

Cape Town to Lisbon 2017 – race 1037

Race Report by “Zoe”

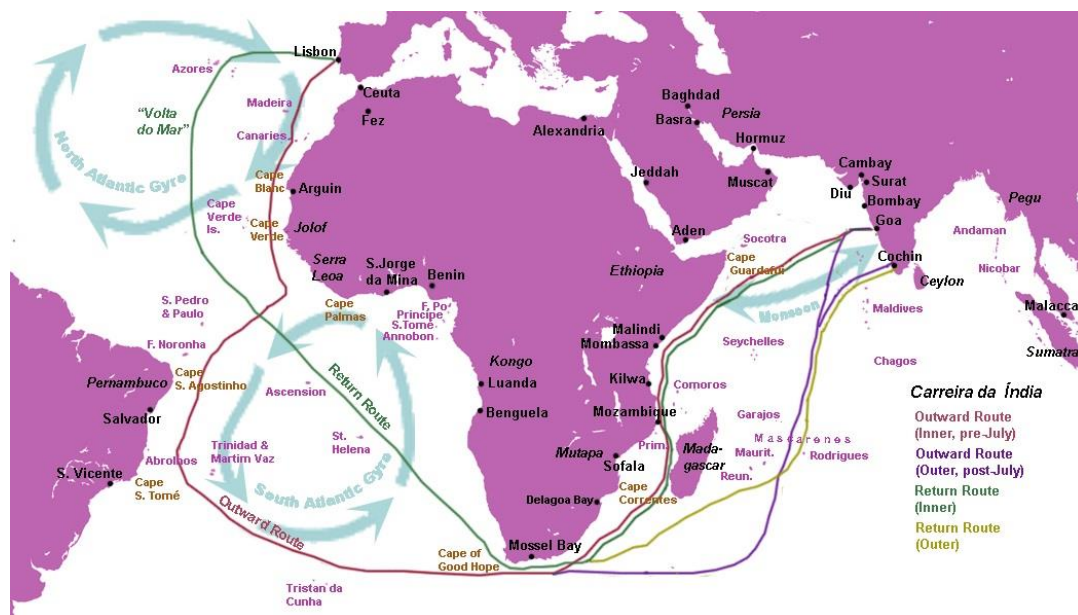
Fantastic to be standing on the podium of a long open water ocean race. My first. Up to this race, all my best results were achieved on short races. This was 6204 nautical miles, 22 days plus race.

I also discovered that my limit of simultaneous races is three. In fact, I can only concentrate in two races at the same time and the third will be sailed on the fly. At one point I was on four races and it was clear that I was going to make mistakes, so I beached my boat in the Osaka race to concentrate on the Lisbon, the Ron Miel and Jacob’s birthday races. Even so, mistakes were made and I learned my lesson to sign up for a maximum of two races from now on.

Because so many races were going on simultaneously, I started this Lisbon race about 45 minutes late. It turned out that it didn’t make a difference. My guess is that races that cross the Equator and the doldrums a late start doesn’t make a difference because at some point the fleet is bound to compress and sort of resets the race. The key is to press on and reach the equator as close as possible to the leaders, so when the fleet slows down you are close to the pack to have a change to finish on the top.

Because the limitations of the Wind Grib files, routers can only reach a point 6 or 7 days ahead, and even so the accuracy of the results drop off very quickly after 3 or 4 days in the future. On the Volvo-70 sailboat, that translates in about 1500 or so miles ahead with the last 800 miles more or less useless due to lack of accuracy.

So, since our race was divided in two legs, first to Noronha, 3365 nm and then to Lisbon, 2863 miles, the key to do well is to set way-points spread out about 700 miles apart and use the router to those points. I set about 5 way-points and 4 way-points respectively. To pick the points location, I used my trusted Pilot-Charts and a map of the Portuguese routes to-and-from India that I found online.



You can see that the first leg to Noronha is pretty much follow the rhumb-line from Cape Town to Fernando de Noronha. That is what "Zoe" did and we turned the island at #32 on the leaderboard. Perfect, I was in business. Although, I knew that any position gained from there on would be difficult due to the quality of the remaining sailors ahead. At that point, I would be happy with a Top 20 finish.

The first five days of the second leg was a no-brainer, full throttle dead North (cc = 0 degree). You could set the boat and disappear for 5 days and you would be fine. Great race for us who likes our night sleeping.

Something interesting happened when the top fleet reached the vicinity of the Azores. At that point, we were within the Wind-Grib reach to Lisbon, so it was possible to route all the way to the finish line. But, the router would give a straight line to the goal. In fact, the router was oscillating between going North and going straight to the goal. I could clearly see the hesitation of the leaders, they were pointing to NE or N, oscillating every few hours. That was my opening to try to pass.

At that point, I disregard the route results and use my original way-point located at a latitude North of Lisbon. See the Portuguese map above, note how the "return route" goes north of the Azores before turning almost 90 degrees Eastbound to Lisbon.

So, when I finally reach my way-point North of the Azores and gybed to the goal, the leaderboard was showing "Zoe" at #65. But I had a better angle and better pressure than everyone. From there, it was reel in boat after boat until I crossed the line in second place. Kipper1258 also went North and it was beyond my reach to pass.

Congrats to Kipper1258, to the top 10 and all the sailors that participated in another great SOL race. As always, my sincere thanks to all the volunteers that make all this happen.

Antonio