

An adventurous journey...

...past mills and sandbanks



Text Man van het Woord; photos: Start2Boat

In the autumn of 2020, Peter and Sanne undertook a 16-day adventure trip of more than 800 km in the Beluga, a Linssen Grand Sturdy 40.0 Sedan, on the breathtaking Dutch waterways. Among other destinations, the trip took them to the busy Westerschelde estuary, to picturesque Kinderdijk and right through the city of Rotterdam. Via Linssen Boating Holidays, they chartered the Beluga from Aqua Libra Yacht Charter in Ophoven (Belgium). This was the starting point of their adventure.

Peter and Sanne are a young, ambitious couple who put their heads together with three other entrepreneurs to establish Start2Boat. Start2Boat specialises in sailing training and boat transport. Peter, Sanne and the Start2Boat team work on Belgian and Dutch waters, passing on their passion for sailing to novice skippers of fast boats or displacement yachts. Peter: "About three years ago, we chartered our first Linssen from Aqua Libra to enjoy the charms of the inland waterways in peace and quiet. We enjoyed it so much that we have even established a collaboration with Aqua Libra and Linssen Yachts to provide sailing training."

In search of a new adventure

The couple often works six days a week. When Belgium went into lockdown again last November, they unexpectedly had three weeks of free time. The charter season had actually ended, but Aqua Libra was happy to make an exception for them. Due to the rather rough season they'd had, Peter and Sanne

deliberately chose a sedan. "With a sedan, the controls and extensive navigation equipment go hand in hand with the cosiness and comfort of the saloon."

Peter and Sanne have many years of sailing experience and were therefore looking for a new adventure. The objective was to sail from Belgian Limburg to Breskens over several days. "Everything we were promised about the performance of this Linssen turned out to be true. A Grand Sturdy 40.0 Sedan can handle open water just fine." During the high season, the boats are often five rows deep in the marinas. The best advice in such cases is to find a spot in good time. In the late season, Peter and Sanne often found themselves alone in the harbour. "A bizarre experience. But we certainly enjoyed it; an aperitif on the aft deck, an evening stroll in the historic part of Heusden, or a cycle trip to the windmills of Kinderdijk on the Unesco World Heritage list."

Culinary enjoyment

Because of the time of year, there weren't many facilities open in the marinas, but you don't need them with a Linssen. "The Beluga had everything on board: a washing machine, a dryer, a cooker, an oven, a fridge and a freezer. And a generator to keep them all running. In short, a luxury flat on the water. People often get the wrong idea about boating holidays. They think there is no heating on board or only a primitive gas stove to heat up canned food. That's absolutely not the case with a Linssen. Sanne prepared delicious meals in the kitchen every day. From bacon and eggs for breakfast to steak with a creamy pepper sauce and grilled potato slices for dinner."

Riding the waves

The couple rounded off each day by planning the next one, of course, but sometimes they had to change their plans due to the weather conditions. For example, the trip from Willemstad to Zierikzee on day 4 was not planned. "We wanted to go to Wemeldinge via the Oosterschelde, but during our trip the wind increased to 6-7 Beaufort on the Oosterschelde. The waves also got higher because the current was against the wind."

Peter navigated through the high waves while Sanne saved the glasses and plates from being smashed. To prevent the Beluga from rolling too much on the crosswind course to Wemeldinge, they decided to divert to Zierikzee. "It got very lively at the Zeeland Bridge. The waves made us feel like we were free-falling, but the Beluga made it through just fine."

Lost between the sandbanks

After spotting seals during a glowing red sunrise,



Because of the corona measures, no restaurants are open and Sanne cooks every evening on board. The Beluga is so well equipped that anything is possible. Today fresh pizza.

the Beluga passed the Hansweert locks on day 5. After greeting them with a friendly good morning, the lock keeper opened the final lock gate to the Westerschelde and they eventually reached their intended destination: the North Sea. "But the Westerschelde confused us," says Peter. "The buoys were not where they were supposed to be according to the Beluga's chart plotter. Even when Sanne plotted the co-ordinates on the map, the course we were following was too shallow. Thanks to our extensive preparation for the trip, I was easily able to contact the Terneuzen traffic control centre to verify our position. The buoys were indeed positioned differently to those on the map, but we could easily follow them to avoid the sandbanks. The Westerschelde is a dangerous stretch of water and we had to make full use of all our navigating experience. If you follow your GPS blindly, you'll run aground before you know it."

Arrival in Zierikzee. Even in the harbour, there are considerable waves.



The ocean giants gradually appeared on the horizon, looking very small at first. They had reached the North Sea. At a safe distance from these large, fast, sea-going vessels and under a blue sky and radiant sunshine, they arrived in Breskens. They weren't going to miss out on a freshly caught lobster here, prepared by fishmonger Cor. "Cor's fishing boat is a real attraction!"



Time has literally stood still in Middlesharnis...



Arrival in Breskens under a bright blue sky.

Arriving in Kinderdijk, we cycle to the windmill park that is even on the Unesco World Heritage list. There is an impressive collection of windmills in a beautiful natural park.



Exciting and unforgettable

On day 8, the Beluga sailed from Tholen along the Scheldt-Rhine Canal towards the Volkerak, a very busy stretch of water with a lot of commercial traffic. "The big ships passed us one by one in rapid succession. Fortunately, the Beluga has AIS (Automatic Identification System) and we could visualise all the ships around us on our chart plotter."

The couple decided to enjoy the beautiful little harbour in the old town centre of Middelsharnis for two days. A walk around the town centre with a doughnut ball in hand and a bike ride along the Haringvliet made that decision more than worthwhile. "We even sailed with the sunroof open in a 1 Beaufort wind and were able to enjoy the glorious autumn sunshine. What more could you wish for?"

On day 9, the couple made plans for the next day, as they did every evening. But this time they were even more meticulous than usual, because they would be

sailing through the large industrial port of Rotterdam. "A city with a lot of commercial and maritime traffic, where all sailing instructions are communicated by VHF radio and everything is bigger and faster than us. A wonderful experience, never to be forgotten!"

Sailing by night

During the homeward journey, Peter and Sanne were adventurous enough to sail by night from Roermond. After passing the Linne lock, Peter dimmed all of the navigation equipment. Wrapped in a warm blanket, Sanne acted as lookout at the bow. "The beautiful starry sky and the bright moonlight reflecting on the calm water made for a magical conclusion to our memorable trip."

Fully approved

After 16 days of sailing, the Linssen Grand Sturdy 40.0 Sedan had gained Peter and Sanne's full approval. "The water is where our hearts lie and we wish everyone that same feeling. That's why we were able to turn our passion into our job. We are happy to share our knowledge and experience with our Start2Boat trainees, because the more knowledge they have, the more they will enjoy their boat. That's when sailing really becomes carefree enjoyment."

START 2 BOAT

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Duration: 16 days.
Distance: 805 kilometres.
Number of locks: 19.

Boat: Linssen Grand Sturdy 40.0 Sedan "Beluga"

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