



Tai Tai at rest

Tai Tai of London

<http://blog.mailasail.com/taitai>

Newsletter No. 1. May 2014

Tai Tai entered for the AZAB 2015

It started over a pint in the bar at Cowes in September 2013.

We were sitting having a quiet pint after a day's sailing. Conversation drifted towards open water sailing and the joys of endless horizons and a fresh breeze rather than the confined waters of the Solent.

'What about the AZAB?' An iPhone web search provided a date for the next Azores and Back (AZAB) race.

A chance conversation two days later with renowned yachtsman Paul Heiney, a veteran of the AZAB and recently returned from Cape Horn, encouraged us. Our wives proved to be understanding and we submitted our entry with James Morrow and Charles Macmillan as co-skippers. The campaign was on!



James at the helm in brisk conditions

The Boat

Tai Tai, a Malö 38, has been James's family cruising boat for over a decade. Built by Malö yachts of Sweden in 1991 she is a solidly built, blue water cruiser with a great pedigree. With room to sleep 7, she is very comfortable for a family, and easily handled by just two people.

Preparation

The AZAB is a 2,400 mile race, *"in the unlikely event of you sailing in a direct line"*. It starts on 6th June 2015 from Falmouth with the return leg from Ponta Delgada due to start on the 23rd June. Each leg is likely to take us 12 to 14 days depending on the weather.

The race is run under the ISAF offshore racing rules as a category 1 event. This rigorous set of specifications seeks to ensure that all boats and crews are capable of an endurance ocean race where self reliance is key.

Tai Tai is a solidly built boat, intended for open ocean sailing and challenging conditions.. She is heavily and strongly built, intended for safety and comfort rather than racing speed. Much of the essential gear is already in place but as part of the preparation key items are being serviced, replaced or added.

New heavy weather sails in day-glo orange, a new GPS-enabled EPIRB (distress beacon), an AIS transponder and an Iridium satellite phone complement the existing kit including SSB radio, radar transponder, wind steering, wind power generation and personal locator beacons. Her sails have been serviced and bits of running rigging replaced.

This blog will be updated as we prepare for the race.



Charles sporting Tai Tai's colours

The Crew

James is a Yachtmaster Offshore with over 30 years of sailing experience including two Atlantic crossings. He regularly cruises with his family from Tai Tai's home berth on the River Orwell.

Charles has his Yachtmaster Coastal qualification and has regularly sailed with James over the past 25 years including an Atlantic crossing and some challenging conditions. He is now based in Italy.

Horatio is the ship's best bear. Born in the Nyanga mountains of Zimbabwe, he has logged over 10,000 sea miles on Tai Tai. He prefers to stay below decks.



Next Stages

Both Charles & James are doing the mandatory sea survival and safety courses in June. Immediately afterwards they intend to do the qualifying 300 mile non-stop passage from the River Orwell across the North Sea. This will enable them to test the new gear, establish routines, and shake out any gremlins in the systems on board.

While sailing updates will be posted to the blog site either by Iridium satellite link or over SSB radio with a Pactor modem. Watch this space.
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