

Explorer vs Ploes in Fethiye

One of the most attractive things that drew me to KSSC rather than any other club based at Suffolk Yacht Harbour was that it offered Mediterranean sailing opportunities. When Peter kindly invited me to join him on a Ploes commissioning trip after COVID restrictions eased earlier this year, I couldn't resist. She hadn't been used for almost 2 years and had suffered galvanic corrosion. In addition, the bow thruster had been replaced and there were unanswered questions about the saildrive.

We arrived in Fethiye on 1st October. Peter has written about our trip elsewhere so as a Turkey, Mediterranean and Ploes virgin I'll focus on my first impressions of it all.

It was after dark when we arrived at Ece Saray marina. The temperature was a pleasant 20ish and after dropping our bags on board we joined Claire Jones (our local consultant) for a drink and traditional Turkish cuisine at the bar within the marina. The marina was very busy with large flotilla fleets of monohulls and catamarans of mainly Russian clients. The facilities in the marina are good, including a good bar and restaurant, clean showers and toilets. There is a small shop selling basic items and a more extensive supermarket is within walking distance, but your arms may suffer if buying larger amounts of supplies, and a taxi may be advisable.

Below decks Ploes has 3 double berths (1 in forepeak, and 2 stern), 2 heads, salon and a galley with electric fridge. Technically she is probably classed as 7 berth, but that would be cramped. If someone sleeps in the salon 4 singletons could sail reasonably comfortably.

ECE Saray marina, the view from the Tamarind restaurant



Above decks she has a reasonably sized cockpit, wheel steering, autohelm, electric windlass, new main sail, good furling head sail, bimini and spray hood. The main is roller reef and all control lines are returned to the cockpit. She carries an inflatable dinghy with Suzuki outboard.

Before casting off, the appropriate paper work needs to be in place, and this requires a visit to a shipping agent. It's not difficult, just takes a little time, and for first timers Claire can advise.

The Fethiye area is such a contrast to the English east coast. The weather is pleasant – in October it was perfect for T-shirt and shorts with just an extra layer when the temperature dips in the evening. The water is deep (very deep – 10's of metres within a stones throw of the shore), no tides, clear and warm.

Ploes moored at Sarsala, our first stop over in the bays



Ploes is different to Explorer, obviously a lot longer and wider, wheel rather than tiller. In many ways she is easier to handle than Explorer. Under sail she was easy to sail two up. Under engine she doesn't have any noticeable prop walk in reverse but with a larger free board she is more prone to being affected by the wind.

The major difference though is stern too mooring. All of the places we moored for overnight used lazy lines (This wasn't the case with a subsequent trip to Greece where the anchor was used). My first experience was returning to the marina where they have marinos, who use a small rib to retrieve the lazy lines from the berth and pass them to the bow man to pull up the bow line whilst the helm reverses towards the pontoon.

With hindsight my first experience didn't have much risk of going wrong. All I had to do was get the stern of Ploes between the two adjacent boats, whilst Peter pulled and cleated the bow line on the foredeck. It was very very tight but with a marinio on the pontoon shouting "Captain harder, harder" and fenders compressed to almost bursting point we safely berthed.

I felt quite smug. This changed somewhat the next day as I attempted to berth at a taverna. Without boats either side I gingerly reversed towards the pontoon, the wind caught the bow, and my attempts to recover with the bow thruster were thwarted as the fuse blew instantly. We ended up broad side to the pontoon. The rather exasperated marinius shook their heads and I beat a retreat. Peter's advice was to go faster to ensure I had steerage, then using hard forward to brake before hitting the pontoon. The process is then to get the prepared stern lines ashore (windward first) and made off longer than required, move forward and hold against these whilst the bow line is secured then reverse and tension all 3 lines as required to position so that the passerelle can reach the pontoon. Although not perfect my second approach was much better, and by the time I returned to the UK I was much more confident and capable.

During our eight nights we stayed in Fethiye for six. There are lots of reasonably priced restaurants (Peter seemed to be on first names with many of the owners) but the fish market is a must visit. You chose what you want cooked and they prepare it for you. If you like live music, Deep Blue Bar is the place to end the evening or early morning. The tavernas in the bays were approximately twice the price of Fethiye restaurants but there are no mooring fees to pay.

Deep Blue bar, a nice place to stop for a late night drink and music



In summary Ploes is a great club asset, and Fethiye is a great place to get a first experience of Mediterranean sailing whether as day sails out of Fethiye or visiting the many bays and waterside tavernas, and opportunities to perfect your stern to mooring. What more could you want?

Those of you on WhatsApp will already know I'm gathering names of of anyone who wants to visit Ploes in 2022. Bookings open on 1st January and we hope there is some pent-up demand, but once the dust has settled I'll look to see if I can fill some un-booked weeks by matching skippers and crews with a view to giving more members an opportunity of a "Ploes Experience." If any one hasn't responded on WhatsApp yet and wishes to register their interest in this opportunity, please let me know via email at paul.j.newman@btinternet.com. Hopefully we can have a bumper year of bookings in 2022.

Paul Newman

