

Alice and Harmony went below decks, as it seemed just too exposed and dangerous in the cockpit. Sean and I were secured with safety harnesses and lifejackets. Sean did a great job of controlling the boat until the seas just got too steep and I took over. In the middle of this storm (which according to the Italian coastguard was a force 7) a school of 1 to 2 meter tuna were leaping about in the waves much to our delight. Many years ago I saw something similar in the straits of Messina and I assumed that all the tuna in the Med had been fished out long ago. I'm glad I was wrong they were a beautiful sight.

As darkness fell, Alice was consulting the Adriatic Pilot and charts for the best harbor of refuge that we could get to in the shortest time and on our current heading. Harmony was working to fix the GPS. They were both suffering from seasickness, but they just shook it off and handled the



navigation beautifully. By now the wind was about 15 degrees off parallel with the high rocky cliff shores of Puglia so we had to get in very close to get any lee. About a mile or two off the coast the seas moderated and we approached the shore in total darkness. None of the harbors on this stretch of coast are lighted and we settled on a place called Castro with the intention of anchoring off and entering the harbor in daylight. We tacked into the protected little bay dropped anchor and fell exhausted onto the cockpit cushions. The girls already had

The harbor at Castro; we anchored where the lower blue photo dot is (Google Earth)

fallen asleep once we reached the lee. What a delight to wake up in this quaint harbor, actually what a delight to just wake up!

The next morning after cleaning up the boat, we motored into the small crowded harbor and found a slip. Everyone was starving and it was almost noon, so we headed up the stairs and found a restaurant and had a great meal. We returned to the boat and a few minuets later the coast guard/customs guys show up (darn, I had hoped we could avoid this). They suggested a different slip and then told us get our documents and go to the headquarters. I really hate checking in!



Safe Harbor at last



The Harbor at Castro, If you look carefully you can see the boat anchored off

We got every official looking document and hiked up the steep road to the office. We were met by the same young guys from down below and I presented our paperwork. As they went over each document one of them asked where we had come from and was a bit surprised that it was from Greece and even more surprised that we had made the crossing in the Tramontna winds. Next he wanted to know why I had been out of the U.S. for 7 weeks, and half joking I said I was a political refugee from the U.S. What? You don't like Bush? Doesn't everyone in the U.S. like Bush? I assured him in my semi-fluent Italian that most people do not like Bush, even many from his own party.

Ah Ha! There is a "small" problem, you do not have a registration and certificate of ownership for the outboard, plus you have no insurance on the outboard. I showed him my homeowner's insurance card but it had expired 3 days before, the insurance was good, I didn't think I would need my new card. As far as the motor went, I explained that just like in Italy where they don't require a registration and certificate of ownership for bathtubs, in Greece they don't require them for outboards. Can't argue with *that* logic, of course you can't argue with Italian bureaucracy either.

After some negotiations, they were ready to "overlook" the problems if I would just move on up the coast in a day or two. Suddenly the both stiffened up and stood at attention. Behind me the

Comandante walked in (dressed in civvies). I turned around and greeted him in English, he nodded and then proceeded to ignore us and question the two coasties. I just quietly listened in on the interesting conversation. “Who are these guys?” “What nationalities?” He was told the story and told that we were Americans. “Shit” he says, (not a good sigh), is everything perfect with the paperwork?” Not exactly says one of the guys there are a couple of “small” problems.” “There are no “small” problems for these Americans, they are just like their president, they think they can push around other people and the rules don’t apply to them. Impound the boat and collect a 1,000 euro fine.” Now it is my turn to say “Shit” but in English. One of the coasties then says, “but Comandante, these guys don’t like Bush!” and the other pops up with “Yeah, they said he was a sack of shit”. Now, I never actually said that, but before I could say anything else the Comandante perked up and said, “Really, they really don’t like Bush? In that case, perhaps we can work out something with these “small” problems. Tell your American friends that I will be down to inspect their boat in 10 minutes.” (my thought was we were in deep doo) “Oh, and also that if, say, the outboard motor had been taken off and put in the cabin where I would not look, then there is no motor and no problem.” Can’t argue with that logic! The coastie then explained that he didn’t speak English, which was the cue for me to pipe up in Italian that I would be honored to have my boat inspected by the Comadante of the Guarda Costa of beautiful Castro. There was that moment of awkward silence then he gave a big laugh and just reminded us that we had to only sail out of the harbor, not use the motor and try to get the insurance and papers from Greece.



Alice and I left the next morning and in a roundabout manner managed to get to Rome with time to spare. This did mean leaving Sean and Harmony to deal with the Italian bureaucracy, which after several tries, they gave up trying to fix. They just sailed away up the coast stopping at a couple of other small towns, but avoiding the coastguard and other officials. Eventually, they made their way 120 miles up the coast to Trani and from there made the 90 mile crossing to Lastovo Island in Croatia.

Heart of Gold heading north to Croatia