

Saorsa II — 2010 Cruise

Part 008

2010-06-18 19:37 EDT (23:37 Z)

Pretty place; peaceful anchorage. We've anchored in Anse du Petit Mitis for tonight, about 25 miles east of Rimouski. Another yacht is anchored here. He left Rimouski about the same time we did. With his limited Anglais and my limited French, we learned he has anchored here twice before with no problem.

An uneventful day on the water. We left Rimouski about 09:00 this morning and caught the tide to help move us along. Not much wind, but we made steady progress.

We passed the bouy which marks the last resting place of the liner "*Empress of Ireland*".



Illustration 10: Bouy marking the last resting place of the "Empress of Ireland" and over 1,000 of her passengers and crew

She sank in May of 1914 after being rammed by another vessel at night in thick fog. One of the great maritime tragedies, over 1,000 people died within seven miles of Rimouski. An odd feeling to pass quietly, serenely over the grave of so many souls resting on the bottom only 130 feet beneath our keel. A reminder

that risk abounds on the sea; one does not venture forth with impunity.

As expected, the wind faded in the early afternoon so we resorted to engine power for the last half of the trip. The engine ran for about four hours today with no sign of an oil leak. Perhaps we can declare success on that front.

The sun is getting lower in the sky, the bay is bathed in its glow. Long shadows form and we rock gently to a small but persistent easterly swell.



Illustration 11: The end of another day cruising. Anchored at Anse du Petit Mitis

For now, the anchorage is calm, but there is a Gale Warning in the forecast. It is odd to think this lovely restful scene will be transformed in the next twelve hours by a rising gale.

Still, such a wind may work to our advantage. With a sou' westerly gale and a destination to the nor' east, we will make good speed running before the gale.

The next feasible anchorage is fifty miles distant in Les Méchins, so we will need a good wind to cover such a distance in a single day.

2010-06-19 09:55 EDT (13:55 Z)

Just finished our breakfast of assertive coffee and bowls of porridge topped with cream and maple syrup. At anchor still in a very light easterly breeze. Not enough wind to ruffle the water let alone sail the boat.

A bit of wind overnight. About mid-night the wind veered southerly and began to pick up. After checking our heading and position to verify our anchor was holding, I returned to my berth.

About 03:20, a bang on deck woke me to the sound of wind whistling in the rigging and rain pattering on deck. Up and out of my berth in a moment, a quick verification of position and heading, and then out on deck.

The loud bang had been a hatch cover lifted by the wind and flipped over. Flashlight in hand, I made a circuit of the deck, stopping at the bow to check the anchor cable and snubber. The latter was drawn tight by the pressure of the wind on the boat, but all was secure. Then below again, spattered with rain, to secure ports and hatches, check GPS position, confirm with compass heading, then a compass sight on the nearby lighthouse. Not dragging; all's well. Back in my berth at 03:45.

The wind had veered westerly and was about a force 5, perhaps 6. No gale to be sure.

Waking a few hours later, I found very light easterly, high cloud overall, and menacing dark clouds to the west. A quick check on the forecast still gave a gale warning for later today.

After assessing the options, I decided to stay another day in this anchorage.



Illustration 12: Light at Pointe Mitis, Fl(3) 7 1/2 s 21m, Group flashing 3 every 7.5 seconds on a 21 metre tower.

I sit here in the cockpit, looking out on a peaceful bay but hearing the drone of traffic on a nearby road. From time to time, a seal surfaces near the boat, looks over at me while taking a few breaths, and then disappears silently to her underwater realm. Sweet Selchie, take me with you.

2010-06-20 09:22 EDT (13:22 Z)

Grumpy and out of sorts this morning. Damnable Environment Canada weather forecasts have been way off the mark the past few days. Don't those guys ever look out a window?

A cool dreary grey morning. It rained most of the night so all is cold and damp below.

There's almost no wind this morning (the forecast was right this time... pffft). We broke out the anchor about 07:55 and got underway. The engine is thrumming along nicely and charging our partially depleted batteries as we motor down river. It's good for the engine to have a solid run and good for the batteries to get back to full charge. I take some consolation in that when we cannot sail.

Our destination today is Les Méchins, a small commercial harbour with a shipyard and dry dock, but no facilities for a yacht. The charts show an area which might work as an anchorage and there's a public wharf.

We'll see what happens when we get there.

We could stop short and stay at Matane tonight, but that would mean another night in a marina... expensive.

Thus far, about four or so weeks into our cruise, we're significantly over budget. Two reasons, vizt., marina fees and fuel costs.

Anchorage in this part of the cruise are very scarce so we have used marinas much more than planned. We've also run under engine a lot. Sailing the the St. Lawrence Seaway is nearly impossible. And, there are days like today when there's almost no wind. All part of the journey.

2010-06-20 10:45 EDT (14:45 Z)

We continue under engine, our course roughly parallel to the south shore about three miles out. The shore is hidden in grey mist even at this close distance. Our world is a grey horizon, unbroken by any mark, nothing visible but dull grey in all directions. The engine works on in the absence of any wind.

I'm baffled. The tidal current arrows on the chart clearly show a favourable current, yet we have about a knot of current against us, impeding our progress. An already frustrating day is made even more so.

I'm tired now. Constant wind shifts throughout the night have woken me. At anchor, vigilance is needed and I sleep lightly. My concern for the safety of my Mistress takes precedence over comfort. Tired, I must be on my guard against errors of judgement induced by fatigue. But, I am tired.

I tried setting the headsail earlier when a bit of wind appeared. It went away just as quickly, so the sails again are lowered and furled on deck. I'm getting stronger. Some of my pre-cancer strength returns. I can now hoist the sails without the aid of a winch; only at the end do I need the winch to fine tune the tension on the luff. That's better.

2010-06-20 21:14 EDT (2010-06-21 01:14 Z)

It's tomorrow now... in Greenwich.

The summer solstice has arrived, for the next 21 hours, the sun will be at its northernmost latitude. The longest day is here.

We're anchored at Les Méchins within a few cables of a commercial shipyard and dry dock. An odd juxtaposition. My little voyaging yacht and a 400 foot freighter in dry dock for a refit.



Illustration 13: Our anchorage at Les Mechins, close by the commercial shipyard and the public wharf.

At sundown, the Ensign was lowered as I quietly hummed “*Sunset*”; the anchor lamp is lit, hung on the forestay, and glows softly in the twilight. In my berth as I write, offering a silent prayer for those on the sea.

Tonight, after we anchored, as we sat with our wine eating hummus and crackers, a seal frolicked in the harbour. Perfect!

I continue to read Moitessier's book, *The Long Way*. I've read it many times before, but on this reading it seems to take on a new meaning. A quote resonates:

“I have almost reached a turning point along my way. I know... that I no longer want to go back.”

2010-06-21 10:35 EDT (14:35 Z)

Engine running smoothly. Sun drying my clothes driving out the damp chill. We motor East nor' east on a day with not wind.

The Nor' nor' east swell is still with us. It made the anchorage at Les Méchins uncomfortable this morning. After coffee, we raised anchor in the cold and damp, then motored out of the harbour into the fog. Our visibility was at most half a cable, usually much less. Cap Les Méchins appeared out of the mist and fog on our starboard bow and then disappeared as quickly.



Illustration 14: Cap Les Méchins appears out of the fog...

A timely warning to plot our course with care.



Illustration 15: ... Cap Les Méchins disappears abeam in the fog.

The fog has lifted now and we have a crisp clear horizon to the north. But to the south, low haze and some mist still clings to the land. The water to the north has the rich deep blue of the ocean.

End of Part 008.