finally back to Athens.

We spend a last, quiet night aboard *Elena* before we return from the Aegean to the Middle European spring the following morning.

## RÉSUMÉ:

Image 15

During the 14 days we spent in Greece we were on the move for 11 days. According to the log, during this time we covered a distance of 518.6 nautical miles, that is over 47 nm per day. For about one third of the stretch we had to use the aid of the motor, because there was not enough wind for sailing; thus the sailing distance averages almost 30 nm per day. Without tacking the total distance amounts to 431 nm. We visited two places at the mainland of Attika and a total of eight islands. Three more islands were seen at close range. We spent two nights at anchor, one night tied up at a mooring buoy. Ten nights we stayed in harbours or marinas and we sailed on during one night. There were no remarkable damages on our yacht. Except some seasickness at the start, nobody got ill and

there were no injuries. We were very satisfied by *Elena* regardless the heavy traces of usage and the missing third reef. The handling by the charter company was exemplary. The only situation of bad mood occurred at day three when we had to give up the plan to reach Crete. For the rest of the time we had a lot of fun together.