

Remember that time it snowed in the Med?

Jubilee Sailing Trust Voyage TNS 365

Malta – Malta



Rachael McMillan

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Thursday 7th February, the journey began. After waiting patiently for two weeks now was the time to head to the airport and nerves were kicking in. I'd rarely flown before never mind by myself therefore it's safe to say I was nervous. I arrived at the airport parents in tow and went to check in and get rid of my baggage, we then moved up to departures where I flapped for the next half hour considering everything that could have gone wrong. However, oddly enough nothing went wrong and before I knew it I was boarding the plane and sitting next to a little bald man who laughed at me for most of the journey (apparently I looked nervous). A short time later I arrived in Gatwick and now is where the fun began. I got lost. I couldn't find my hotel and after walking for what seemed like a mile a bus came along and the kind bus driver drove me round to where I started and, much to his amusement showed me my hotel. It took me longer to walk to the bus stop then to the actual hotel! Only me!

Up bright and early the next day (well, really it should be night as it was 4am!) I got myself sorted and made my way to the airport yet again. Got myself checked in, got to security and surprise surprise found myself getting frisked, they even took my shoes revealing my holy socks! I made my way to the departure gate and quickly spotted John, the man I'd contacted through the JST forum (his JST jacket was a good clue) but was too nervous/half asleep to talk to him. Once aboard the plane he approached me and informed me I didn't look as scared as he thought I would, result! After what seemed like hours on the plane we arrived in sunny Malta and met up with Kevin and Lorna from Dublin who we would taxi share with and headed off for the marine in search of Tenacious.



Due to being early, we left our bags and set off to explore the beautiful country. After some great exploring and seeing some beautiful sights we had some lunch then headed to the maritime museum before making our way back to the ship for joining. Upon arrival we were met by our watch leaders. My watch leader, Les soon informed me there was another Rachel on my watch and as he showed me to my bunk it became clear we would have an interesting experience in Aft Starboard. Whoever



assigned the bunks seemed to think it'd be funny to have us together and so I was on the bottom bunk (bunk 10) and Rachel was on the top bunk (bunk 12). It was scary how similar we both were and we instantly became friends. After getting slightly settled we then gathered again in the mess to meet the other voyage crew members and be introduced to the permanent crew. After dinner some people went ashore however others (myself included) were left with a harbour watch. The first night here and on harbour watch 12-2am, lucky me!

7.30am wake up call and more 'getting to know you' conversations at breakfast. We then split into our watches and had morning meeting where our watch leaders told us what the plan for the day was. We were to set sail at 2pm. Our destination: Syracuse, Sicily. But before that there was plenty to do, we had some sail setting to learn and then we had the chance to climb aloft! Scary! I've climbed the mast before however every time I do it its just as scary as the last but hey ho, you're only here once so lets layer up and do it! I climbed the mast, not as many screeches this time but I made it, once at the top the view was phenomenal!



After returning on deck it was Smoko before being called to mooring stations as it was time to set sail. Captain John had the very skilled task of manoeuvring this magnificent ship (which was parallel parked between two super yachts) out of the berth between two buoys with not a huge space in between. I'm beginning to think nothing fazes Captain John as before we knew it we were out and headed towards the open



sea. Oh no, the open sea! The open sea is no where near as sheltered as the berth and we soon realised this as the wind got up and the ship began to roll! However we had wind! And we all know what wind means? Real sailing! Sails were set and before we knew it engines were off and we were actually sailing, despite the corkscrew experience and the fact that some of the crew members had started to turn slightly green, we were sailing and it was brilliant! Early bed for most in bid to sleep off the queasy feeling and to prepare Aft Starboard for our 4-8am watch.

Awoken at 3.45am with a torch shined in my face was not the best way to start a watch. Kate woke me up and was whispering at me whilst still shining the torch in my eyes after realising she was doing it we both had a giggle and she disappeared off back to the bridge as I sleepily dressed myself with almost every item of clothing I had packed. Even had the old oilies on, I wasn't taking no chances. Well little did we know this watch would be so exciting! Joke, it was dull. It was cold however it was dry, nope it wasn't dry, it rained. Well, I guess it was dry for a while at least and we spotted a few ships in the distance, the sky was clear also and we



could see some stars. But, little did we know we were headed for a storm and could see lightning in the distance! Then the rain came, and the wind and boy did it come! 8am could not come quick enough. After breakfast at 8 it was all hands on deck and time to handle some sails. Happy hour soon followed



and guess who had to clean the heads? Yes that would be me. The plan today was to arrive at Syracuse mid afternoon however the wind had other ideas. Due to the wind being too strong we were unable to get into Syracuse so we anchored just off the shore for a few hours, the pilot then joined the ship and we managed to come alongside and dock at around 5.

Once the ship was secured and the gangway was set voyage crew retreated to the fo'c'sle to shower and get ready to go ashore. A rather

large group of us set off into the busy city to experience some local cuisine. Sonny and myself particularly excited to taste and Italian pizza, please don't ask what was on my pizza as I haven't a clue! After the meal we were given some Lemoncello, a lovely lemon liquor and then the group set off for a wander round before heading back to the ship.

Monday was a day in port for the crew of Tenacious. In the morning we had a few things to do, stowing the sails and having a visit from Italian TV! Yes an Italian TV crew and group of local dignitaries boarded Tenacious and began interviewing some of the voyage crew as Jo, from the office (that seems to be her official title), showed a group of them around. After that all the ladies on board were called ashore to be photographed for an Italian Women's Federation



article, after chatting to the visitor's Rachel and myself managed to get ourselves a photo with the Harbour Master and even bagged ourselves his email address, Italian Stallion to say the least! After an exciting morning shore leave was granted and Rachel, James, Kevin and myself set off to explore the island. After wandering around for a while, taking some amazing photos of the gorgeous surroundings we decided to grab a quick bite to eat, again no idea what I had but it

wasn't too bad. Then more exploring, we had spotted this huge triangular shaped tower and decided to try and find it. So we headed off to the other side of the island to find this peculiar looking building and after what seemed like hours and hours of walking through a slightly less picturesque part of Syracuse we finally found it. Can you guess what was inside? A church, yes we walked for around 3 hours to find a church that had a rather unsafe feeling around it, however it did have a gift shop. Back to the ship yet again to get ready for another evening meal ashore and then meet up with the cadets to move on to a bar to get to know the local beverages.



6.30am rise this morning, earlier than usual as we planned to set sail at 7.30am, today we were heading



for Riposto another part of Sicily where we would take on the famous volcano Mount Etna. It all went to plan and we set off on schedule and began to sail, again we had some wind so some sails were set and this time the sea was calm. It was beautiful perfect 'gin and tonic' sailing was done and the sun just topped it all off, sunbathing on deck, hooray! As we approached Riposto Mount Etna was



soon spotted and what looked like snow could be seen on its peak, snow? In the Med? Apparently so.

We docked around 5pm and got the ship sorted out, again pizza ashore for dinner, after all when in Italy...

After dinner I returned to the ship and a group of us gathered in the bar, after a little while I headed off to bed to get my head down as I was on watch with Kyle at 2-4am. 1.45 came too quickly and it's safe to say I was not glad to see Lorna when she came to wake me up. However layers were donned and I bumbled up to deck to be met shortly by Kyle who I would spend the next two hours on watch with. He brought his duvet with him, result! It was a quick two hours positioned on the lifejacket boxes by the gangway. Time flies when you're bob sleighing, well we did have to create our own entertainment as we didn't see a single soul the whole time.

On Wednesday the group had an excursion, we were going a day trip to Mount Etna. So we all loaded



onto the bus and headed off for the mountain. The bus journey up was lovely and we saw some beautiful parts of the island, I really liked seeing the fruit trees: lemon trees and orange trees, how cool! As we approached the mountain the green began to fade and white took its place... snow?! Yes it was, and a lot of it! Back home we don't get snow, it's very very



rare so this was exciting! The snow got deeper and deeper as we got higher and higher, when we arrived at drop off point and stepped off the bus into a heavy snow shower it became clear most of us were not prepared. Come to think of it we were barely prepared to sail in the



coldness of the Med never mind the blizzards on Etna. We decided to attempt to get to the top, I set off with the gang but as we began I realised I was not prepared (I was wearing plimsolls and material jogging trousers!) and had already ended up knee deep at times therefore after falling twice I decided to head back. Glad I did because once back at the café I managed to convince a group of the oldies to go sledging! And sledging we did, best €4 ever spent! Despite the cold and being

completely not prepared to be sledging it was amazing, I even made friends with some Italians and Austrians who let me use their sledges and we raced. At the end I ended up like a giant snow ball but it was worth it! After the bus journey home we got showered and heat up, my feet finally thawed out

after at least an hour and we headed ashore, after dinner a group of us headed to the Irish bar to watch the football with a few beers.

Thursday morning brought yet again another harbour watch, this time it was 6-8am however I was woken at 4am as Tom woke the wrong Rachael! Watch this morning was pleasant as we got to see the sunrise over Mount Etna, wow. Today I was linesman! Yes, this is exciting, linesmen are the ones that remove the mooring lines and then watch as the ship sails away and leaves them ashore. It's okay though because that's when the real fun is, you get to go in the RIB (inflatable boat) and zoom across the harbour to



meet the ship again. After breakfast we were called to mooring stations and linesmen made their way ashore, we followed instructions and removed all the liens except the Aft Springer however the wind had gotten up and was causing us problems as we were unable to get off the quayside as the wind was so strong. After multiple attempts the captain decided we would have Smoko then try again in a little while hoping the wind died down, this meant the linesmen were stranded ashore! Not that we were complaining as we

sunbathed on the quayside, making most of a bad situation as they say! Eventually the wind died down

just enough to allow us to set sail and before we knew it we were underway yet again heading for Malta. Today I was also on Mess Duty in the galley, serving dinner was interesting as the ship rolled.

After dinner in theory, mess men were able to retire to their bunks ready for a day of mess the next day, however this was not the case.

Winds then proceeded to drop and we were making no progress we had to bring the sails in, however disaster struck as the Upper



Topsail jammed and voyage crew were stuck furling and unfurling the line for a lengthy period of time.

During this time the deck was lively with choruses of "oohs" and "aahs" as lightning lit up the skies around us fork lightning and all, but fortunately no rain! After it was said that nothing could be done a very tired voyage crew (except those on watch) retired to their bunks.

A day of mess, now this is exciting. I'm not a fan off mess duty but everyone takes their turn so at

6.30am I was ready for whatever was thrown at me. John woke me up that morning by shaking my leg, I thought it was going to fall off with the amount of shaking he done, I now understand the term "shake a

leg" fully. After breakfast the hard work began, my first task? Chopping onions, there were tears. As lunch time approached the Cooks Ass asked me to make the announcement for first sitting lunch over



the loudspeaker – this did not go well. My watch were on duty along with some extra bodies that thought it was funny that I was announcing, therefore they did everything they could to confuse me and make me laugh, I was nervous as it was as I'm not good at things like this! After several attempts I finally whispered out the call for

lunch complete with an “oh dear, oh dear” at the end! After first sitting lunch I was told to call the rest for lunch, again! This time I was taking no prisoners I make my way to the bridge nudged them out the way and before they knew it “lunch is now being served in the lower and upper mess” was heard throughout the ship, followed by a great cheer from me closely followed by everyone else on the bridge. Result!

Lunch was interesting, we had soup. Soup + Rolling Ship = Comedy Gold. However no one was harmed in the delivery of this lunch, thankfully.

After lunch we were dismissed and we began our approach into Mellieha Bay where we would anchor over night before motoring into Malta in the morning. The weather was good, even though nightfall had just began and as it was the second last night that meant one thing – BBQ on deck! Superb! The weather was good therefore the BBQ was brought out and the music was blaring as the BM’s started handing out the fruit punch and the party began! After the BBQ everyone gathered in the lower mess and bar for a night of horse racing and hilarity. It was great fun with those winning victorious and the losers determined as the competition heated up. In the final race crew could bid on a horse in a Winner Takes All final race, this left the cadets victorious and after making a donation to the JST, able to pay off their bar bill. Again I drew the short straw and had watch til 12 so heading up onto watch after the horse racing. After watch Rachel and myself rejoined the few left in the bar and continued to play some of the ships games, Charades was particularly interesting!



The engines were switched on at 6 which allowed us to motor round to Malta. Linesmen were called again so we made our way into the RIB and headed for shore to await the ship. The ship arrived shortly after and Captain John yet again skilfully reversed the ship through those buoys and parallel parked us in the same spot as where we left. After we were docked we were granted shore leave and went off again in our little groups to explore the island, and find ice cream. Oh the ice cream was good (and messy)! In the evening everyone went out to a local restaurant, Cargo, for our last voyage meal before heading to a local bar where a little band played encouraging the ships engineer to have a go on the drums! We then headed back to the ship to meet some members of our watch where we chatted for a bit before heading to bed in the early hours.

Why in the world would you go to bed that late knowing you had to get up so early to leave? Who knows but anyway we were up bright and early and raring to go to complete our final happy hour. Thankfully I managed to avoid the job of head cleaning duty and got away with mopping the floors. After happy hour we had bacon butties on the deck then we had our



debrief from the captain and collected our voyage CD and packed the final bits. We then said our final goodbyes as our taxi arrived at 10.30 and the long journey home began.

I'd say I definitely enjoyed my time on Tenacious and had a fantastic experience sailing with the Jubilee



Sailing Trust. I met some amazing people from all different cultures and backgrounds with a range of knowledge and abilities (including the famous Jo from the office) and I have built on my knowledge of sailing forever learning new things. It was a different experience from any of my other adventures but an unforgettable one at that. I've developed personally a great deal and have further gained new skills working with people with disabilities, particularly adults with physical disabilities. This is great as it will help with within my job at Girvan Youth Trust working with and supporting young

people with additional support needs and disabilities. I would definitely say that as a result of the voyage my self confidence has improved in various ways. I'd like to say thank you to the Jubilee Sailing Trust, The Royal Thames Yacht Club and Girvan Youth Trust for allowing me the opportunity to take part in this remarkable voyage!



P.S. Who goes to the Med and comes home with a sledge?
Oh yea... ME!