





# NORTH-LINE YACHTS NORTHERN EXPOSURE

A long-held dream to cruise from the Netherlands to Greenland comes to fruition

Words **Berber van der Meer** Pictures **Sipko van Sluis**

**JUNE 10, 2016** 375 MILES, CALM WEATHER, RAINY

## Harlingen-Peterhead

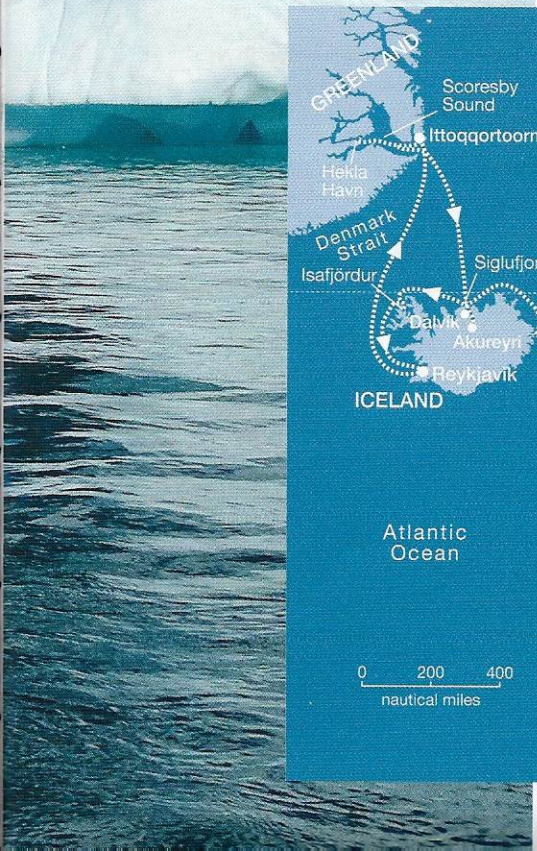
Waving goodbye to family and friends on the quay, we set off through the lock in Harlingen in *Dauntless*, a North-Line 42. I'm off to Greenland, the realisation of a 25-year dream, and also hope to set a new record by being the first semi-displacement boat to cruise there from the Netherlands. Accompanying me are Sipko van Sluis from North-Line Yachts and North-Line 37 owner and enthusiastic fisherman Cees Shot. Two further friends, Yvette Ruys and JP van Dam, are due to join us in Greenland, if and when we make it that far North.

Cruising at a steady 10 knots, we're soon north of Vlieland and heading towards the Frisian Islands. Countless boats surround us at Terschelling, hosting the Oerol Festival. We set our course 315 degrees towards Peterhead, accelerating to 17 knots at 2,350rpm while keeping an eye on the windfinder. Average 1m waves are forecast but they're twice as high as we plough through a long, moonless night without spotting a single vessel on the radar or AIS screen.

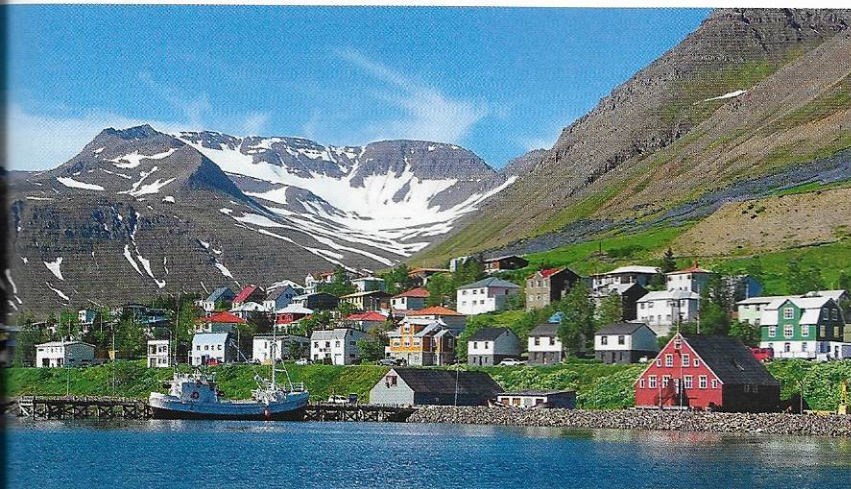
We arrive in Peterhead at 3pm and the friendly harbourmaster allocates us a berth and requests our passports. I realise that after spending weeks preparing for the trip, I've forgotten my passport...

My options are either to get a courier to bring it to me, which will cost €700, or fly home and get it, which isn't much cheaper. The harbourmaster is pretty relaxed about it though – we're only here to fill up with fuel and tomorrow we leave for the Faroe Islands. This gives my family time to send the passport to Tórshavn, the capital.

Feeling sporty, we grab our mountain bikes for a tour around Peterhead. Back at the boat, our chef, Cees, has cooked fresh sea bass. Rain is falling but we remain positive.







This far north, the sun never sets but at least the sea calms down at night making for ideal cruising conditions



Colourful houses stand out against snow-capped mountains of Siglufjörður

**JUNE 12, 2016 297 MILES**

### Peterhead-Vágur, Faroe Islands

Refuelled, we're ready to go. Three hours of ebb tide remain and we cruise at 1,150rpm, making 9 knots. Everything is going smoothly. The weather is clearing up with faint sunshine in the sky.

After 30 miles, the tide starts turning and our speed falls to 7 knots. Still, with 750 songs left on my iPod's playlist, we're good to carry on chugging away. We up the pace to 20 knots across the Pentland Firth before changing course to Vágur and another night passage. Wind increases to 18 knots from the east but I find the long swell relaxing as the moon lights our way.

At 8am, we see the island and tie up at the quay an hour later, berthing next to Dutch neighbours who offer us coffee. We buy fresh cod at the fish market. We don't know if it's the novelty of a visiting Dutch crew or our friendly appearance, but we're given the fish for free. We take an evening stroll before a glass of whisky and then head for our bunks.

**JUNE 14, 2016 36 MILES**

### Vágur-Tórshavn

Bacon, eggs and coffee done, we slip our lines at 11am. After a couple of hours, we switch off the engine and pull out our fishing rods. We catch nothing, so head for Tórshavn where we join locals watching Portugal versus Iceland on a big screen in the square.

**JUNE 15, 2016 WINDY**

### Tórshavn-Streymoy

Salt washed from the boat, we explore Streymoy on two wheels. Once we find the right road, it quickly steepens. We're like cyclists in the Tour de France, dreaming of winning the yellow jersey.

Our trip back is intense; the wind has increased so much that even going downhill, we have to pedal with all our might. Our reward is BBQ for dinner.

**JUNE 16, 2016 292 MILES**

### Streymoy-Seyðisfjörður

After paying the harbourmaster and refuelling, we depart at 11am. The first leg along the coast sees us bouncing up and down through steep seas. After ten miles, we slip between the islands again and the seas settle down. The tide turns and we cruise with the current, increasing our speed to 16 knots before leaving the



Berber and his crew keep fit with cycling expeditions inland

shelter of the islands – the heavy swell and 12-knot wind stubbornly return.

After 85 miles, we come across a fishing vessel. Another 200 miles to go and we're already losing our sense of day and night, taking turns to sleep. The heating's on but it's chilly. At 4am, we tie up

to a quay clad in car tyres. The silence is amazing... as is the sleep.

At 10am, we wake to a national holiday celebrating Iceland becoming a republic on June 17, 1944, announced by the firing of a large canon, seemingly straight at our boat! An old man loads several paper balls into its barrel and off goes a loud bang. We head into the countryside. Waterfalls stream into a river which flows into a fjord. Melted ice floats on top of the salty seawater. Making our way back to the boat, we see a fog bank building up. An hour later and we can't even see the bow.

**JUNE 18, 2016 196 MILES, COLD & FOGGY**

### Seyðisfjörður-Siglufjörður

At 9.30am at the fuel berth, the harbourmaster arrives in an old pick-up truck to fill our tank. He also drives us to the cash machine in town and kindly drops us back. It's 10.30am when we exit the fjord.

By 1pm, the wind is 25 knots and there are white crests on the waves. Reykjanes is known for fog and we're soon completely enveloped with visibility under half a mile. It gradually lifts and after five hours on the water we enter the Arctic Circle. Soon, we spot spouts of water to port... whales! We quickly change course and so do they.

An hour before entering Siglufjörður, we capture a whale on camera. At noon, we moor up opposite a cosy pub. Old photos show the days when the herring industry thrived and there's a brass plate from shipyard De Dageraad Holland. A Swiss lad who sat beside us spoke excellent Dutch; his mother is Dutch. The Netherlands is everywhere.

**JUNE 19, 2016 137 MILES, CLOUDLESS SKY**

### Siglufjörður-Ísafjörður

After less than four hours' sleep, a loud knock at the door wakes us at 5.30am. We're given five minutes to leave because a large vessel is coming in. Thankfully, we find another spot to tie up.

Sure enough, a purse seine vessel comes in and refrigerated trucks go back and forth with their cargo. Shopping, we grab a Greenland halibut weighing around three kilos. Cees fillets it, putting some scraps aside for fishing. Our guide suggests the



herring museum is worth a visit. Indeed it is, with photos of fishing boats loaded to the gunwales with herring.

Back at the boat, we check the oil, shining a flashlight through the glass to see if there is sludge in the fuel filters. For the first time in 100 hours of motoring, we've had to add a litre of oil. When we later question Cummins about this, they reckon that the steepness of the waves caused oil to be sucked up through the sump vent.

By the time we leave, the sea is like a mirror beneath a cloudless sky. The whales return and I take some photos before tucking into the two large halibut fillets. When it's my turn to go on watch, the view is spectacular: to port, snowy mountain tops glisten on the horizon, to starboard, the sea stretches out to infinity under a sun that never sets. We cruise at 8.5 knots on long ocean swells, reaching Ísafjörður at 6am. That afternoon, we bike out to see if we can reach the snowline and explore an abandoned skiing area. Back on board, we enjoy a meal before borrowing our neighbours' pump to inflate our dinghy having left ours in Harlingen!

**JUNE 21, 2016 180 MILES,  
CLEAR BLUE SKIES**

### Ísafjörður-Reykjavik

We take the dinghy across the fjord, capturing great photos of the North-Line with the snowy mountains in the background. The wind increases as two whales burst from the sea



The magical waterfall discovered on a cycling trip around Seyðisfjörður

to put on an aerial show for us, rotating their bodies and splashing – a remarkable sight we'll cherish for ever.

We set off later that afternoon. The sea is heavier and serious rollers pass beneath the hull. We're lifted 3m up in the air before surfing down the back of the waves. The sea settles down at night this far north but it's light 24 hours a day. Orcas slice across our path at tremendous speeds. Skies are clear – so clear that we can see the cape of Snæfellsjökul from 50 miles away, rising 803m into the air. We sleep exceptionally well despite the constant light; our biorhythms are still on track.

At 3.30am, the fog is back. We keep our eyes peeled even when the AIS shows nothing. A fishing vessel that has strayed off course passes in front of us. Radar tells us another crosses half a mile behind, even though I can't see him at all. I change course to avoid a third boat, catching only a glimpse of a vague shape in the mist.

At around 11am, we enter Reykjavik. Fog lifts and the sun is shining. We moor up at the Brokey Yacht Club in front of the famous Harpa concert hall – a pretty decent spot.

We celebrate our arrival by uncorking the bottle of champagne we brought from home. Part one of our voyage is accomplished! We've cruised a grand total of 1,522 miles in two weeks, done a lot of biking and seen many great sights but tomorrow, we fly home for a three-week rest before returning to complete part two of our voyage.

*We take the dinghy across the fjord, capturing great photos of the North-Line with the snowy mountains in the background*

The crew experienced an unforgettable whale encounter on their cruise from Ísafjörður to Reykjavik





**JULY 15, 2016 SUNNY**

## Amsterdam-Reykjavik

On our return, we find *Dauntless* in good shape. Although the Hekla volcano is active, there's not much ash on our deck. We head to town for dinner, ending up in an English pub where we win eight glasses of beer playing Wheel of Fortune.

The next day, our first challenge is to find a chart of Greenland, a much trickier task than we'd imagined. Four men in an old English pilot cutter tell me they'd experienced some heavy winds out on the water over the previous two days. They recommend a route north and then to Scoresby Sound. The fjord there is easy to enter despite a greater risk of ice, they say, advising me to keep an eye on the ice charts which they've copied for us.

**JULY 18, 2016 452 MILES**

## Reykjavik-Scoresby Sound, Greenland

We leave at 11.45am and spend the afternoon in the cockpit on course for the huge snow-covered mountain that is Snæfellsjökull.

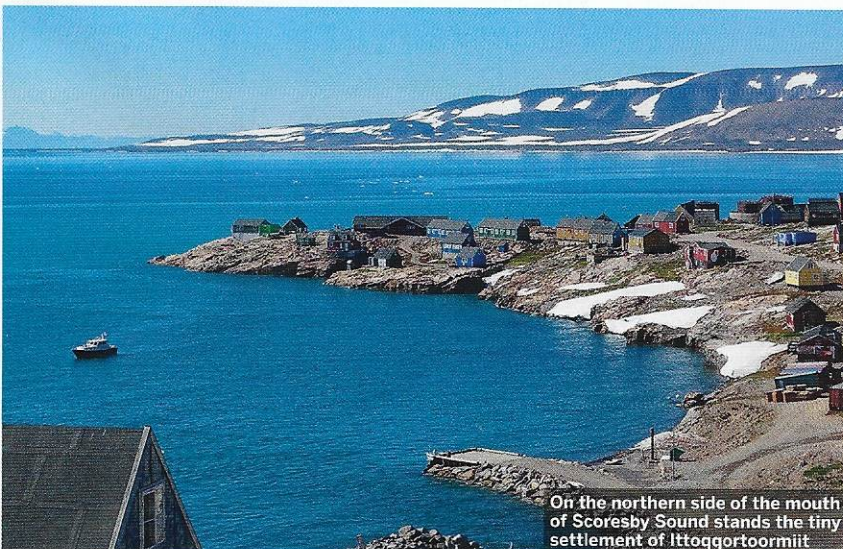
At 9pm, we arrive by the cape in a pretty bad swell: tall waves slam into the hull followed by an even bigger trough after every seventh wave. It's not until 3am that things ease up. But the weather has more surprises for us – incoming fog means we can't even see our hands in front of our faces.

At 11.30am, we arrive at Ísafjörður and moor at the fuel jetty. I ask the attendant whether I can buy a rifle; going to Greenland without one would be dangerous because of the polar bears. He feels comfortable lending me one of his own rifles as we'll be returning a week later but it appears we'd need a licence. The simpler option is to borrow a rifle in Greenland in exchange for a bottle of whisky.

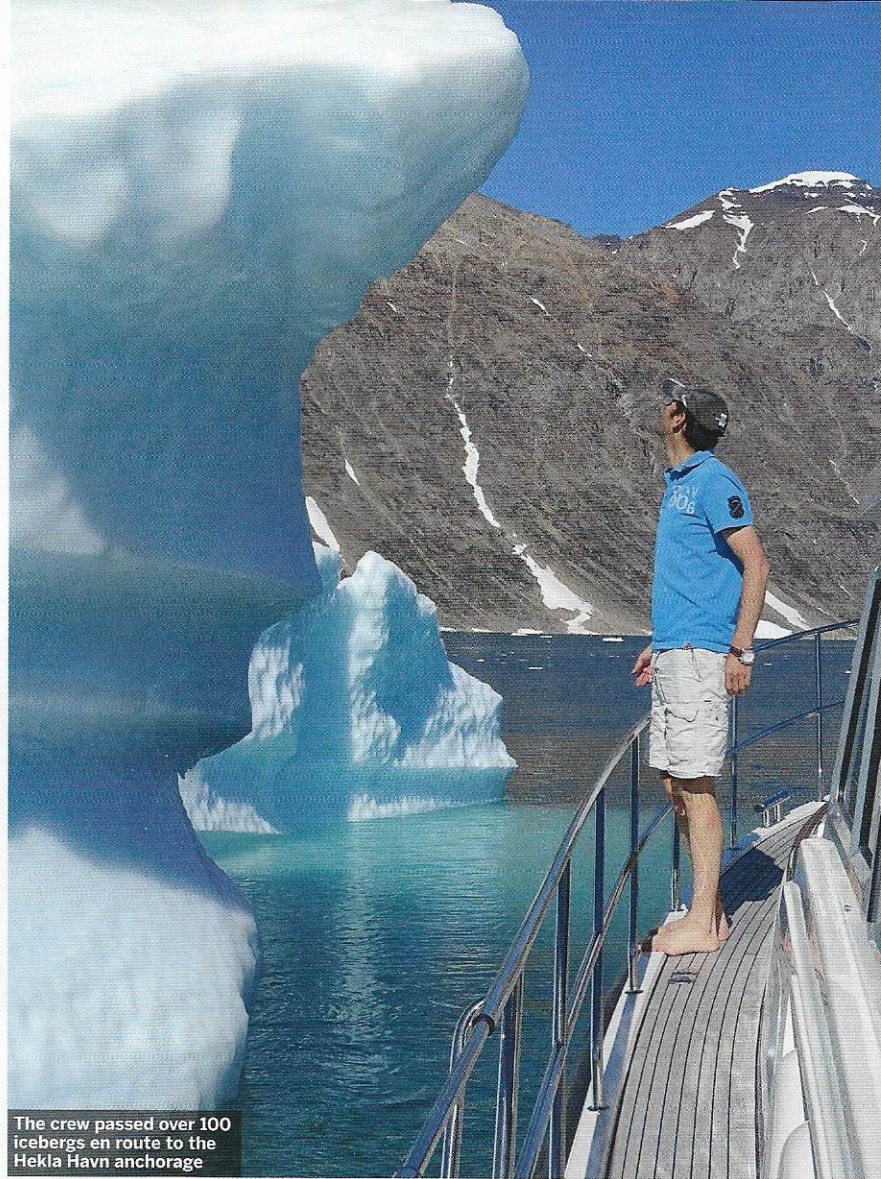
The fog finally lifts and the wind increases. We'd like to speed ahead of the bad weather but we can't – it's 700 miles to Greenland and we'll run out of fuel if we cruise at 16 knots. At 8 knots, we've a range of 2,000 miles.

Thankfully, the wind calms down in the morning. Three dots on the radar turn out to be whales sleeping on the surface; they don't move even when we approach. Then the first free-floating chunks of ice appear on our radar.

I cast my mind back to how this adventure first started. I'd read about a boating trip to Iceland and decided that one day I'd like to make that same journey. I'm woken abruptly by an iceberg looming out of the fog like a ghost ship. Some don't show on radar but even the smallest ones can do enormous damage. Increasing wind and a broken wind gauge add to the excitement. Only when we round Brewster and enter the fjord does the sky turn blue and the fog lift. We breathe a collective sigh of relief. Behind us, a snow-capped mountain sparkles in the sun. We've arrived in Greenland, covering 452 nautical miles in 60 hours. Yvette looks at me with a big grin: "You did it! You drove your own motor yacht to Greenland!" We raise a glass of beer to our successful crossing.



On the northern side of the mouth of Scoresby Sound stands the tiny settlement of Ittoqqortoormiit



The crew passed over 100 icebergs en route to the Hekla Havn anchorage

**JULY 21, 2016 93 MILES**

## Scoresby Sound-Hekla Havn

Although still tired from the long crossing, I force myself out of my pit. The weather report is favourable for the next few days with 12-18 knots predicted for the weekend. In town, we're surprised to find rifles for sale next to the milk and eggs in the supermarket! A large bulldozer arrives to refuel us and 498 litres later, we set off taking pictures of icebergs drifting by. It's only when we revisit the images later that we realise how large some of these really were.

Early morning and 100 icebergs later, we enter Hekla Havn, where Lieutenant Ryder of the Royal Danish Navy overwintered in 1891. Through our binoculars, we see a hunter's cabin. Anchored in water 10m deep and shallow enough to avoid ice, it's high time we enjoy a well-earned tippie.

**JULY 22, 2016 28 MILES, CALM**

## Hekla Havn

Mosquitoes are driving us insane so we raise the anchor and cruise around the island. Against all advice, we go ashore without a rifle but scuttle back before any polar bears decide to make a meal of us!

**JULY 23, 2016 420 MILES, CALM**

## Hekla Havn-Akureyri

Although the water is cold, I start my day with a quick dip. We set a course back to Iceland and the wind picks up while the temperature plummets to five degrees. Spotting an ice floe, I turn off the engine. To the crew's astonishment, I step on to the floe to take pictures of *Dauntless* as she circles me.

We tiptoe through a minefield of small icebergs, known as growlers, before entering open water. Within hours, waves become mountainous and the wind increases to 30 knots. I feel queasy and put on my Crewsaver lifejacket, our default action whenever the



**North-Line 42 Wheelhouse,  
Dauntless****SPECIFICATIONS****Length** 45ft 3in (13.80m) including swim platform**Beam** 13 ft 6in (4.15m)**Draft** 3ft 7in (1.13m)**Displacement** 14 tonnes**Material** Polyester (vacuum injection)**Hull shape** Round-bilged semi-displacement with deep-V**RCD category** A**Diesel** 2 x 1,050 litres**Fresh water** 700 litres**Blackwater** 400 litres**Engines** 2 x 480hp 6-cylinder Cummins**Design** Arthur Mursell / TT Boat Designs**Contact** Tel: +31 (0)517 391054.Web: [www.north-line.nl](http://www.north-line.nl)**ABOUT NORTH-LINE YACHTS**

North-Line has been active in the marine industry for more than 40 years, focusing over the past decade on high-class seagoing motor yachts. The Dutch boatbuilder has developed its own North-Line range from 26ft-60ft to a design from Arthur Mursell at TT Boat Designs. As well as serving private owners, the company also builds commercial vessels. In 2012, the company moved to a new purpose-built yard in Harlingen where, in addition to new builds, it also offers repairs, maintenance, berths and winter storage.

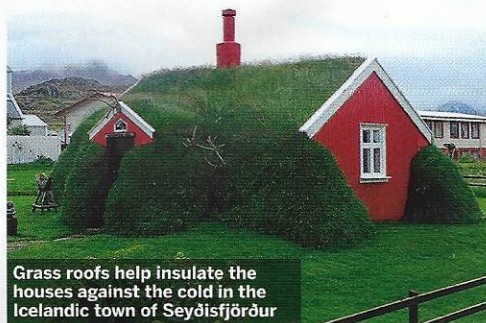


*Against all advice, we go ashore without a rifle but scuttle back before any polar bears decide to make a meal of us!*

The author started the day with a swim in the chilly waters of Hekla Havn!



weather turns bad. We always feel more secure with them on. No equipment can spare you from the occasional bout of seasickness though, and this keeps us up all night. Next day, we're all in a bad mood, facing more steep waves and fog. We refuel on Grimsey, have something to eat and enjoy an hour's break on land before pressing on to Iceland.



Grass roofs help insulate the houses against the cold in the Icelandic town of Seyðisfjörður

**JULY 25, 2016 23 MILES,  
LOW-PRESSURE AREA, STRONG WIND**

### Akureyri-Dalvík

While Yvette and JP look around Akureyri, I stay on board to catch up on some emails and call customs for clearance. We leave for Dalvík at 5pm. Once there, we moor between two fishing boats. The weather report indicates no improvement: there's a low pressure above Iceland bringing strong winds.

**JULY 26, 2016 183 MILES**

### Dalvík-Seyðisfjörður

A new day dawns. All is calm until late afternoon when 20-knot winds arrive from the north increasing to storm force. I cruise to Seyðisfjörður in one leg to avoid the worst of it. The first 100 miles are the most uncomfortable before we head south leaving the wind on our stern. Even when we're safely tied up, *Dauntless* pulls on her lines as the wind howls.

**JULY 27-30, 2016**

### Seyðisfjörður

We catch a nice flounder and a small wolf fish but not enough for dinner. We clean the boat, oil our bike chains and explore for the

next few days. We hitch-hike to Egilsstaðir and rent a car so we can drive to Höfn to see the puffins.

We're not the only ones: the local pub is full of puffin watchers, dressed in expensive outdoor gear and hiking boots, making us feel awkward in our jeans and boat shoes. The puffins don't seem to care though, and we drive on past a beautiful lake and through a forest to a large waterfall where

we hike a further mile and a half before heading back to the car.

**JULY 31, 2016 285 MILES**

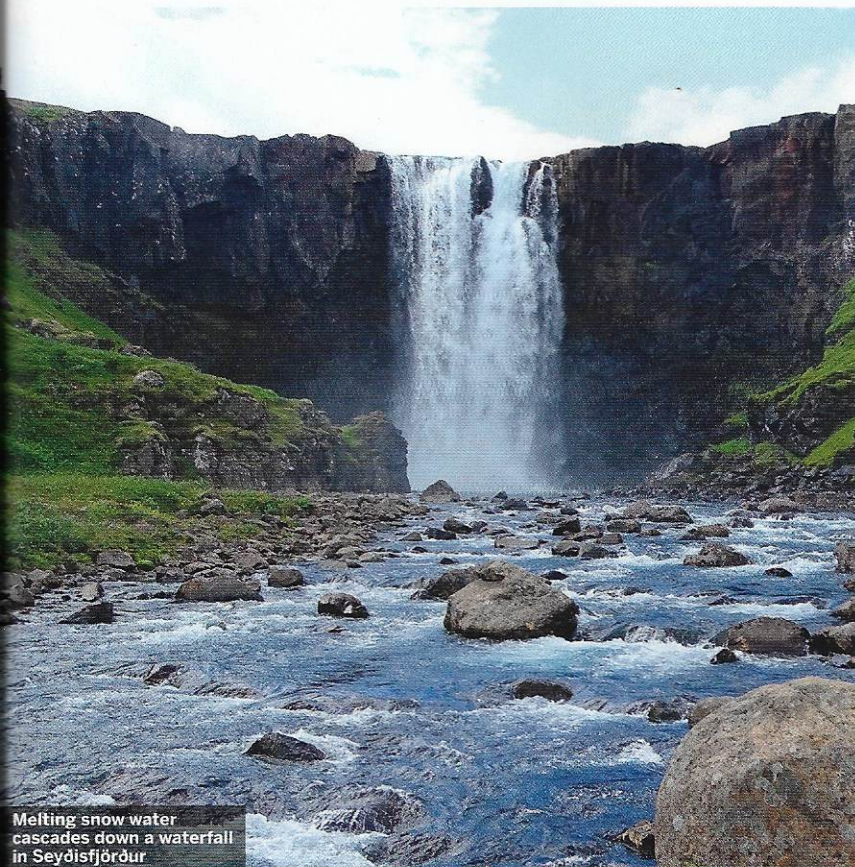
### Seyðisfjörður-Midagur, Faroe Islands

We're back at sea heading for the Faroes. Stiff winds are forecast but we leave anyway as the weather seems likely to deteriorate further. The swell is already 3m but long, so motoring isn't too difficult. By evening, the waves are 5m so we change course to the westernmost island to shorten the journey. We hit Midagur later that afternoon; the last couple of hours haven't been much fun.

**AUGUST 1, 2016 241 MILES**

### Midagur-Kirkwall

We're uneasy leaving Midagur: the plan to cruise 30 miles to the southernmost island and from there to the Shetlands would mean crossing through a low-pressure area with winds from the east in the northern segment and western winds over the Orkneys. We decide on Kirkwall and chug on through the night at a steady 8 knots, taking turns at the helm. We speed up again in the morning to ensure we reach the islands at the right tide. We cruise through Westray on a good current and make land in time for bacon and eggs at 7.30am followed by a ride into town.



Melting snow water cascades down a waterfall in Seyðisfjörður



Towering 5m waves make the journey from Iceland to the Faroe Islands tiring but the North-Line copes well

*Serious rollers pass beneath the hull. We're lifted 3m up in the air before surfing down the waves*



**AUGUST 3, 2016 105 MILES, LOW WIND**

### Kirkwall-Peterhead

Soon after departure, we shut off our engines and throw out the fishing lines. Maybe this time we'll catch our own meal. Cees feels a tug on the line – a mackerel first and then a ling. Ling can reach lengths of up to 3m but the one we catch is much smaller. We're still very pleased with ourselves. At 9.30pm, we head for Peterhead on a calm sea. The nights are getting darker and our biorhythms are improving. The soft motion of the yacht rocks me straight to sleep. We motor into Peterhead at 8am.

**AUGUST 4, 2016 337 MILES, CALM & SUNNY**

### Peterhead-Thyborøn

Setting off at 11am, we zip along at 17 knots, taking turns to nap until the wind picks up and we literally roll into Thyborøn.

**AUGUST 6, 2016 136 MILES, RAINY**

### Thyborøn-Grenaa

We cruise through the Limfjord towards Aalborg to take on fuel but you need a special card to refuel here so we press on through the rain to the Baltic. We bash into an uncomfortable head sea and go to bed soon after arriving in Grenaa.

**AUGUST 7, 2016 93 MILES, STRONG WIND**

### Grenaa-Aerosund

The wind and heavy waves make departure tricky so we stop in Aero and have a meal at the *fiskers hus*. The food is tasteless but arrives quickly. A whisky offers some consolation.

**AUGUST 8, 2016 130 MILES, NOT MUCH SUN**

### Aerosund-Cuxhaven

We're in luck when we arrive in Kiel: the locks are opening and

we can motor right in. Once we exit the locks, we cruise on for a further eight hours to Brunsbüttel. Lady Luck is on our side again: the locks are open and we can continue on. Because the wind has died down, we seriously consider continuing to the Helgolands, but a mile out of Cuxhaven, the wind picks up so we turn back.

**AUGUST 9, 2016 100 MILES, STRONG WIND, HIGH WAVES**

### Cuxhaven-Borkum

Conditions worsen as we head out to sea. We consider the Weser but press on to Borkum. Above the island, a fishing boat exits through the Riffgat which gives us the courage to go in. The chart says there is 6m of water, so if the fishing vessel can do it... Almost immediately I regret it as we surf along on breaking waves. I steer by hand, afraid that the autopilot won't keep up. Bathed in cold sweat, we hurtle in and quickly reach deeper waters, tying up to the quay and treat ourselves to a restaurant meal. The last supper – tomorrow, we'll be home.

**AUGUST 10, 2016 114 MILES, RECEDING WIND**

### Borkum-Harlingen

The wind from the southwest recedes and we set out via Hubertgat below the islands on the 10m line. At 11am, we're on time for the tide change at the Stortemelk. On a considerable swell, we bounce inward, take a shortcut by the Richel and pass through the Vlieree at 20 knots. We're all in good spirits. We have arrived. It starts to drizzle. Home sweet home.

We have cruised for six weeks solid, covered more than 4,300 nautical miles and run the engines for 390 hours. *Dauntless* has lived up to her name, performing fearlessly in all conditions. I've fulfilled my dream, it feels amazing, and the adventure more than lived up to my lofty expectations. **MBY**

