

Blue Cup Regatta in Greece 2008

The following is a précis from the 2008 Blue Cup Regatta (1 Nov – 9 Nov) entry from Clifden Boat Club, County Galway. It should give some idea of costs and itinerary for the planning of a similar exercise by anyone.

The event is called the Blue Cup Regatta and is an annual event with a series of passage races between various harbours in the Argo-Saronic Gulf. At each harbour there is a stop-over with daily prize giving/receptions sometimes at tavernas, sometimes in the municipal square and sometimes in hotels. The final awards dinner is at a luxury hotel. The Blue Cup is now in its 18th year and attracts crews from all over Europe and sometimes beyond.

Blue Cup is organised by the Vernicos Yachts charter company who are based at Alimos, Kalamaki marina near Athens. (www.vernicos.gr/bluecup/) All yachts for the Blue Cup are chartered from Vernicos as bare boat charters and all vessels are from the French Beneteau stable. The boats come fully equipped so other than personal clothing no other kit need be taken. All boats have roller reefing headsails and depending on class have either lazy-jacks/boom mounted sail bag with fully battened mainsail or in-mast main sail reefing. No spinnakers are provided and none are allowed for the races.

The vessel that was chartered by Clifden Boat Club was a Beneteau Cyclades 43.3 which was named "Velona".

The first day of sailing is usually a shake-down sail to the start point of the race the next day, in 2008 this was 30 NM from Alimos/Kalamaki to Palea Epidavros.

The passage started out with calm conditions that required the use of the engine for perhaps half of the passage. The wind did pick up in the afternoon and the remainder of the passage was under sail.

A dinner had been arranged for all crews including wine at Verdelis Inn and was included in the entry costs. And very nice it was too. Entertainment included traditional Greek dancing and singing.

The first leg of the race the next day was supposed to be 18¼ NM from Palea Epidavros to Methana. In the event the race start was moved some distance forward due to the forecast of calm conditions. The day's race was very slow going.

A very cheap, but very good family run restaurant was found by the crew upon arrival in the evening and a good meal made up for the slow passage.

The second leg of the race on day three was 11 NM from Methana to the island of South Poros.

The weather was hot with a gentle breeze which made progress very sedate. A second race of 10½ NM (third leg) in a triangular circuit was scheduled for the afternoon. The time limit was 4 hours but by the late afternoon the breeze just died and most of the fleet did not make the finish line in time. Most yachts threw in the towel and abandoned the race to motor in to Poros to get a good berth.

For our crew it was to a restaurant some way behind the town which tumbles down the hill, up some picturesque narrow streets to a delicious meal, again being very reasonable in price.

The fourth leg of the race on day four was supposed to be a morning race of 11NM from South Poros to Soupia. In the event this leg was cancelled because of the very calm conditions and so the fleet motored on to the off shore area off Soupia and awaited the start of the planned fifth leg that afternoon. This leg was just under 12 NM and finished at the town of Ermioni. Progress was slow but most of the fleet did manage to cross the finish line. The evening meal was provided by Vernicos yachts and was a form of carvery/help yourself at Ganosis Taverna.

The final sixth leg on day five was supposed to be 18½ NM from Ermioni to Porto Heli. The start line was pushed forward some 8NM in the hope that the wind would pick up in the afternoon and that all the fleet would stand a chance of finishing in time. In the event the wind did pick up a little and the race was probably the most satisfying of the week.

That evening all the crews attended the grand prize giving at the AKS Hotel where Dinner was also arranged by Vernicos Yachts.

The next two days were allocated for free sailing to get back to Alimos Marina Kalamaki near Athens. We stopped off at the beautiful island and port of Hydra, stayed again at Poros for the night and stopped at the island and town of Aegina for lunch before arriving at Alimos the same day. Most of the time we motored, the wind which had now picked up at long last, was out of the north and in consequence on our nose! After staying overnight on board and having a very relaxed final day we flew back to the UK in the evening. Unfortunately due to flight times not matching up with two airlines we had to stay the night at Luton before flying back to Galway the next morning.

Despite the poor wind conditions, the whole week was very enjoyable. The scenery, food, partying and being part of an event on this scale made it all very worthwhile.

So what were the costs?

The charter cost and entry for the Blue Cup was €3,220, split 6 ways (6 crew members) = €536.66

Cost of Galway to Luton Flight (Aer Arann) per person = €121

Luton to Athens Flight (Easy Jet) per person = €133.36

Diesel Fuel used on yacht 109 litres €141 split 6 ways = €23.50

Taxi from Athens airport to Kalamaki per person (three sharing a taxi) = €14

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Taxi from Luton airport to Travelodge motel at Luton per person (Large taxi) = £7 (€8.75)

Taxi from Travelodge motel to Luton airport per person (Booked Large Taxi) = £5 (€6.25)

Travelodge motel 2 sharing a room per person (advanced booked) = £15 (€18.75)

Total per person €876.27

Not including food and drinks except where provided as part of charter cost (3 evening meals)

Travel Insurance was left to individuals in my case it was €22.50 from getcover.com Tel 1850927247.

We created a boat kitty that paid for all food and some drinks. This was topped up as the week progressed. The basics for on board breakfast and lunch/nibbles was purchased out of the kitty and all of our evening meals. I would say on average the evening meals came to between €15 to €20 per person

The fleet consisted of two classes, the cruiser racers in class A and the cruisers (oceanis) in Class B

A total of 30 yachts were in class A and a total of 21 yachts in Class B making a total fleet of 51 yachts ranging in size from 37 ft to 52 ft.

Our yacht was a Cyclades 43.3 (L.O.A. 13.26m) was built in 2005 which had three cabins (1x twin & 2x double) plus saloon converted bunk. There were 3 w.c.'s all with showers. A cockpit shower was also fitted. The helm was twin wheel. Beam 4.43m, engine Yanmar 54hp. The boat had pressurized hot water, fridge, VHF(DSC), GPS, Log, Depth and autopilot. A radio-c.d. player was also fitted. An inflatable tender and small outboard engine were also provided.

The 2008 Blue Cup is my 4th time participating. In the past the weather has been either similar with very light airs or very strong winds which required some reefing during the race! It really does vary but at most times it has been shorts and tee shirt weather even in November.

Werner Cook