

NORSEMAN notes - The first voyages

Monday, June 17, 2024

Today is a big day for the "NORSEMAN" and its crew. The first trip to the new assignment is on the agenda. In the morning we made an appointment at the filling station to fill up the ship with fuel for the first time. The crew skilfully docks at the pier and a little later the two tanks are filled with 515 liters of diesel fuel.
(total capacity 1,200 liters).



I am delighted and not without a little pride to pay for this first tank of fuel with a symbolic gold franc from the donation treasure chest. The crew is astonished and grateful.

The crew then cast off and the "NORSEMAN" sets sail for the first destination in the north of the island. On board, in addition to the crew and female support, are 8 young students (5 female and 3 male) from various Italian provinces.

The last few weeks have been hectic. The date for the first trip was fixed. My knowledge of details on the ship was in constant demand. There were too many things to assign to their purpose. Slowly, however, the interior of the ship began to feel comfortable. The sails had also been expertly hoisted in the meantime.

The cruise program is divided into 2 groups. On the one hand, the "Legambiente" friends, whose main subject is the protection of the sea and nature, and on the other hand the "Diversamente Marinai" friends, who will offer disabled people a vacation on the ship.

As far as life on board is concerned, the volunteers are challenged. There is no permanent ship's cook, as it is part of the program that the students do their own shopping and cook for each other. The first menu last night, consisting of rice with chicken and vegetables, has already been rated 4 stars. A good omen!

We captured the ceremony surrounding the first exit in pictures and video.

I will attach photos, or try to do so with links to enable access, si vedrà?



The first crew of the "Legambiente"

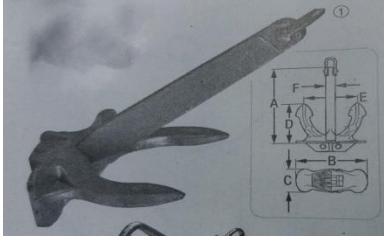
Wednesday, June 19, 2024

I receive a message from on board with a picture that a shroud tensioner is broken. This is almost unbelievable, but according to the photo sent, it is a fact. These long turnbuckles are used to brace (hold) the two masts in a vertical position so that they are always held in the correct position. Be that as it may, it is right to replace all 4 tensioners of the mizzen mast (the smaller, rear mast) at the same time for safety reasons.

The skipper goes on to report that the anchor at Procchio was unable to withstand the night-time gusts of wind of up to 30 knots and that the ship had drifted off several times and had to be re-anchored each time.

The fact is that I knew all the anchorages very well with the "NORSEMAN" and had always anchored on rocky ground wherever possible. That's what the dropped anchor was for.

With the ship's new task, however, it will primarily operate in shallow water and therefore anchor on sandy ground and seagrass beds. The battered stock or admiralty anchor is not really suitable for this type of anchorage.



For these cases, I always had 2 additional anchors lashed on board as a reserve so that I could change anchors depending on the situation. And especially for sandy bottoms, I had a 60 kg so-called HALL anchor to choose from.

The fact is that both reserve anchors, like so many other ship accessories of the time, have inexplicably disappeared for whatever reason.

Also missing are the 2 heavy double-roller ship's block pulleys, which have to be attached to port and starboard to brace the main mast in strong winds. I simply cannot understand some of the things I have found, but unfortunately that is the way it is.

Luca tells me that he has found a suitable used sand anchor on the Internet. A good alternative for a third of the price of a new anchor. All that remains now is to bring it from northern Italy to Elba - si vedra?

The "NORSEMAN" cruise schedule is such that the ship arrives in a port on Elba (usually Portoferraio) on Friday evening and is ready to set sail again on Saturday evening with a new group of students. Each day is a busy day for the crew, as they have to "clean the ship", clean, bunker and stock up on food.

Thursday, June 27, 2024

I ask Luca how I can get the report on the first weeks of the cruise from the perspective of the volunteers? The "**Diversamente Marinai**" group has a **Facebook page** where text and photos are uploaded every 2 - 3 days and all the events are described.

Until then, I had strictly refused to join this virtual medium.

I was extremely reluctant to log in for the first time, but had to open an "account" to do so. So now I'm also a member of this billion-strong community, if I want to chum up with more contacts?

I quickly found the Facebook page mentioned above and immediately found the information I was looking for.

I quote: *"A week ago, each of these enthusiastic volunteers traveled to the ship alone, with only their backpacks, not knowing exactly what would happen...."*

The "Norseman" quickly transformed the individuals into a united crew.

The program included:

1. Clean the two beaches of Viticcio and Crocette of garbage and catalog it.
 2. A nature walk across the Biodola peninsula.
 3. Search the Fetovaia beach for traces of sea turtles and raise awareness among tourists.
 4. Further training in seamanship at
- On board, lots of swimming fun and enjoyment.



Friday, June 28, 2024

I receive a message from on board that the gearbox suddenly stops shifting (forward/reverse) when entering the port of Marciana Marina. The hydraulic reversing gear was the first major conversion I had carried out on the NORSEMAN. The old 2-disc clutch/gearbox, which was purely mechanical, had become unreliable.

Thanks to WhatsApp, I sent Francesco, the skipper, all the possible checks he should carry out first to determine the defect, but nothing helped.

At first I hadn't even considered that the defect might not be damage to the gearbox, but only to the clutch disk. Years ago, I had this specially manufactured for this engine/gearbox combination by a German company specializing in marine drives, and all previous problems had been solved.

If the gearbox is not left in neutral for a few seconds during the forward/reverse shifting process, this clutch disk is subjected to excessive stress every time. I had the foresight to order two of these clutch disks at the same time and kept one in reserve in the rearmost storage space in the stern of the boat.

A short time later, I was actually informed that this valuable and expensive spare part had been found, after all.

The first thing to do now is to check whether this engine/gearbox connection is actually the cause of the problem. Years ago, I drilled a small "peephole" in the transmission bell housing to check this connection with an endoscope or a mini rod light. Now I'm waiting for the answer?

Tuesday, July 02, 2024



At 11:59, I receive a message from Luca with a photo of the damaged clutch disk. Also a picture with the new transmission already installed. The problem seems to be solved - thank God! We still have to flange the gearbox back on and fit the short drive shaft piece. A tough job, but the "NORSEMAN" should actually be ready to set sail again tomorrow? I'm looking forward to hearing about this.

The longer the more I get respect for how well the "Diversamente Marinai" and have so far been able to solve all problems in a short time with the appropriate specialists. These are not amateurs, but truly experienced sailors and skilled craftsmen, which makes me all the happier.

IF THAT'S NOT GOOD NEWS?

18:22 WhatsApp voice message from Luca:

"Ciao Walter, the intermediate shaft is also installed, the gearbox is working and the ship will be ready to set sail again tomorrow!"

E LA NAVE VA!

