

Saorsa II — 2010 Cruise

Part 009

2010-06-22 19:21 EDT (23:21 Z)

We arrived at Sainte-Anne-des-Monts yesterday and tied up to an empty slip in the yacht basin of this multipurpose harbour. In short, the town is lovely and the small marina very well done. The dockage fee is a very reasonable \$1 per foot of boat per night. The staff are remarkably friendly and helpful.

Within view of our dock is a striking red stone church. I'm not really one for organised religion, but this building is magnificent, beautifully proportioned, solid, understated, and quite pleasing to the eye. I gave up on trying to capture its full grandeur and instead tried a photo of architectural detail.



Illustration 16: Architectural detail of the Church in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts

From a cruising sailor's perspective, this spot is near perfect. There are two large grocery stores within a ten minute walk from the dock. A liquor store (SAQ) is nearby, small but well stocked with a wide variety of wines. Diesel fuel is dispensed into one's jerry can at the top of the dock.

The town has a number of restaurants within an easy walk of the marina. Although we didn't sample any (actually, we did later), they all appeared well run with good menu selections.

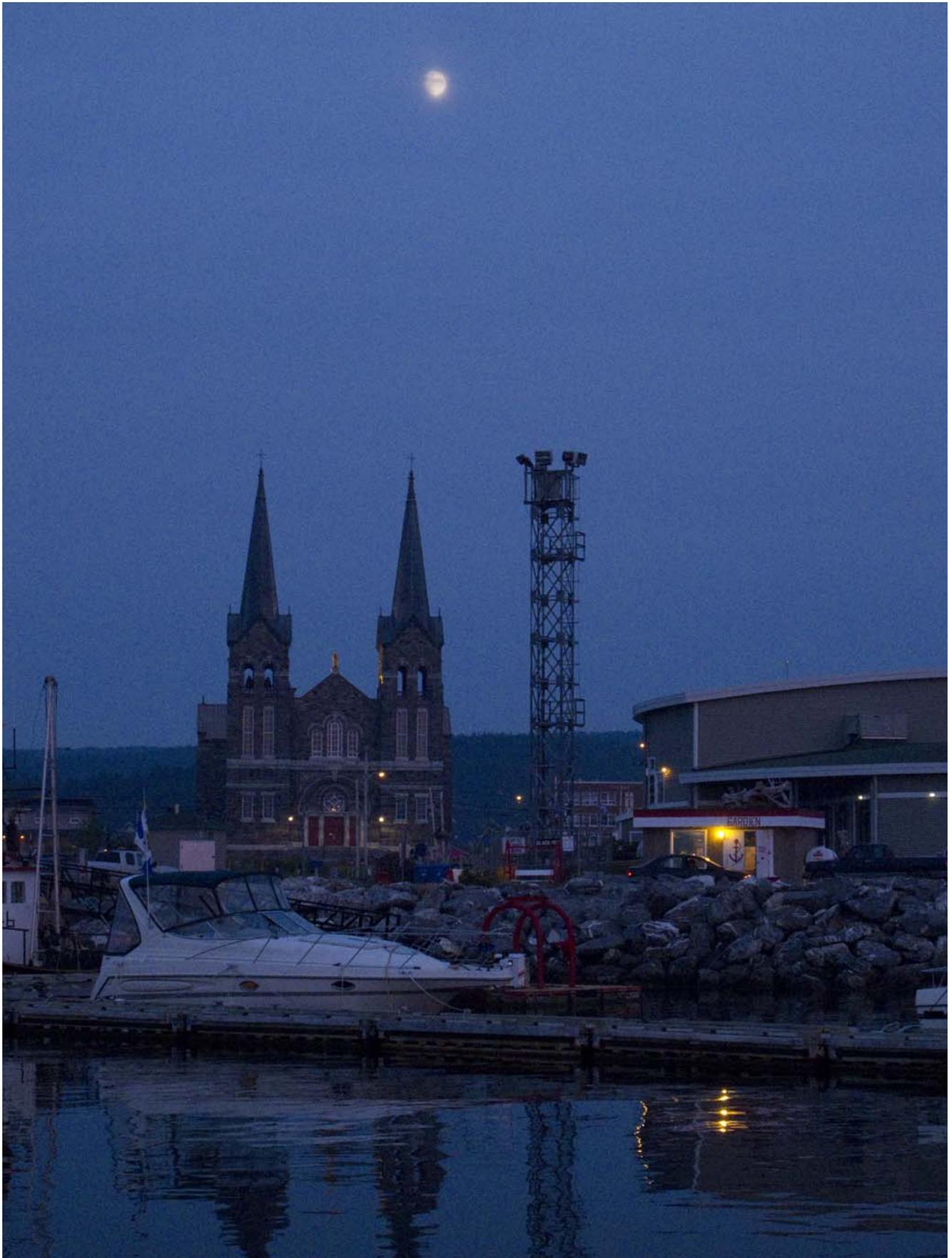


Illustration 17: Moonrise over Sainte-Anne-des-Monts as viewed from our slip in the marina on our last night at this harbour.

Today was a small project day. With electricity and water available, we tackled a few items. The new foghorn / loudhailer horn was wired into the radio system and test mounted. A clothes hook for foul weather gear was put up in the head. The port hand anchor roller was disassembled and greased. The chain hook on the anchor cable snubber was touched up with a file so it fit the chain better. A jerry can of diesel fuel was tipped into the main tank and then replenished from the marina's supply. A brief excursion to the grocery store yielded a few last minute supplies.

Tomorrow, we sail. The forecast is for southerly and south-east wind in the force 5 range. That would work well for us.

In the next couple of days, we will sail past the northernmost point of our cruise; somewhere in the vicinity of 49° 18' north latitude. An interesting milestone on this voyage.

2010-06-24 11:40 EDT (15:40 Z)

Wind. Not much, but enough. We're close hauled on a Starboard tack making ENE about three knots. The wind vane self-steering is engaged and doing a good job of following this fickle breeze.

Grey clouds overhead and the occasional patter of rain on deck.

A Dutch passenger vessel, about 700 feet overall, the "*Maasdam*", passed us up-bound a few minutes ago. She was well out of the shipping lanes and passed inshore of us. The AIS system continues to be useful.

We left Sainte-Anne-des-Monts this morning...

(narrative interrupted here by a wind shift that kept me busy for a while)

2010-06-24 15:27 EDT (19:27 Z)

The bit of wind we had on leaving Sainte-Anne-des-Monts faded away just after mid-day. We started the engine and have been motoring along about three hours now through mist and intermittent rain falling from grey overcast skies.

In about a half hour, we will pass the northernmost point of the Péninsule de la Gaspésie, also the northernmost point we will reach on our cruise.

We're about four miles offshore and simply watch the striking and rugged scenery of the coast as it slowly goes by.



Illustration 18: The north shore of the Péninsule de la Gaspésie

A delightful evening last night aboard an American flagged yacht, the sailing vessel “*Screech*” out of Islesboro, Maine. Our hosts, Mary Lou and Jay, invited us aboard for a very pleasant evening of conversation. We took great pleasure in introducing them to the taste sensation of creton on slices of baguette and were delighted to find they are “*Dark and Stormy*” aficionados. Like us, they travel in constant search of ginger beer.

For a few hours, we swapped cruising tales. They regaled us with stories of their adventures on the Intra-coastal Waterway while travelling to and from Florida. Sincerely hope our paths will cross again.

2010-06-24 15:56 EDT (19:56 Z)

As I write this sentence, we are abeam the northernmost point of the Péninsule de la Gaspésie, Pointe du Gros Morne. It is shrouded in mist and fog.

2010-06-25 15:27 EDT (19:27 Z)

At Rivière-la-Madeleine. The last few hours of our passage to here yesterday were rather interesting.

We motored along in wind that was very light and variable in direction. The shore about four miles distant was shrouded in low cloud, mist, fog, and occasional rain.

Then, steadily, the wind filled in from the east, the very direction we were headed, and rain began to fall heavily. Soon, we were battling our way through three foot waves, sometimes higher. The engine drove us on, but we were being hammered by a steep wave train resulting from the wind against current situation.

The pattern which repeated itself consistently for the next few hours was a series of smaller waves that let us build momentum, then three or four deep and steep troughs. By the time the bow slammed into the third trough, the boat shuddered nearly to a stop. Then, She would lift Her bow and the engine would drive her forward again. Constant battering; constant driving rain; cold rain dripping from my hat brim, spattering my glasses, dripping from my hands, streaming from my foul weather gear, trickling down my neck, dripping on the chart table when I went below to confirm our position. Cardinal sin, never let a chart to get wet. Damn.

Not soon enough, Cap-de-la-Madeleine light was visible off the starboard bow. Only another couple of hours before harbour.

A harbour with an entrance which is not for the faint of heart. A narrow channel flanked by wide rock shelves. Rock that is just barely hidden at high tide and which shows raw and menacing at low.

A harbour not shown on the charts, only a small bouy offshore to indicate the channel. We located the bouy which marked the start of the run in. Then, turning beam on to the seas, I shut down the auto-helm and took the wheel. My Mistress and I would do this as one. My fate in Her hands; Hers in mine. If either of us faltered now, the wind, waves, and rocks would not allow a second chance.

Rolling steeply, rocking twenty or thirty degrees each way in the space of a second or two, difficult to keep one's footing. I lined up the range marks and on we went. Waves were breaking and washing over rocks on both sides less than 100 feet away. The depth sounder reading steadily decreased.

Past the breakwater and a sharp turn 110° to starboard, leaving the range and entering the basin. Staying fifty feet off the end of the breakwater to avoid the sunken rocks lurking there.

Slowly now, into the comparative calm of the basin, a quick decision, that end dock, port side to, ease my sweet Mistress gently alongside, astern with engine to check our way, and then onto the dock with a stern line. Myra with a mid-ships line and a helpful local taking the bow line.

Safely in.

2009-06-26 11:24 EDT (15:24 Z)

All plain sail set on a port tack broad reach. Rolling and pitching a little in the quartering swell. Wind nor' west force 3.

Awoke this morning to grey overcast, steady rain, and light sou' west wind. Dismal mood as I made coffee looking out at a dreary morning.

The forecast at 03:00 was for good sou' west winds veering nor' west; rain and a possibility of thunderstorms.

The morning rain stopped about 09:00 and I was assured by a local sitting in front of the "*Cantina La Marina*" that it was "finit". We left harbour at 09:20, low tide.

Now we sail east and will begin to turn south on our way to Rivière-au-Renard. The large outer basin there is reputed to be a good (and free!) anchorage.

Galvaude Poutine yesterday at the Cantina. Here in the heart of Gaspésie, where Galvaude was invented. Yummy!

An amazing end to the day yesterday. A loud "*Allo*" came from a fellow on the dock who introduced himself as "JP", the self-appointed President of the local welcoming committee.

"Did we need anything at the grocery store?"

"Would we like to see the world's longest fish ladder?"

What followed was a delightful tour of the area in the knowledgeable company of Jean-Paul.

The Rivière-la-Madeleine is an important local Salmon river and a fish ladder was built some years ago to assist the fish up past the falls and rapids. We were given a tour of the facility by the local fellow, a Conservation Officer type, who works the ladder and counts the fish. An important part of his job is to keep trout from running up the ladder; they eat salmon eggs.

It was a delightful diversion that allowed us to see the landward portion of this beautiful area.

But now, we sail. The wind vane is engaged keeping us on course as I write. The sails fill and draw. The dinghy burbles with joy as he follows dutifully along on the end of his painter.



Illustration 19: View of the valley of Rivière-la-Madeleine looking downstream towards the sea.



Illustration 20: The waterfall and rapids of Rivière-la-Madeleine.

2010-06-27 15:47 EDT (19:47 Z)

The mains'l is furlled and secure; the working stays'l is filled with wind. Even with only that small sail, we are over-canvassed and moving far too fast. We surf forward up the back of five and six foot waves as the gust exceed 35 knots. We are running before a gale and our destination is still ten miles distant.

That is what we were doing 24 hours ago. Now, we sit in peace and calm anchored in the outer basin of Rivière-au-Renard.

As we "rounded the corner" of the Gaspé Peninsula yesterday, we encountered the nor' west 15 knot winds that had been forecast. We sailed along comfortably with the wind vane engaged and steering us steadily on our way.

The wind began to freshen and it became prudent to lower the mains'l. We were rounding up a little too much in the gusts and the wind vane was having difficulty keeping us on course. I took the helm and knew the main had to come down.

After the main was safely lowered, furlled, and the boom sheeted mid-ships, we were again under control. The helm was easy in my hands. I closed my eyes and let the wind, waves, and my Mistress speak to me. We sailed on with power and grace as She harnessed the wind and flexed Her muscles. "This is why we are here", She whispered to me.

My attention wandered as I accepted a mug of tea handed up my Myra. In a moment, a wave pushed us aside and the heads'l backed with a bang. Immediately, back on course and the sail filled with a wallop that shook the rig. A timely and stern rebuke from my Mistress, "Pay attention, boy, for I have need of you".

It was as though She knew what lay ahead.

At first, three foot waves with an occasional four feet; then, four and five footers; then solid six foot waves rolled down on us from astern. The wind continued to build to a solid force 7 gusting 8.

We were sailing too fast; we surfed forward on the waves and overtook them with tumbling white water frothing on either side. The sea in all directions was covered in white caps which had not been present two hours earlier. I watched the back of the waves as we rode up and over them. The gusts of wind blew the spume clear off the crest.

Still, the wind increased. I heard our radio come to life as the Coast Guard issued a revised forecast. A grim joke at this point.

We were over-canvassed. The best thing would be a heads'l change. Pull down the working sail and hoist the small number 3. Which held the most risk? A heads'l change on a bow that was bucking and awash in green water or carrying on like this with less than ten miles to our destination.

I knew my Mistress and I could sustain this pace for another hour, perhaps two. The helm was difficult but manageable. She still responded well to my touch; I could feel Her reassuring motion.

We carried on.

In the last hour of the passage, we covered 8.6 nautical miles. That, in a boat with a hull speed of 6.4 knots.

As we approached Rivière-au-Renard, Myra gamely pulled down the heads'l and lashed it securely. We continued to sail making 4.5 knots under bare poles.

Engine started and I altered for the harbour entrance. An easy harbour to enter, but made difficult with

waves now on the quarter, foam boiling and surging around us with each wave that passed.

Then, transformed, relative calm as we pass the breakwater.

Now, to anchor. Head to windward, Myra readies the ground tackle and windlass. The wind is so strong I must open the throttle to move us to windward and a good spot for the anchor. Then the signal, "let go".

Difficulty with the windlass. Move to the foredeck and free the windlass. Pay out chain. Five fathoms, then ten, and finally fifteen fathoms of chain run out as the wind pushes our bow off.

Snub it.

Did it set? Are we dragging?

Find a mark ashore. Stationary. Take reference bearings. Update the ship's log. Mark position on the chart. Verify position.

Safely in.

Then, we may rest.

End of Part 009.