



PRINCESS'S PONDERINGS NO 5

Sea date 22nd ish August 2007

Ahoy there me hearties – Oh ar' tis grand to be back at the helm of my yacht (ok Eric and Lyne's Yacht!) and filling fear in the hearts of the locals where ever we sail! Even Captain Jack Sparrow trembles with fear now that I am back!

You will all have had a chance to read my short ponderings number 4 (Tho I feel I should be asking you questions on them to see if you are actually paying attention) – Allan Pellow what do you mean I had verbal diarrhoea on it – I thought they were short, to the point and they had no pictures! I dunno, you moan if I don't write enough and you moan if I write to much – make up yer mind man!



Now I left you with us having a Pink Ladies Lunch – and you remember all about that but here are the three darling buds of Frexi – just for your viewing pleasure. So here we are in the left hand picky Denise at the top, Prinny, Lynne and Chui.



And I told you about the whales we saw – well we have seen hundreds of them now and they are



absolutely awesome to watch– Chui hated them and barked his little heart out at them. Hannes and I were next to them on a dive but we did not see them –



Eric says we were so close to them! BUGGER!!! Catching them on film is not as easy as you think so you have to make do with these ones till we get better pictures! (No I am not calling Lynne a whale – she is seen here whale watching!!!)



My first dive back was a scream – literally! The ‘boys’ decided to go catch dinner which meant a night dive! Now I was not going to do this as it would be my first dive in ages and a night dive is not a good one for Prinny to recommence her career as



Jacqueline Cousteau! Being that she has a massive fear of the dark and that every shark in the world would be waiting for her down there in the deep blue cold wet ocean. BUT the boys made me feel so damn guilty that they would have had to catch the Lobsters AND hold the goody bag – so I, being the martyr to any cause especially feeding my face with Lobster Thermidor, donned my kit and psyched myself

up for it. Now, I am sure you will all agree, hindsight is a great thing and I should have listened to that paranoid little voice in my head before the dive screaming at me STAY ON THE BLOODY BOAT YOU DAFT COW!

I repeat - I have not dived for ages and starting again on a night dive which I hate at the best of times was not a good idea! My heart rate was going through the roof. (Oh my God, I have a heart – wow I never knew that till now) I had major problems equalizing! I was breathing for Britain and then Eric came towards me with a lobster – panic panic panic! The bloody thing was wriggling its freaking tentacle thingies at me and he wants me to put it in the bag???? I think NOT!!!! Eventually when calm was restored and Prinny had stopped freaking out, I had 4 lobsters in my bag and when the little blighters wriggled to the top of the bag I screamed and shook them violently to move them back down the bag! Hannes was peeing himself laughing at me. Then I smiled to myself as I remembered that I do still have my divorce lawyer’s number handy!! Ok so I am crap at night dives and I went through 180 bar of air in 25 mins. The Little Mermaid I aint. I showed my darling husband my low on air sign expecting him to signal us all to come up (well we did have 4 lobsters at this point!) BUT NO!!!! all he did was give me his octo and tell me to keep going – what a flipping star!!! Oh well alls well that ends well I guess! Now where did I put that damn telephone number?

We did start the sail toward Madagascar on the 12th August but after three days and nights solid sailing the winds were against us and we headed to Mayotte instead. Now we had no intention of going to Mayotte as Hannes and Eric did not have visas and it is a French island. However, needs must and off we headed. We anchored off Mamoudzou at les Petite Terre. I have to say that is it one of the most gorgeous islands I have ever seen. The people, locals and Expats, are really friendly and very helpful and even though they all speak French it has been an awesome place to visit. (Where is Pierre when I need him now?)



Lynne and Eric sorted things out in Mayotte re visas and there is no problem in us being in Mayotte at all. Hannes is the only one who needs a visa (these South Africans!!!) So Hannes and I had to go over on the ferry to Les Grande Terre to get his visa and this is kinda how it went.....

My God what a day we had! Now the nice wee policeman who gave Lynne very simple instructions on how Hannes and I need to take Hannes's passport to Le Office de la Prefecture in les Grande Terre to get a visa for him. This is easy we just take the ferry and as soon as we get off the ferry go up the hill and the Le Office de la Prefecture is on the right hand side – easy peasy lemon squeezy !!!! So after three hours we are still looking for the ruddy office!!!!

You see the nice wee policeman failed to tell us that once you come off the ferry there is actually 6 roads up the bloody hill and the Le Office de la Prefecture is NOT infact on the right hand side of any of them – we know we climbed up and down these hills for three bloody hours looking for it. So finally I plucked up the courage (for this please read *I got soooo pissed off walking up and down hills looking for the ruddy office*) I stopped and spoke to this nice lady in an ice cream shop for directions in my very best school girl Frenchnow those of you who know me will know that this is as good as my Swahili and my Afrikaans..... it went something like this.....

Prinny “*Bonjour Madame. Je tres desole, je parlez l’francaise un petite peu. Vous parlez_anglais?*”

Nice Lady who has now turned white! “*Mais non!*” As she grabs this nice man who is just passing by “*Vous parlez_anglais?*” she squeaks at him, almost begging him to say Yes!

Nice man passing by “*ANGLAIS!!!! Mais non!*”

Ha ha ha we all laugh together at our situation (me through gritted bloody teeth and Hannes snickering in the background). Not too worry I thought – crack on girl your almost bloody fluent now.

Prinny “*D’accord. Pas de problem. Ou est le Office de la Prefecture s’il vous plais?*”

Nice man “*ahh hmmm emmm – ah Oui ! blablablalbla bla bla bla bla bla Taxi!*”

AHA! Its too far away and we need to get a taxi ! Cool lets get a taxi! Now one thing to be said for Dar, you cannot move in the street without the guys shouting to you “Taxi?” “Taxi?” and you get pissed off saying “hapana asante!” every two minutes. Now let me tell you I would have given Hannes's left ~~testi~~ arm to have that happen now but nope not here! As soon as we saw a taxi we went to ask the driver to take us but before we could get out a “Bonjour” some bugger had jumped in the said taxi and they were off leaving us standing there like two tourists in a foreign country

(!!!!) So off up another hill we trudged and then like a dog spotting a rabbit I saw an empty taxi; I grabbed the handle, throwing women and children out of the way and told the driver where we wanted to go and off we went – RESULT ! Go Prinny! (Those years of Glasgow upbringing soared through my now happy heart! Proving again I have a heart!!!!)

At last, Praise the Lord, we are now outside Le Office de la Prefecture! The taxi leaves and yep you have guessed itit's now closed for lunch! Come back in an hour!

Hannes, in very typical Hannes fashion, looks at me; sees that I am about to let rip and he just laughs and hugs me! Ok ok ok – so now we have to find a place to have lunch. This we do and it's great – it also has WiFi (wireless internet) which I know will make Lynne and I happy and plan to bring her here tomorrow IF we get finished with Hannes's visa this century! After an hour off we toddle back up the hill – yep we walked cos we now know where it is and although my feet are bleeding, my back killing me and my body screaming to stay in the restaurant and sit and drink beer – of we go!

We are shown to the visa section where there is a very lively crew of staff on duty. They are having laughing fits at us being English but in a nice jovial hard to be angry kinda way. They were friendly, funny and very very helpful. So yep no problem getting a visa but we need a €12 stamp for the visa. And NO you don't get this stamp at this office!!! Of course not!! BUT, they give us directions to another Fiscal office to get this stamp andguess what.....this office is closed till tomorrow!!!!

Somebody somewhere is having a huge laugh up above! We then decide to head back to the yacht and let Lynne and Eric know what we have accomplished – if anything!

They both came across on the dingy with Chui and we all took a walk to the MYC – yep they Mayotte Yacht Club – it's dead cool – not posh like the DYC (Dar Yacht Club) – but it has got internet, washing machines, showers and oh yeah A bar! And the French guy behind the bar speaks a bit of English. Turns out he has been at the DYC many years ago – small world! He tells us about the Friday night bring and BBQ your own meat and it's a get together and we would be very welcome! Cool a night out – Fridays at the yacht clubhmmmmmm.....sounds very familiar!!! I wonder if John Hope, Chris Mottley and Magda Los will be at the bar.

Next day we are up and raring to go and get the stamp and visa. We deposit Lynne in the café and she does all her email stuff. She is a happy girl.

We hike up the hill just for old time's sake! And find the Office de Timbre Fiscal as per the written instructions from the Visa man yesterday! We wait in the queue and are soon issued with our stamps and then we hike further up the hill back to the Visa Place. All painless so far!

We go to the visa place and they are happy to see us (well who wouldn't be?) . Hannes sits first and I pull up a chair and merrily say to the lady "Bonjour Madaaaaarghghgh !" as my chair disintegrates beneath me, my bum hits the deck, my arms flail about and my legs end up in the air (don't worry mum I had clean knickers on !) . Hmmm not the way I had planned to use my French but heigh ho! The offending broken chair (WHICH I DID NOT BREAK – just before you say it John bloody Hope!!!!) was hastily removed to cries of "Madam. Je tres desole. C'est bien?" Hannes and I are pissing ourselves laughing – it could only happen to me – only flippin me!!!! So not so painless after all, well my bum hurts!



So we are in Mayotte, we all have visas etc and we decide it is so beautiful here that we will stay and spend a week or so sailing round the whole of Mayotte, sight seeing, swimming, snorkelling, diving, kayaking and generally living the life of blooming Riley!



All the bays are gorgeous but one of my favourites was the Cascade de Soulou. It has a lovely waterfall and lots of limas on the rocks and tons of turtles in the water who kept popping their heads up to say hello! We went for a long walk to the village of Tsingoni. There is a part before you enter the town which is full of trees and they are full of huge fruit bats – it was amazing to stand there in broad day light and watch these bats flying overhead.



On the way back I had a 'shower' in the Waterfall de Soulous – it was blooming freezing! It is such a pretty spot but the rubbish around the beach and water fall is pretty sad – such a pretty site spoilt by man again!



The dives have been great and none better than when we see dolphins (which you can just make out in this picture), whales or turtles. BUT on our dive today, 24th Aug, Hannes and I were down at 17.5 mtrs and 30 mins into our lovely dive when we hear the dingy above us and the emergency three pulls on our surface marker bouy! Eric wants us up and wants us up NOW! So we ascend safely and get to the surface. "Hi Eric, what's up mate?" says Prinny nice and calmly.

“Ah nothing much Sheila” he replies in his Aussie drawl. “Just behind the yacht there are about 7 sharks, so we thought we had best bring you up”. Well for those of you who have any doubt about how fast your Princess can move with full kit on her back should have seen this. The Guinness Book of Records would have recorded it. My darling Hannes, as cool as always says, “It’s ok Rhona, just hand Eric your weights before you give him your BCD”

Prinnies retort was short and sweet and I have been told my Lynne I am not allowed to swear in the Ponderings, so fill in the blanks yourself...”F**k the weights!” said I, as I threw my whole BCD at Eric and did not wait for Hannes as I threw myself onto the dingy! Hannes ambled on next taking his weights out, his BCD off and easing himself onto the dingy as his wife screamed at him “Stop fanning around and get your F*****g arse in the dingy!” Hysterical? Yep maybe. Eric and Hannes thought this to be very funny! Prinny’s last dive ever? Yep definitely.

Back on board Lynne had also decided stuff that for a game of soldiers she aint diving again either. We all went to the front of the yacht while Hannes and I got our kit off (diving kit – do calm down!). Eric told us all about how he saw the sharks and we kept an eye out while we chatted about our ‘close encounter’ my mind already having Princess Pondering’s Headlines – such asPRINCESS FENDS OFF KILLER SHARKS AND SAVES HUSBAND FROM A FATE WORSE THAN BEING FORCE FED HIS MOTHER IN LAWS COOKING! Sorry mum! Then we saw them at the front of the yacht – that dreaded dorsal fin!!!! My (and Tina Sutton’s) nightmares had come true – SHARKS and lots of em!

They moved gracefully to the port side and then we saw them clearer – and then they opened their wings and it spanned a good 3 metres – they were not sharks after all - they were eagle rays!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

So life is good again and yep we will be diving again and soon!



So until we chat again - we 4 sea faring folk will be reading, fishing, snorkelling, diving and all that sexy stuff and having daily sundowners as usual – what are you lot up to????



**Life in the fast lane
sucks!**



Prinny – not afraid of anything, especially eagle rays pretending to be sharks – **out
xxxxxx**