

1st Report: Mindelo on São Vicente, Cabo Verde

16°53.2N 24°59.5W

Cayenne, French Guiana

04°51.1N 52°16.9W

Route Overview



Data

Start in Mindelo: January 18, 2013 around 6 PM local time

Course over Ground: 1857 nm

Water Track: 1746 nm

Difference (due to the Equatorial Current, average 0.35 kn.): 111 nm

Great Circle Track: 1750 sm

Duration: 13 days and 1 hour

Engine running: 34 hours (due to little wind or lack of warm water)

Arrival in Degrad des Cannes, Cayenne: January 31, 2013 at 4:20 PM local time

After a two-months visit in Switzerland, where we enjoyed many family gatherings and meetings with friends and acquaintances, we returned to Cabo Verde on **January 7**. We were supposed to reach Mindelo on the same day with intermediate stops on Boa Vista and Sal. However, a sandstorm over Boa Vista caused the pilots to head for Sal directly, and, owing to bad weather there as well, our flight to Mindelo was cancelled.

The airline organized an overnight stay in an apartment hotel on the beach, pretty far away from everything.



We had some lunch in the small bar and took a stroll on the beach at low tide.

At a closer approach we wonder at the strangest of rock formations.



On a sandy patch we come across this bright yellow flower that pushes its way into the light right through the sunbaked ground. We have seen the same one in the Algarve, but I believe I never found out its name.



What an incredible effort by such a delicate blossom!

We turn in early. The taxi will pick us up at 5 AM for our flight to Mindelo at 6:20 AM.

Tuesday, January 8. We are a bit anxious when the driver only shows up after 5 AM. We have so much luggage and it takes a moment to load everything into the small trunk. There are 30 kg parasailor, 30 kg Alex's bag, 25 kg my bag including a small trolley plus our hand luggage. We will have to pay overweight here again and worry about the time at our disposal. Nothing is quick on the islands! But we are lucky, procedures go smoothly and we are only charged for 30 kg. Nice gesture!

In Mindelo we see old friends, hoist our luggage on deck and begin immediately with scouring: *Silmaril* is still or again covered in Sahara sand.

The coming days are filled with preparations of all sorts, with seeing friends and going out for dinner, writing lists of where we keep what and rearranging the storeroom and the aft cabin to make space for the new crew. A friend from Effingen will join us for the crossing. And by the middle of the week we understand that his wife Renate will also come on board. She was with us from la Gomera to Dakar and we are very happy to have them both. What a great outlook to have a balanced crew, two and two both ways, couples for routine communication (or misunderstandings!) and female and male for the discussion of sex related opinions and attitudes. I'm convinced that both of them, Renate and Mike, will be great *Silmaril* crew,

Monday, January 14. They have arrived and preparations are in full swing. Our French neighbors will sail on Wednesday. They have mounted nets for fruit and vegetables beneath the bimini. We will do the same, but also install the net in the cabin as we had for the crossing to Dakar. It served us well and Alex and I will know to avoid knocking our heads on the way to our bed.



Before Chantal and Christophe start on their way to Brazil, she offers to uproot one of her Basil plants. I still have some Swiss potting soil and accept with pleasure. My new little garden is soon doing well and the few wilting leaves recover fast.

I present Chantal with a little jar of ginger in sherry for her generosity.

Wednesday, January 16.
Our friendly neighbors are ready, they wave goodbye and are on their way.



We are planning to leave on Friday.

Thursday and Friday, January 17 and 18. Renate and I go shopping, carry and stow away and write lists. Alex and Mike take care of the technical concerns for the crossing. And then it is time to leave for us as well. We cast off and head for the diesel pontoon. Another sailboat is already moored there. I keep *Silmaril* close enough to observe

what is going on. We inquire: no diesel. What now? A new supply is supposed to arrive in two hours. We make fast on the pontoon where our friends, Claudia and Bernhard from Switzerland and Jacqueline and Roel from Holland, are waiting to say goodbye. Bernhard suggests to wander to the nearby gas station, where the fuel is cleaner in any case than at the pontoon and haul the four jerry cans between the three, himself, Alex and Mike, equipped with the trolley. The tank is full, so that is all we really need. No sooner said than done. They go and Renate makes tea for us women. Finally we are really ready. The jerry cans are stowed away. It is 5:45 PM, we cast off, everyone is waving, Alex blows the foghorn and we start getting *Silmaril* clear for sailing.

After a few minutes we have not yet left the harbor bay and are about to set sails, the autopilot fails to react. Turning it off and on again, other little tests, nothing helps. We have to turn back.

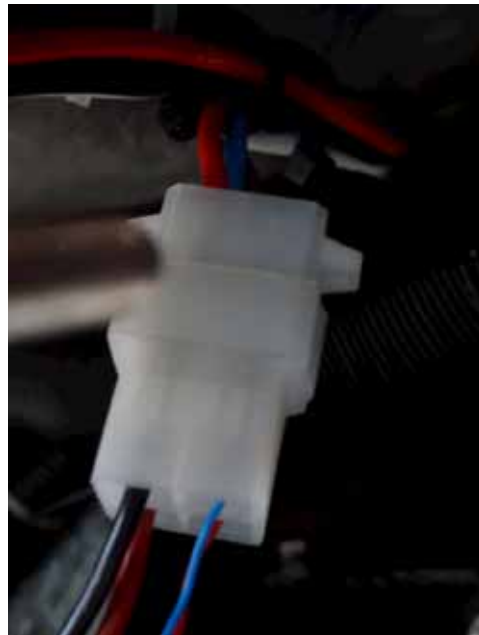
We call the harbormaster Tuga by radio and ask permission to make fast on the first pontoon. He knows a specialist for autopilots. But Alex wants to check himself. He had taken the whole thing apart to make sure that all the parts were in good shape. And sure enough, Alex detects the problem. The plug is connected the wrong way and Alex had connected it the way it should be and so caused the malfunction. Connected the wrong way the autopilot works perfectly!

This is not the first strange thing by the grace of Schwern Yachten that Alex found and repaired.

Tuga calls us on the radio to say goodbye. He has been very kind and helpful throughout our stay in Mindelo.

We unfurl the genoa and let the 30 kt wind and the steep waves in the acceleration zone between the islands of São Vicente and Santo Antão carry us and rock us into the dusk out at sea.

We set all our watches, cameras and computers to UTC time.



Alex has prepared a watch plan. We take turns every three hours, Alex, Mike, Ursula, Renate. During the night one is at the helm, the other one sleeping on deck. The cockpit floor turns out to be the very best place to rest or sleep. The noise and the pitching and rolling of the boat prevent peaceful rest inside the boat. The afternoon shift lasts four hours, so the shifts begin one hour later every turn. All of us will see a slightly different sky at night and spend different times on shift during the day. The waxing moon lights the sky and even with cloudy skies there is enough light to see the waves and the horizon. Too bad it sets around 3 AM! Humidity and cold during night watches call for the Dehler jackets and the down comforter for the one asleep.

Saturday, January 19. Renate and I witness our first sunrise. We don't see the sun, but the entire band of clouds hovering over the horizon is on fire.

We have both slept and go on shift at 7 AM.

The noise in the boat is unbearable.

Towels serve to quiet the rattling dishes, bottles and other moving glass objects in the cupboards, we use shoes and rags to steady cans and bottles in the bilge. Clanking and rattling still wrecks our nerves! *Silmaril* rolls from one side to the other, every time with the railing fixtures in the water.

Renate is seasick. Cooking is very difficult. Nevertheless we prepare a vegetable dish for dinner.

The wind dies down in the night. For a brief time Alex turns on the engine to assist the genoa.



Sunday, January 20. Around 8 AM, Mike is still at the helm, a wave washes over the deck, nearly drowns him, throws a flying fish into his face, rips off the railing bag with Alex's brand new e-book and carries away one of the new cockpit cushions! Through the small hatch in the cockpit wall it drenches the bed in the aft cabin and the comforter on deck is also wet. We spread everything in the boat to dry as best we can. I serve Renate a large mug of broth. She doesn't want to eat anything yet.

Later in the afternoon a group of whales (pilot whales?), six or seven, float right next to the boat, maybe 10 m away. We slowly pass them. They blow from time to time and send a small fountain into the air. They are probably asleep. Alex was asleep when we shouted. So, he arrives too late with the camera, no pictures unfortunately. Flying fish jump out of the water, storm swallows catch their food, plankton and refuse (according to my bird book!) close to the surface. They are far too swift to allow for good pictures.

Renate feels rotten. We split her watch among us.

We receive a number of SMSs over the Iridium phone. We are touched by the concern our family and friends show by contacting us.

Monday, January 21. We sleep late, all of us. Breakfast is served only midmorning. Renate feels better and prepares a delicious fruit salad to the cereal. Alex presents us with his theory of water-conserving dish washing: rinsing with seawater from the foot pump in the left-hand basin and rinsing with warm water if available in the right hand one and drying. If no one dries right away, the dishes may be stacked and secured in the basin. The method has proved very useful and efficient indeed.

Around noon with moderate wind we hoist the parasailor for the first time. Stefan Winter in Las Palmas, the man who sold us the new sail had offered to give us an introductory course and explain the handling and trimming, when he would be in Mindelo. He never showed up and never got in touch with us. We had great difficulty to reach him at all, although he had promised to have his satellite phone on at certain hours.

So, since we have the sail we will try ourselves to get it up and flying.

The maneuver goes surprisingly well. Alex and Mike do the work at the bow, Renate and I follow the hollered commands as fast and as well as possible. The somewhat aggressive tension is later resolved by a detailed discussion of the obvious difficulties in communication. We are a really good crew. *Silmaril* runs far smoother and faster than under genoa.

Alex slept very little lately.



Renate watches the newly hoisted monster for a while and then prepares a tomato salad for lunch. She feels fine again. After the meal we send the skipper to bed.



We have no experience with the new sail and take it in for the night. This maneuver is not so successful. Alex shouts to let go, I take the one line from the winch in a hurry without securing it and promptly burn my hand. Only one spot is really bad thank goodness, and with ointment and a band-aid I hardly feel any pain.

We decide to discuss further maneuvers in detail before we begin. Shouting is no good, although the noise of wind and waves in the rig and the rushing water call for quite some volume. Renate and Mike need to know beforehand, what they will be asked to do. They are learning and we should not expect them to anticipate our commands.

Mike heats up the leftovers and adds a few goodies before I go on watch at 10 PM. The meal is served in the cockpit, each holding the bowl in one hand, the spoon in the other. The feet are in charge of the stability of the two thermos cups with a broad bottom. Nothing is secure without steady attention. Our eating utensils will be the same throughout the trip.

We are sailing toward the sunset and hope for an agreeable night. Watches are peaceful.



Tuesday, January 22. At 8 AM noise over my head wakes me up. Alex and Mike are preparing the lines to hoist the parasailor. The method Claudia had described to Alex does not work well and Stefan cannot be reached. The men rearrange the sheets and suddenly they both have the loose line of the reefing sleeve around their necks. Renate and I yell, scold and laugh all at once! In the end all goes well. The maneuver is not yet routine procedure, but slowly everyone knows what needs to be done and our "rocking horse" settles down to a more even trot.

The yoghurt jar is almost empty. I prepare a new batch. All of us like to eat it with our cereal. And again I make an effort to reduce the noise from the cabinets with more towels and an entire roll of paper towels. The material in the storeroom also needs rearrangement and wedging to keep it from banging against the wall of the aft cabin.

The parasailor comes down for the night. This time they tuck it through the hatch in the fore cabin on our bed. It functions very well. Later on it rains a little and Alex is more than happy to have a dry sail!

During my watch from 11 PM to 2 AM the sky is clear with a bright moon and many stars at first. Then clouds form at a disquieting speed. The darkest ones travel on slightly different route and we get little rain. Wind and squalls remain moderate. After the watch, sleeping is still difficult. The noise and the jerky movements of *Silmaril* are a disturbing lullaby.

Wednesday, January 23.

Unfortunately there is too much wind and the waves are too chaotic, the parasailor stays in his bag. We boom out the genoa. Behind us towering waves lifting and shoving *Silmaril* like a cork.



Despite jerky rocking we bake bread. After the cereal only breakfasts, we will love

our customary bread with butter and jam. Water, water, nothing but water. We are sailing on a circular immensely large pond with a bell-jar sky above us. The water is a deep blue. The wave ridges shine turquoise; some of them sport small collars of sea foam. Beneath a hole in the clouds the water glitters in black and silver.



(Renate's picture)

There is "Rösti" with bacon cubes, fried eggs sunny side up and white radish salad from Renate's kitchen tonight. She suffered a little accident while turning the potatoes onto the lid. No wonder at the rate the boat is rocking. But there was still enough to eat for everyone.

Alex serves a Strela beer to celebrate the first six days at large on the great water.

Thursday, January 24. My watch begins at midnight. Clear sky, the moon is so bright that the stars twinkle only faintly. A storm swallow flits through the rig. Renate takes her turn at 3 AM. Together we admire the Southern Cross just above the horizon. I lay down in the cockpit to sleep. *Silmaril* heels so much that I roll off the mattress and wake up with a scream. Renate is a little wet. Apart from that everything is well. We make good headway and we just have to put up with the movements.

Alex comes on deck at 6 AM. Renate sits a short while when a flying fish jumps right at her back. She lets out a yell and changes over to the other side of the cockpit. Mike's feet are large and the perspective is misleading. We estimate almost 30 cm! The fish is wonderfully blue and looks at us with large eyes. Right after the picture with Renate's camera we fling it back to its element.



We have cereal and bread for breakfast. Utensils are always the same: four bowls, two thermos mugs with a wide rubber bottom sitting on a anti-slide mat, four spoons, two knives to spread the butter, one knife to cut the bread on a separate board, the container from the refrigerator with all the dairy products and the basket with the cereal, the dried fruit and the nuts.

The feet are usually engaged in securing something in its place.

(Renate's picture)



We also served the "Rösti" in the bowls and ate it with the spoons.

Washing the dishes is a special exercise: hold on, rinse, wash, and pump with one foot. Exhausting business!

The movements of the boat are by no means regular. Once ever so often you get thrown about. Someone must have flown against the door of the head. The door handle is a bit curved and punched a hole through the layers of wood and filler! In the evening, we discuss our track. A friend of ours, Bänz, is our weatherman. He has been transmitting weather conditions and routing suggestions ever night faithfully with loving care and has boosted our morale, except when he once mentioned his record of 182 nm in 24 hours on his own crossing. We only managed 161 nm!

We are headed too far west. We should jibe.

It is getting late for dinner and the maneuver, the men have to work in the dark at the bow. The tension increases, communication is not up to scratch, the maneuver is hectic, not really under control. I have difficulties at night with orientation and I do not steer well. Finally the genoa is hoisted and trimmed. Renate and I wash the dishes, Alex and Mike are figuring out the most favorable new course. The waves are pretty high and chaotic. Suddenly *Silmaril* heels so much that Renate and I sit on the floor with pots and pans flying about our ears. Neither of us is injured, but we both hurt in a few more places and do not appreciate the unannounced maneuver. The door to the head has two more dents! We decide that washing dishes and searching for a new course will never be done again at the same time.

During my watch from 1 AM to 4 AM all goes pretty well. The boat dances, but no more waves in the cockpit, just a few splashes over the spray hood.

Friday, January 25. There is less wind today. The boys prepare everything for the parasailor. Alex finally reaches Stefan on the phone. The wind is less of a problem, he says, but he would not hoist it in tall or chaotic waves. We would have to steer by hand to avoid too drastic heeling. And of course, that's just what we have, rather tall and very chaotic waves. We unfurl the genoa, set the boom and accept our fate. During the maneuver the motor was running and we have hot water for the dishes and rinsing after the saltwater shower with the bailer. The boys have emptied 50 l from the jerry cans into the tank, so there is plenty of water.

Mike invents a saltwater washing machine with the empty net we stored the fruit in. It does an acceptable job. The net is just a bit coarse-meshed; sleeves and other small parts of the garments are working their way out. Before they



are washed out completely, Mike recovers the net and soon the laundry is flapping in the wind.



Alex uses the bailer with great relish. He helps me with the shower, and my shampoo goes overboard and the bailer comes uncomfortably close to my ear. Between two at one job, the reactions are never coordinated enough to react simultaneously to *Silmaril's* hopping!



Our "bonsai" is doing extremely well. We have changed its name, since our boys refuse to waste precious grey cells to store the herb's real name, "basilicum".

It takes pride of place under the spray hood, sheltered from unhealthy wind and with a great view, at night it is carried to its night quarters on the vegetable net in the cabin.

A very special sea swallow keeps circling the boat. We think it is a *Sterna dougallii*. It is white, has a black cap, dark stripes on the wings and long tips of its tail.

The night is calm, no squalls on the radar. Storm swallows whoosh through the rig once in a while.



Saturday, January 26. At 9 AM I cook porridge for everybody with a few slivers of ginger in sherry I always have on board. Other ingredients, like dried cranberries, cream or sugar are added individually. As always there are two mugs of black tea between the four of us.

Tomorrow is Sunday, so we bake a "Zopf" with the ready mix Renate and Mike have brought. It looks fine from the top; the bottom has a thick black crust. I need to



experiment more often with my stove. The heat from only below calls for adjustment of time and temperature.

The yoghurt jar is almost empty. And for the Sunday breakfast we have to have it. The making is simple and only takes a few minutes. Mix well 1 l milk, 4 TS milk powder and about 5 TS left-over yoghurt, heat it to about 40° C, put it in a glass jar with a lid, keep it warm for a few hours and put it in the fridge. My jar fits into a Styrofoam container that I place in a basket on the floor.

Nobody is in the mood to cook dinner tonight. We are tired and eat a few crackers with olives and some cheese.

Soon the sun descends into the clouds over the horizon.



Before it gets dark, pressure from us women make the boys take in the genoa boom.
The night is peaceful.



Monday, January 28. I wake up two hours after the beginning of my watch. Renate has taken my turn. I'm really upset. Moreover, I get rained on for a good part of the three hours. No comfort there. In the morning Renate and I discuss the problem. She meant well, I know, but no one should change the watch plan without a very good reason. We all agree and there are no ill feelings. We are a very good crew, indeed.



The parasailor flies beautifully and we enjoy the smooth ride.
Mike is preparing an appetizer with leftovers and sardines.



The main course is pumpkin soup with smoked sausages from Effingen.
At night we change to the genoa again. There is a little rain here and there.

Tuesday, January 29. We eat the rest of the "Zopf". The radar shows great blobs of violet, squalls all around us and pretty strong wind. We still get ready to hoist the parasailor. It's more difficult today, but with patience we achieve an acceptable maneuver. However, the wind is steadily increasing and at 20 kt we take it in, again through the hatch of the forward cabin. It lands on my knitting with the delicate bamboo needles! Thank goodness there is no damage done by the heavy collar of the sleeve.

Alex discovers that the piece of line at the gennaker (German for an asymmetrical spinnaker) boom, which is attached to one sheet of the parasailor, is too long. It stretched under the strain.

He takes everything apart, replaces the line with a piece of line of dynema, very good material, and reassembles the boom.

A fish took off with the expensive large rubber squid on the line Alex is usually dragging. Not the first one!

In the afternoon we see a group of whales (pilot whales?), a little later dozens of dolphins surround the boat. We are fascinated with these animals time and again, how they swim and jump at great speed, often two in perfect union. We watch them as long as they are around us.

We only have spaghetti for dinner. But cooking them and the sauce takes more than just two hands. Together we manage passably, serve anchovies sauce and pesto with them. A cucumber salad rounds off the meal nicely.

An e-mail from Bänz makes me very happy: he suggests NOT to sail into the river Mahuri by night. Alex has been at me with loads of arguments that it would not be a problem! Well, there is hope for me yet.

The night is tiring. Suddenly the autopilot is not working, chaos on board for a few seconds. I have difficulties with orientation and I steer badly. Alex thinks that the battery has too low tension. We start the engine and with patience and concentration we get back to our course. The autopilot resumes work as reliably as ever. We do not



really know what happened.

There is a lot of rain, on and off for hours.

Two birds settle on the reel of the line for the stern anchor and on the support



for the generator. Mike shoots great pictures. The birds are so confident that Alex can almost grab one of them.

Around midnight Alex is on duty. He wants to set the main sail to have a little more speed in the light breeze. The maneuver proves difficult. With almost no speed *Silmaril* does not respond to the rudder. Until I understand the reason for her reluctance to obey, all four of us are pretty tense. After final success, we discuss the exercise in detail and sooth each other in good humor.

Wednesday, January 30. Around 6 AM Renate and I want to get the main down. There is too much wind and we do not feel comfortable with the bull tackle under such stress. I have to go to the mast to reach up with the grapple in order to secure the halyard. Week-kneed I succeed, but back at the helm I have problems concentrating and getting back on course. Alex wakes up and saves us! Embarrassing, embarrassing!

We have a late breakfast this morning. We are tired. But the peaceful meal restores our energy. With new élan I start baking another bread. This time I want to use the spelt flour. The dough is pretty liquid, but rises well. I cannot find the loaf pan, it must be somewhere in the storeroom to keep it from sliding around in the oven and making noise. So I use the Pyrex glass bowl. The bread rises so much that it touches the grill. No problem, it looks good, that's the most important thing. Unfortunately it just won't come out of the bowl. Renate is operating on it with a knife and the force of her fingers. I had forgotten to grease the bowl or line it with baking paper, which I never do with the loaf pan. Life is not easy on the wide water.

The engine is running incessantly. Alex would like to arrive tomorrow. We have couscous for dinner with a creation of vegetables and a Portuguese sausage. Renate and I do the cooking according to the strict instructions from Mike. It tastes very good.

Tonight a whole flock of birds ride with us. They sit on the boom, on the radar, on the railing and the solar panel. I pass the time to take pictures.



A few turn out quite well.

The birds clean themselves, fight for balance in the wind, flutter for a second and settle down again. Once in a while they utter a mixture between the sound of a dove and a crow. And suddenly, before sunrise they are gone, all of them.

Where are they going? Are they hunting, digesting, or just soaring above?

We have no idea who they are and how they live.

My bird book only lists and describes European birds. I will definitely buy a book on indigenous birds.

Thursday, January 31. There is spelt bread for breakfast. Renate again tries hard to get shapely pieces with a knife and her fingers. They taste just fine, but their form is far less than perfect.

We hoist the parasailor, but the wind dies down and we continue under genoa with the help of the motor.

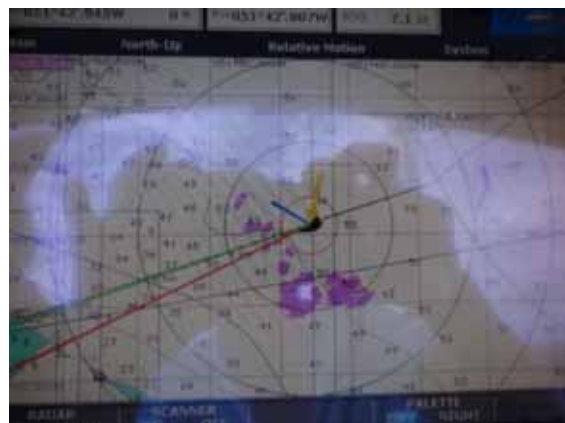
Alex catches a red bonito. Well, adequate hooks usually correspond with the size of the fish.

Renate takes a picture of the fishermen at work and soon they have it in the net.



A few minutes and it is ready for the refrigerator.

It's time to hoist the French courtesy flag. Alex gets ready, we follow his every movement and accompany with the appropriate song and "allez les Bleux" until we cry laughing.



Squalls show on the radar as violet blotches. They virtually besiege us.

Once again the sails are reduced according to the weather. Full concentration on the foredeck.



All clear? All clear!

All the squalls pass us. They look impressive, but are not at all threatening.



We all take a last shower in our birthday suit. The skipper is first, then the mate (Renate's picture!!)



The closer we get to the coast and the islands at the mouth of the river, the shallower the water. Its color is changing gradually. First it is gleaming almost linden green, a great contrast to the dark grey sky. Then it gradually turns into beige and shades of brown. The Mahuri River carries a great deal of erosion material.



The navigable water in the river is well marked.

We keep to the middle as best we can, where a depth of 4 m at low tide is supposed to be guaranteed. A dredger is at work constantly.

It slowly runs up and down the edges of the waterway and keeps it from silting. It soon starts raining so hard that we can hardly see the next buoy. Mike serves a snack and all four of us stand in the cockpit as far away from the rain as possible. Not far actually! After an hour or so we reach inhabited areas and far away we see the masts of the sailboats in the marina Degrad des Cannes near Cayenne.

We go close, circling in front of the outer pontoon looking for a space. No chance. A couple shows up waving and pointing that we should make fast at the service boat. They help and Annette and Terry from the large catamaran *Kaisosi* greet us. She is German, Terry and the cat are South African. They are our neighbors on the other side of the pontoon at the place of the other now absent service boat. We accept their help gratefully. After 13 days on the water stable mooring is more than welcome, be it pontoon or another boat.



The tidal currents in the river are strong and there is a lot of wind very often. We hang all the fenders we have between the two boats and check many times whether they are well placed.



A last critical assessment, and then the almost unbelievable fact sinks in that we have really arrived in South America.



It takes quite a while until we congratulate each other, moved, relieved and grateful.

It is rather late when we think about food. Mike had marinated the fish. With boiled potatoes and lots of lemon it makes a scrumptious meal. To celebrate the occasion we drink the bottle of Ovni wine Claudia and Bernhard had given us as a parting present. Tired and not quite arrived yet we fall asleep rocked by the wind and the waves of the current.

Friday, February 1. Renate and Mike have organized a ride into town. They leave early to rent a car to explore the vicinity of Cayenne with us before they take a plane back to Switzerland tomorrow evening.

We take route N 2 south and visit the Hmong village of Cacao. The Laotian inhabitants were brought here thirty years ago (on a voluntary basis?) and cultivate the land. They clear it by burning the bush first and grow vegetables and fruit. Their crops yield a fair part of the total demand of the country.

Their two-story houses are built on pillars with the space mostly left open, not like this house. A broad roof reaching over the wide veranda that runs around the entire building covers the second floor.

Their catholic church also shows signs of foreign architecture. We could not find out details of these peoples' history. We received quite contradictory answers to our questions.



The village looks abandoned today. On weekdays the children go to school and the parents work in the fields. The weekends are supposed to be busy. One can eat delicious soup for lunch and find other local specialties.



Here we also meet the French potter of Cacao at work. He digs his own clay and produces a number of useful ware. Renate buys a small dish; I only get a tiny bell for *Silmaril*. It is difficult to find more room for breakable stuff on the boat.



On our way we take many pictures of the vegetation unknown to us. The road runs through dense forest. From a lookout we get an idea of the gigantic green cover of the island.



Wonderful bright colors spot the green maze.



Renate and I urge Mike at the wheel to stop a number of times to take pictures. We want to see the Fourgassier waterfall. On a small road we ask a man at the gate to La Domaine de Lulu. He is the owner and sole inhabitant of the place. He invites us into his garden. He originates from Martinique and has come here to build a guesthouse and a fruit garden away from everything.



His two dogs are fierce guards. But they obey him very well and we can come through the gate unhindered. Lulu shows us his house and explains his production of various liquors. He fascinates us and we buy a collection of the delicious sweet stuff he had us taste. He also picked green coconuts for us and gave us their clear liquid to drink. As we get ready to go, he hands us two ripe coconuts and a plastic bag full of mangoes. What generosity! The picture he takes of us under his great mango trees is also a goodbye present.



Back in Cayenne we eat dinner in a French restaurant, where the chef advises us on food and wine. We savor food and drink and the bill turns out accordingly. In the marina, Annette is already a bit worried about our late return. Did we get lost? Her concern touches us deeply after so much solitary water.

Saturday, February 2.

Last day with Renate and Mike. They will fly back to Switzerland in the evening. We eat a few of Lulu's mangoes for breakfast. What a treat! We then drive to town to see the market and the old port. The choice of fruit, vegetables and spices is overwhelming. Many kinds we see for the first time. We buy what we know, bananas and tangerines.



Renate and Mike purchase a collection of different kinds of pepper.



The old harbor is a great disappointment. Not one boat is moored. It is no longer used at all. At low tide the small bay looks like a garbage disposal site. We wander back toward the market. This is Chinatown of Cayenne. We are hungry and the choice is limited. In a small place (Chinese or Vietnamese?) we get good service and lots of food.

We still have time and Alex would like to go by the Orange Center to get help with the Internet stick.

Then it is time to drive to the airport. It's hard to say goodbye. Alex and I fight bravely to keep the tears back and cry just a little on our way back to the car. We had a great time with Renate and Mike and our hearts have not quite understood that it is now over. We talk about our fervent hope that we will sail again together on our way back to *Silmaril*.

More about our experiences in Cayenne and Kourou together with Annette and Terry and our voyage to Trinidad in the second report of the year.