

A cheap and easy Atlantic circuit

When Andrew Beveridge wanted to visit the Atlantic islands without doing a full Atlantic circuit, he found a cheap and easy alternative

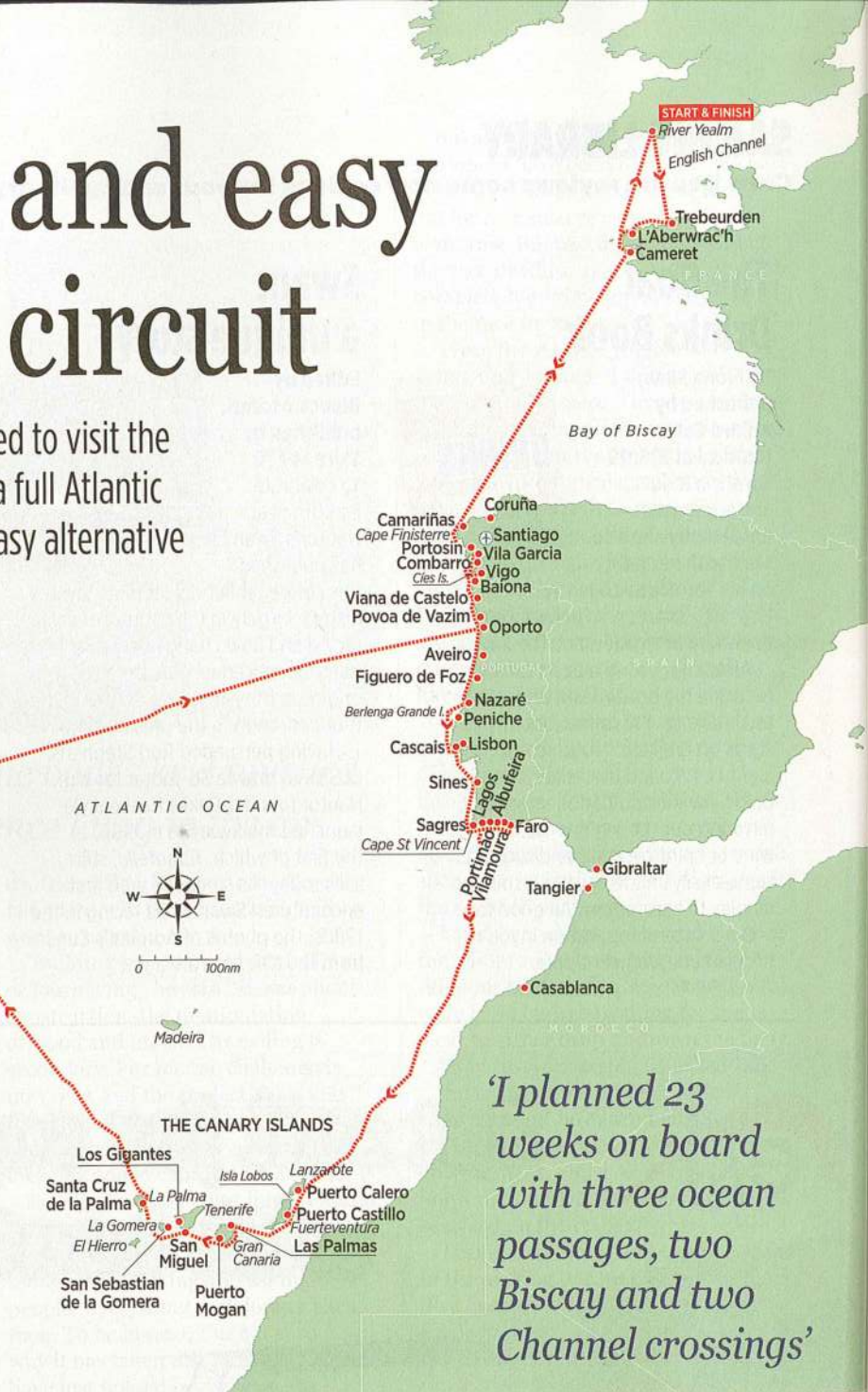
Frankly, Atlantic voyages can get boring. I had completed the full circuit going south from the UK, sailing my Southerly 46 *Nightson* to the Canaries, across to the Windward and Leeward islands with the Atlantic Rally for Cruisers (ARC) and then north via the British Virgin Islands, Bermuda and the Azores, but I was after a new adventure. I wanted to go back to some of the beautiful warm places I had seen, but without the rigour of two full Atlantic voyages.

When I bought my new lifting-keel Jeanneau 379 *Nightstar* in 2012, therefore, I planned to set off on a one-year voyage. After a couple of

PHOTO: JOHN RICHMOND/ALAMY



Andrew left his home port, Newton Ferrers on the River Yealm, for a year



'I planned 23 weeks on board with three ocean passages, two Biscay and two Channel crossings'

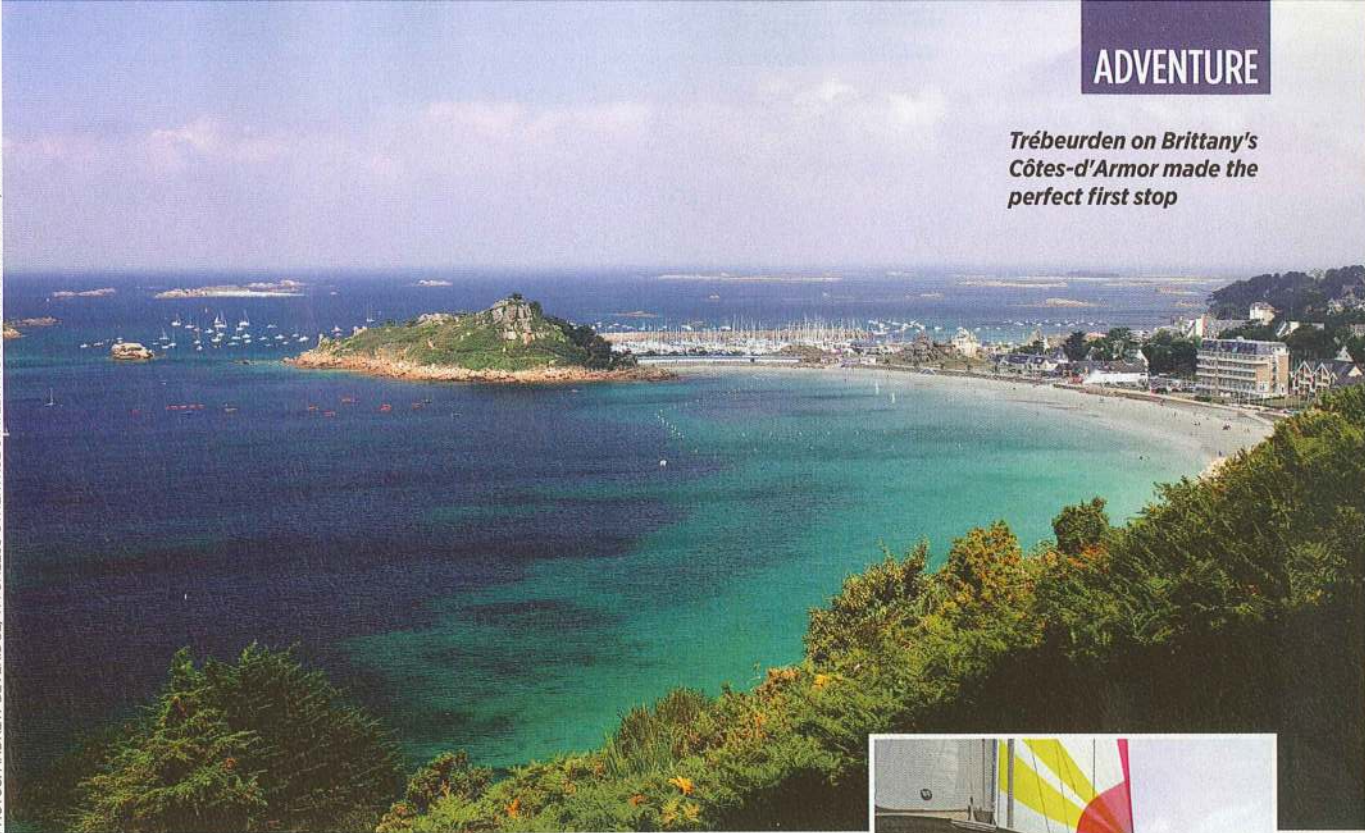
shakedown cruises, I would sail to Brittany, the rías of Galicia and the Portuguese Algarve coast before an autumn crossing to the Canaries. There I would overwinter before returning via the Azores, Portugal and the Rias Baixas. In all I planned 23 weeks on board in the 55-week period with three ocean passages, two Biscay and two Channel crossings.

My old university friend John Oates and I left in June, starting our trip with the Yealm YC Summertime race to Trébeurden in Brittany. It was fun to set off with a fleet of 30 boats and because I hadn't overloaded *Nightstar* for cruising, we still came third in our class of 20 boats. After suitable celebrations in Trébeurden we carried on sailing to L'Aber Wrac'h

CHART: MAXINE HEATH

Trébeurden on Brittany's Côtes-d'Armor made the perfect first stop

PHOTOS: ANDREW BEVERIDGE/YM UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED. PHOTO RIGHT: DAVID JONES/ALAMY



and Camaret, and then to Camariñas on the north-west corner of Galicia. Camariñas was a better stop than La Coruña for us as it saved 30 miles on our route to Vigo, as well as having a lovely yacht club. Having passed outside the Chaussée de Sein, we completed the 360 miles in 60 hours.

In Vigo we were joined by my girlfriend Sally and John's wife Anne for a week exploring Rías Baixas – the Rías de Vigo, Pontevedra, Arousa and Muros – where we found sheltered water for cruising and fascinating historic towns. It was disappointing that it takes three days to get permission to visit the lovely islands of Cíes, where we only had time to anchor briefly. The week flew by and soon it was time to drop John and Anne at Vilagarcía to get to Santiago airport, while Sally and I returned to gorgeous Baiona for more tapas and drinks at the splendid Club de Yates.

The west coast of Portugal is a great cruising ground with harbours every

30 miles or so, eliminating the need for night passages, which is just as well as lobster pots are numerous. We potted down this coast with the prevailing northerly wind and current behind us, stopping at harbours along the way, including Oporto, where there is a nice new marina, Aveiro, with its beautiful salt marshes and fascinating town, and the island of Berlenga Grande off Peniche. We spent a rolly night here but loved the views and the sound of the Cory's shearwaters burrowing in the cliffs.

Finally we made it to Cascais and our choice of Lisbon marinas, Oeiras, where our friends Pauline and Terry Edgson joined us for eight days to help us get the boat down the Algarve. After sightseeing for a couple of days we set off to Sines with a fair wind once more and the gennaker up most of the way to Sagres, just round Cape St Vincent and the longest daily run on this coast of about 50 miles.

The wind eventually failed and we spent a peaceful night at anchor off Sagres, but woke up the next morning to a howling cold wind and rain. We didn't want to stick it out here, so we upped the anchor and set off for Lagos before breakfast. After 10 miles the wind dropped, the sun came out and the temperature soared. By the time we got to Lagos it was nearly 30°C and the true Algarve weather stayed with us for the rest of the week. We ➔



John and I had a fabulous sail across the Bay of Biscay with the spinnaker up



Friends Pauline and Terry join Sally and Andrew in Oeiras for an Algarve cruise



Fair winds and perfect weather let us set the gennaker for the passage south

Wildlife and peace abound on the Portuguese island of Berlenga



CHART: MAXINE HEATH



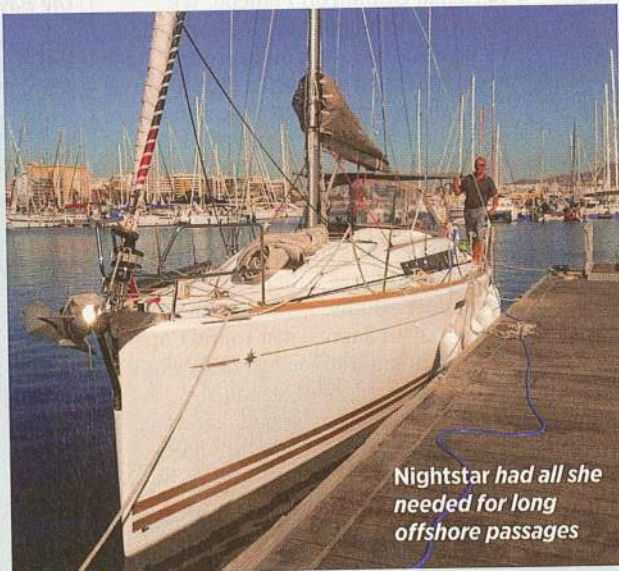
The red sandstone sea-stacks off the Algarve coast, about five miles from Lagos, made a great place to anchor and explore

'How I sailed the Atlantic on the cheap'

I chose the Jeanneau 379 for her speed and comfort for two couples, and six at a pinch. She has a spacious cockpit with a great table. Twin wheels and rudders give her excellent control under sail, and the lifting keel means she can dry out.

I didn't want to spend a huge amount on blue-water accessories. On my previous boat I had the works: water maker, Duogen generator, satellite phone, radar, bimini, storm jib and EPIRB. On *Nightstar* I spent a tenth of what I did on *Nightsong*, saving in the following ways:

- No water maker was needed since I carry 330 litres of water, which is more than enough for one-



Nightstar had all she needed for long offshore passages

week ocean passages with three crew.

- Instead of a wind or water generator, I bought a third domestic battery, giving me 300Ah, and two cabin-top solar panels. I ran the engine twice a day to charge batteries on the long voyages, though with calm

seas and sunny weather as we got south, this was only necessary once a day.

- I had an AIS transceiver but didn't bother with radar. On my last boat I'd only ever used it once in anger, to spot squalls, and found it hard to interpret. Even small fishing vessels tend to have AIS now.

- Satellite phone and data link wasn't necessary, since GRIB files for our week at sea could be downloaded before departure. My DeLorme tracker meant my girlfriend Sally and my children could track me accurately. I did buy an EPIRB but the DeLorme's emergency button obviates the need for an EPIRB.

- I designed a cheap and light bimini using *Nightstar's* twin backstays. This had no windage when stowed, was a third the cost and weight of a standard bimini and I could use it in up to 15 knots.

- My ocean passages were all planned for summer and early autumn when storms were very unlikely, so I didn't take a storm jib. I have previously found that rigging an inner forestay and storm jib in a Force 9 was dangerous and not hugely beneficial.



Nightstar anchored under the 1500ft cliffs of Los Gigantes

visited the lovely river of Alvor and brash, noisy Vilamoura, then spent a happy two days at our favourite Portuguese island of Culatra in the lagoon off Faro. This is a wonderfully hippy, car-less island that is little more than a sand spit but with beautiful beaches on the Atlantic side and fresh, cheap local seafood at the numerous restaurants. After dropping the Edgsons off near Faro airport – where they nearly got arrested as illegal immigrants after climbing over a locked marina gate – Sally and I had a few more days at some idyllic anchorages near Albufeira and Portimão. We left the boat at Portimão marina to fly home for a few weeks.

We returned again at the end of September for a short cruise before my friends David Morrish and Nick Elkins came to help get the boat down to the Canaries. I expected the passage to be downwind on the early trade winds and the easiest of the three ocean legs. In reality, we struggled against light south-westerly winds and nearly ran out of diesel before making Puerto Calero marina on Lanzarote after five days.

I decided to use Marina San Miguel on the south-east coast of Tenerife as my base for the winter, rather than anywhere else in the Canaries. It's only five miles from Tenerife South airport with plenty of flights from the UK. It is central to the Canaries with lots of options for day sails, even as far as El

Hierro 70 miles away, and it is one of the few marinas that don't suffer from swell in gales. The big supermarket is a trek up the hill but not far by taxi, and there are good restaurants nearby.

After sightseeing on Lanzarote, David, Nick and I visited Isla de Lobos. From there we called in at Puerto Castillo and Morro Jable on Fuertaventura, before crossing to Las Palmas, where my crew left me.

Singlehanded, I sailed down the east coast of Gran Canaria to the beautiful south-west of the island, staying at Pasito Blanco, Anfi del Mar and the delightful Puerto de Mogán. Finally I crossed over to Marina San Miguel for the winter, on a glorious broad reach. Marina manager Rafael gave me a warm welcome in good English, and it cost me €2,600 for the winter.

It proved to be an excellent place to base the boat. Sally and I managed three fortnight-long stints on the

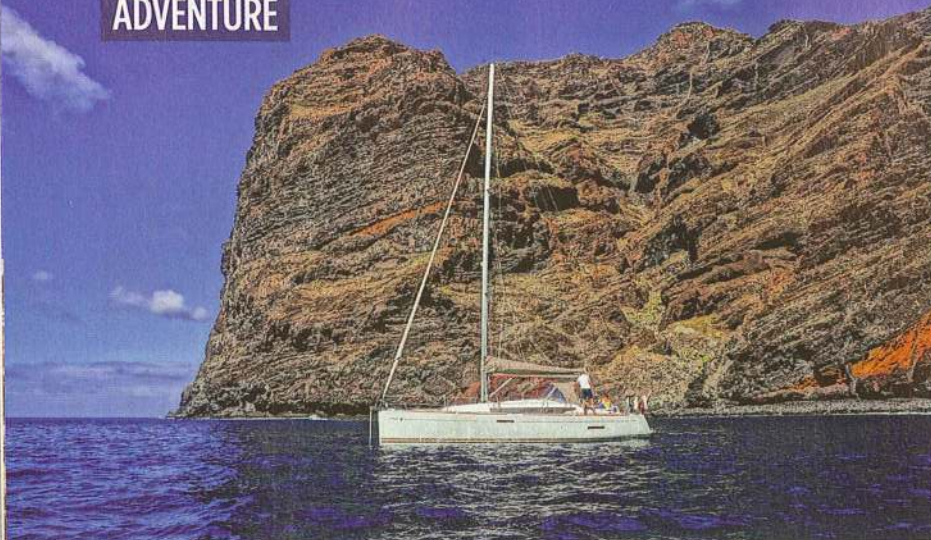
boat, hosting a total of eight visitors on board. We spent time around Los Gigantes on Tenerife, anchored under the 1,500ft cliffs, and at Mogán on Gran Canaria, but La Gomera was our most frequent destination. A car hire to cross the island is highly recommended, as it has the most extraordinary centre of any island I have ever been to. Unlike the other high Canary islands – Tenerife, Gran Canaria, Fuertaventura and La Palma, which have clear visibility and pines on their mountainous slopes – La Gomera has a deciduous forest shrouded in mist and full of lichens, mosses and flowers.

The only real problem was the wind. It was always warm, but the north-east trades blew constantly at 20 knots and in the wind acceleration zones between the islands, the wind picks up to 35 knots. We had to tackle the zone off San Sebastián de

La Gomera several times in Force 8. You can hear and see the wind as you approach, but even with a deep-reefed main and genoa, *Nightstar* was still overpowered. This rather dampened our visitors' enjoyment of sailing. Closer to Tenerife in the lee of the majestic 12,000ft El Teide mountain, the wind often dropped completely and even came in from the south-west occasionally. The zones are unavoidable, so you just have to bear them in mind and get on with it. ➔



Andrew cleaning Nightstar's bow thruster and hull



An easy sail away from our winter base, we found we kept returning to Los Gigantes



Neil and Jenny enjoy a drink in Los Gigantes marina

After lifting the boat out for a week in late April at Marina San Miguel to repaint the antifouling, I returned at the end of May with two crew, Rick Clayton and Warren Haylock, for the trip up to São Miguel in the Azores. I expected this ocean leg to be the toughest as we would have to plug our way into the prevailing northerly wind and the south-going Azores current. Having made it to La Palma from Tenerife in two easy daytime hops, we left from Santa Cruz de La Palma one morning in early June and made a surprisingly fast passage. Despite a foul current of just under a knot, we covered the 630 miles to the south-easterly Azorean island of Santa Maria

in 103 hours. In our favour, the wind never went north of north-east and it remained constant between 10 to 24 knots. Amazingly, we laid our destination in a single tack!

Santa Maria was very welcoming and is the warmest of the islands, being a whole degree south of São Miguel. It's also beautiful, with hydrangea hedges in full bloom for mile after mile. Thence on

to São Miguel, where we arrived at the same time as the AZAB (Azores and Back) race. Sally came out to join me, replacing Rick and Warren. We had a wonderful time sailing around São Miguel and the tiny volcanic island of Ilheu da Vila in particular, where we spent two nights at anchor and the swell didn't affect us too badly.

The morning after Sally left by air, I set off singlehanded for Oporto, 820 miles away. The wind had gone light so I had to motorsail nearly half the distance. I'm no purist, and if the boat speed drops below 3.5 knots, I'll stick the engine on. After all, fast is safe. Luckily, *Nightstar* will sail at 5 knots in 8 knots of breeze, but even so there



Andrew Beveridge

Andrew, 69, was taught to sail on his father's cruising boat aged six. He bought his first boat, a Jouet 23, in 1974 and has since owned a Super Seal 26, an X-302, a Southerly 46 and finally his Jeanneau 379. He retired from the oil industry in 2008 and now lives in Newton Ferrers with Sally. He is commodore of the Yealm YC.



We saw over 100 dolphins and whales

were many calms on the way. One night, I was roused from my sleep by the eruption of a whale blowing right next to the boat. The 30ft fin whale swam alongside for 10 minutes. What an experience! Apart from that, the ocean was almost empty – there are no shipping routes here, and all but the last 100 miles are too deep for trawlers. Still, I woke every hour to check the horizon and AIS.

I completed the passage in 150 hours, an average of 5.5 knots.

John and Anne Oates and Sally rejoined *Nightstar* in Oporto and after the required sightseeing, we ambled north catching an unusual southerly breeze to Viana do Castelo, enabling us to have the spinnaker up for six hours. A good week was spent in the Rías again before Anne left us at Portosín. It was a tough beat the next day round Cape Finisterre to Caramiñas, then a fair wind took us across Biscay to Camaret, with two 10-hour spinnaker runs during the days.

With that it was time to make for home and a final 130-mile overnight sail took us back to the River Yealm. It had been an incredible experience of ocean sailing, without having to prepare for full Atlantic crossings. With 4,250 miles sailed, memories of whales and dolphins, remote islands and warm anchorages, the trip had been a resounding success. ▲



PHOTO: BRIAN JANSSEN/ALAMY

Ponta Delgada on São Miguel is a key stop-off point in mid-Atlantic