

## Together with our OKA from Montevideo (Uruguay) to Antwerp (Belgium) on the Grimaldi RoCo freighter "Grande Amburgo"

### Leg details

**Date** July 6 - July 29, 2014

**Leg** Montevideo (Uruguay) - Santos (Brazil) - Dakar (Senegal) - Tilbury (England) - Antwerp (Belgium)

**PDF**



**Leg map** (click to enlarge in separate window)



On Sunday morning, July 6th, we leave the hospitality of Heinz and Silvia and the **Paraiso Suizo**. The sun is shining but there is still a lot of water on the ground from yesterday's storm.

We stop at the Tienda Inglesa in **Atlántida** to get some fruits ..... just in case ..... should the cook on board of the ship not be good .....



We reach the harbour of **Montevideo** and as we drive toward the Buquebus terminal we spot a camper that is standing there.

Quickly Susi heads over and asks if they are also waiting for the Grimaldi .....

Yes, they are.

Good!

They are Jean-Yves and Martine from France.

Soon we are happily chatting and exchanging stories.

We have a very similar background, they also come from computing, have worked with banks, have retired early ..... etc. etc. .... the only BIG difference is that Jean-Yves likes Apple and we hate it!

But otherwise it looks like we will have a lot of fun on the boat with them.

As we only expect somebody from Grimaldi at 2 PM there is still quite some time to pass.

So we have lunch together ..... with our supplies and a good bottle of wine from Jean-Yves and Martine.

Well, this starts good .....

2 PM comes and goes ..... nobody from Grimaldi appears .....

We are a bit irritated because the other 2 passengers, two motorcyclists, have not arrived either.....

Jean-Yves checks the Buquebus terminal .... nobody is waiting there either .....

At 3 PM Susi decides to call the agent.

But all the public telephone boxes in the harbour accept no cash!

Luckily the friendly lady in the guard house calls them from her mobile.

The news are not good:

Because of the storm the ship cannot enter in the harbour and will only arrive tomorrow morning at dawn.

OK, so we decide to go to the light house near the ANCAP at Punta Carretas and stay there for the night.

The ocean has changed its colour to brown and waves roll against the beach.

The weather deteriorates rapidly and it looks like rain.

Jean-Yves and Martine invite us over for coffee and we have it cosy in their camper.

As we head over the storm breaks loose.

Their camper sways in the wind and since the camper is facing the storm with its side the rain is pushed into the camper through the windows.

Later on Jean-Yves and Martine head over to the large ANCAP for dinner and WiFi and we head "back home" to the OKA.

What a storm!

The OKA rolls and the wind whistles.

But we enjoy it in the warm security of our rolling home.

During the night the storm quietens down.

Good, so the ship will most probably be in the harbour in the morning.



On Monday morning we wake up to sunshine.

Quickly we pack up and head to the harbour.

We don't want to be caught in the rush-hour; Montevideo's rush-hour is not that bad but still .....

The Grande Amburgo is moored and we are relieved.

Soon the French couple arrives too and later on also the two polish motorcycle drivers Izabela and Krzysztof Rudz.

They had already travelled to South America on the Grande Amburgo.

Shortly after 9 o'clock Fabrizio from the agency arrives too and things start moving.



We have to x-ray the campers.

Then we are already allowed to drive to the **Grande Amburgo** but have to wait at the beginning of the pier.



When the arriving campers come past us they stop and there is a big hallo.  
And the most important question is placed: Is it a good cook?  
They all confirm that the cook (Rocco) is very good and the steward (Brian) is very friendly.  
We are very pleased to hear that.  
A bad cook can spoil the whole trip!



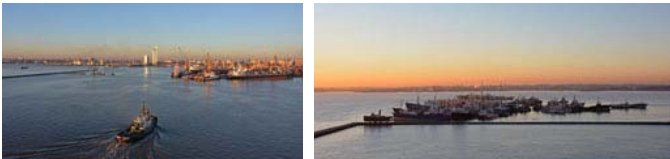
Shortly after 12 we are already allowed to drive on board with the vehicles.  
We just have time to move all our gear into the cabin and then it is lunch time ..... Penne a la Arabiata, then salmon with cauliflower, then meet on sauce and then an orange for desert ..... yes the cook is really good!  
We are so happy.



In the afternoon we have a look at the loading activities on the ship.  
The containers are loaded with the ship's own cranes.  
The way the work is done is almost as bad as we have seen it in Tahiti on our [trip with the CMA CGM Matisse in 2005!](#)



Here too the container carrying mechanism is lowered to "load" two people that have to push the mechanism around in such a way that it can clicks itself onto the container at the correct position.  
Then the container is then pushed and shoved into the required position ..... banging into other containers, damaging the roofs of some containers ..... not very efficient .....



Later on Susi goes to the gym and Ruedi is busy with his "on-board duties" like reading the GPS position and sending the position mail to his sisters.



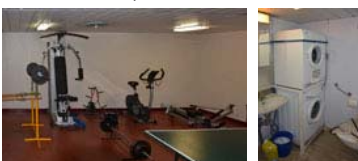
Already it is dinner time and again we can enjoy the good food.  
This will be a nice trip .... but dangerous for the waste line!!!  
Very tired but happy we cuddle up in the beds .....

It feels good to be on board again.



The loading goes on into the night.  
Shortly after 3 AM in the morning the Grande Amburgo leaves the harbour of Montevideo.  
We can enjoy the views from our cabin window and don't have to go out into the cold.

On Tuesday morning at 7:30 AM our alarm goes off ..... breakfast time!  
We have to get used to use an alarm again ..... we usually let the daylight to wake us up .....  
It is a beautiful day and we can see Punta del Este from our window.



In the morning it is time for the gym again and some washing.  
The passengers have their own washing machine and tumbler ..... fancy!

Ruedi is busy making the drawings of the new back section for the OKA while Susi is working on the pictures from the trip.

Soon it is time for lunch.

Rocco the cook appreciates if we are punctual for the meals (7:30 – 8:45 AM breakfast, 11:00 – 11:45 AM lunch and 6 – 6:45 PM dinner) .....

Eating is one of the important occupations for the passengers on a ship.

That's why we are so happy that Rocco is such a good cook!

In the afternoon Ruedi also starts his gym activity and gives the rudder machine a go.

After dinner we sit with the other passengers in the launch.

The two motorcyclists Krzysztof and his wife Izabela are planning to have their own camper too.

So we all have our favourite theme: Campers!

We find it funny that the camper of Jean-Yves and Martine and ours are so similar in their functionality and that we carry the same stuff along.

Over and over again we laugh because we have the same experiences and ideas.

We finally find a few things (not many thought!) that are different:

They not only have a reversing camera, but also one at the front, at the highest point.

If they have to pass a low section / bridge they can actually watch in the camera if the camper can pass.

They also have an additional monitor in the bed area where he can view both cameras.

So if they hear a noise at night they can have a look through the cameras. Good idea .....

They should add the idea from Tom and Dagmar, the Germans we met in Africa:

They have lights on all four sides of the camper and a switch in the bed area.

So if they hear something at night they turn on the light .....

It works wonders!

During the night we cross into the Brazilian waters .....

On Wednesday morning the weather is overcast.

There is no wind and the water is very calm.

At 10 AM we have the safety instruction.

It goes rather quickly as we all have been on Grimaldi ships before.

The life boat is shown with all its content, foot rations (for 1 day only .....,) water (1 lt per person!!!!) and we are even shown how to start the engine!



After another excellent lunch (I think I better start mentioning the bad ones ..... if there are any .....) the discussion between the men is about corruption and what to do ..... an endless topic if you have travelled in Africa .....

After dinner Krzysztof, the Polish motorcyclist, tells us, that they are actually planning to build their own camper and he is very interested in knowing the details of our campers.

Again we are surprised how similar the ideas of Jean-Yves and us are.

During the night we arrive in the bay of Santos.

On Thursday around 8 AM we start sailing up the river into the long port of Santos.

It is raining .....



The port is very quiet and not many ships are moored.

Also the streets look deserted ... almost no traffic .....

We wonder if there is a strike ..... or if Brazil is still in mourning after its 7:1 defeat in the world cup against Germany .....

Halfway up the ship suddenly starts turning.

An officer informs us that a car has fallen off the pier and the rescue operation is on its way.

We will have to wait out in the bay until all has finished.

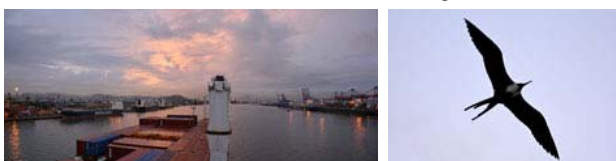


We will not mention the lunch ..... just look at the pictures of the antipasto plate .....

It looks like Rocco has the same routine as the cook on the Grande Costa d'Arvorio (the ship we came to South America with) had:

Thursdays and Sunday special meals ..... which would mean some extra time in the gym for us!!!

Late in the afternoon we are allowed to sail into the harbor again.



There is more traffic in the harbor now.

Luckily the rain waits until we are at our place at the pier before it comes down in buckets again.

Dinner ..... sorry, I know, but the food is too good! ..... pasta ..... then roast chicken and French fries ..... for desert fresh doughnuts ..... Calories!!!!!! ..... but yummy ones!



The Grande Ambugro is refuelled in Santos.

Truck after truck arrives ..... one truck of heavy fuel last for approx. 1 1/2 days of sailing .....

In the evening we watch movies from Jean-Yves and Martine.

It is amazing what they drive with their Ducato 4x4.

We have to change our opinion about what can be done with an ordinary camper upgraded to 4x4. But as always it very much depends on the driver too.

On Friday morning around 9 AM it is already time to leave Santos.

Yes, it is raining .....

Somehow it just seems that this year Brazil is being drowned in rain!

The Grande Amburgo takes course in direction of the Equator.  
 Sadly the visit of the port of Victoria has been cancelled; we are heading straight to Dakar.  
 On Saturday the weather slowly starts improving.  
 In the afternoon we pass some oil rigs.



Some of them are ships .... interesting.



Dinner ..... well ..... first Garlic Spaghetti followed by five types of pizza ..... and ripe pineapple for desert ..... no comment .....

During the night we have to advance our clocks by 1 hour.

On Sunday, July 13, it is already one week that we are on the Grande Amburgo.  
 Time sure passes by quickly.  
 Today is the first day since we have come on board that the weather is pleasant.  
 In the morning the crew is busy cleaning the deck with a high-pressure cleaner and a lot of soap and fresh water.



It is funny to watch the crew how they wait until the ship rolls to the side to sweep the soapy water into the gullies.  
 It is done in preparation of today's party.  
 When Susi asks the officer what the occasion is for the party he just replies: It is Sunday and we have nice weather .....

They have a small pig and it will be roasted over the open fire for several hours.  
 The officer also tells that there will be a bomb alarm and fire drill this afternoon.



Lunch ..... antipasto, then lasagne, then meat and for desert water melon ....  
 It is quite interesting to see the "trading" on the table with the food:  
 - Olives go from Ruedi to Susi, from Krzysztof to Izabela and from Martine to Jean-Yves  
 - all men receive the salami and pancetta from the ladies  
 - Ruedi receives the octopus from Krzysztof and Izabela  
 - Jean-Yves does not like fruit so his desert fruit often goes to Susi and Izabela  
 - Susi always orders a cappuccino too so Jean-Yves can have a double one .....

During lunch there is a test-fire-alarm ....

Around 4 PM the exercise starts for the crew and we are ordered to the officers mess room.  
 A crew member comes and checks the room for bombs.  
 We hear on the walkie-talkie that bombs had been found.



Then our steward Brian shows up and instructs us to get the helmet, lifejacket and the survival suit and assemble at the muster station.  
 All have to assemble at the muster station.

Two are declared missing: Rocco the cook and his aid ... they are busy turning the sucking pig ....  
 We have to head over to the lifeboat and some have to go in.  
 Then the exercise is over and we passengers can go.  
 Only Jean-Yves and Martine had remembered to bring a jacket with them .... We other get a reminder from the first officer .....



On the way back to the cabins it is time to visit Rocco ..... the sucking pig looks good ....  
 Later on the sound of banging in the kitchen draws our attention.



Our steward Bryan is beating a towel with a metal piece from a kitchen machine ..... he is crushing ice .... for Caipirinhas!  
 Rocco asks Izabela to taste if it has enough sugar ..... she doesn't mind!

Dinner is a bit later and for once we all eat together.  
 Poor Bryan is stretched to his limits a bit ..... 18 people for dinner at the same time!

.... Pasta, meat (sucking pig, sausages, roast beef, ribs and chicken), salad, cheese for desert, ice cream and fruit for dessert .....

Bryan completely forgets to serve the aperitif drinks so we have it during dinner .....

Even though the Italian law prohibits alcohol for crews on ships that are sailing under an Italian flag for once the crew is allowed to have an alcoholic drink. Especially the cadets appreciate it and savour the whole selection from Caipirinhas to Campari Orange to Sangria to beer ....

Our stomachs are stretched to their limits .....

On Monday July 14 we are all busy working on our computers .... 6 people 5 computers ....

Only Martine seems to be "computer-less" ....

During the night we have to put the time 1 hour forward.

On Tuesday morning all look tired .... Jet-lag?

We decide to go for an extended siesta until lunch.



In the afternoon we take it easy.

The weather is perfect to sit outside and read a bit.



On Wednesday at 8:51 AM we pass the equator ..... the ship toots three times .....

From now on we will have to use "N" again on the GPS ..... it will be while until we can use "S" again .....

During the night we have to put the time 1 more hour forward.



On Thursday food is the main topic .... it is antipasto day and we love it.

Sadly during the day the nice sunshine disappears and some rain sets in .... again .....

We had much bad weather and rain on this trip .... like in 2012 as we were on the Grande Costa d'Arvorio. But this time no storm or rough sea.

For us it is hard to believe what the others tell, that they had had nothing but sun and heat on their trip to South America .... both in January .... like we ... but one year later ...



In the evening we assemble in the mess to enjoy a coffee.

Susi is busy with a puzzle .... sometimes with the help of Izabela or Ruedi ....

On Friday during lunch the phone rings in the kitchen.

It is the bridge telling us that we are passing some dolphins.

Quickly everybody storms out and there they are, jumping and playing.

But it is just for us to see .... No chance to catch them on camera .... but we sure enjoy it.

Shortly before midnight we arrive in **Dakar**.

On Saturday morning the first thing after breakfast is to go to the deck and have a look at what is happening in the harbour.



We are moored at a different spot than last time.

We hear from our fellow passengers that they also were moored at the neighbouring pier on their way to South America.

The UN vehicles look a bit more like money transport vehicles.

Well, at the end of the day it has the same reason: to protect the people inside from being shut ....

Then Susi checks the harbor for a free WiFi and strikes it lucky ..... an unprotected "D-Link" is visible!

Years back it was quite common to spot one as the D-Link routers were sold without passwords on it.

So if a not so Internet-savvy person installed the router everybody could appreciate the connection.

But these days most new routers per default come with a password .... no more free Internet for us ....

But for the moment we are all happy and soon the top deck turns into Internet-heaven .....

At lunch an officer celebrates his birthday and offers an excellent ice-cream cake.

So should you happen to be in Dakar and like good ice-cream don't miss to visit the French bakery "La Galette" .....

In the afternoon we watch the activities in the harbor.



There is a variety of bags being handled in the Dakar harbor.

We see orange and yellow ones being loaded.



But there are blue ones, white ones and a different shade of yellow ones being loaded to trucks and driven out of the port. We find a source of white and blue bag in the Vega Neptune at the next pier but still wonder what this is all about .....



It is hot and the spots underneath the large vehicles are thought after. Some men are taking off their shoes ..... some washing their feet .... It is hot ..... but wash the feet?



Then we understand: around 2 PM it seems to be praying time for the Muslims. Carton boxes that were used under the trucks for the siesta turn into prayer carpets. Once the prayer is over the "carpet" immediately is taken back and placed again under the vehicle to continue the siesta .....

Later on we see the change of the guard. The guard that finishes his duty takes off the uniform and the new one puts it on ..... they share one uniform!

In the afternoon the gym is in high demand .... because today is pizza evening! But first we are served with garlic spaghetti .... and the cook Rocco sure knows how to prepare them! Krzysztof is a great lover of spaghetti ... but garlic spaghetti tops it all. So he, Izabela and Jean-Yves go for second servings .... and Izabela almost goes for a third one .... after the pizza ..... but we tease her too much.



Later on the Grimaldi **Grande Marocco** also arrives in Dakar. They are moored at the neighbouring pier and we can see their passengers watching the lowering of the ramp. But there seems to be a problem .... For quite some time the ramp stays half down. Seems familiar ..... we had a similar problem on the Grande Costa d'Arvorio!



After dinner the deck cum Internet-cafe is in high demand again ... Facebook receives some new pictures .....

As the ship is due to sail only around midnight we go to bed. But we don't really sleep well. Every time the engine sounds a bit different we check if we are leaving .... only to find that we are still moored ....

Midnight comes and goes .... we are still moored ....

Around five o'clock a loud alarm starts sounding in all cabins. We haven't got a clue what it is and jump out of the beds. Luckily the alarm stops again .....

We are still moored .....

At breakfast we ask an officer what the alarm was all about .... somebody had forgotten that the anti-theft alarms had been activated on the staircases and activated it on the way down to the engine room ....

And yes, we are supposed to depart after breakfast ....



There is just enough time for some more Internet ..... even Skype works!

Around 8:15 the ramp is being lifted and shortly after we leave the pier.



The pier is also guarded during the day ... but some take it easy .....



On the way out of the harbor we pass the bulk carrier Vega Neptun ... the source of the blue and white bags .....  
 We can see that something ... probably some grain ..... is lifted out of the ship's belly with a shovel, emptied into a funnel and packed into bags ... right there besides the ship ...  
 We can only guess that they probably are two different companies hence the different colours of the bags .....



The shipping channel out of the harbor is busy with small fishing vessels.  
 Some of them cross the ship at very short distance.  
 The officers are busy watching out for them with binoculars to find the best way through them.  
 There should be a reserved corridor for large ships where they should not fish .... but if the fishes are there .....



Around the island from where the slaves were shipped to America there are lots of small fishing boats.  
 It is still early and the day activities are being done .... fishing, putting out the parasols for the guests .... even a goat is being washed in the ocean!



We can see another Grimaldi ship coming towards the harbor.  
 It is the **Grande Senegal**.  
 The two ships greet each other with tooting.  
 Lunch .... still love Rocco's antipasto and pasta .....



In the afternoon we can see some albatross.  
 Don't ask me what sort it is .....



Then flying fishes keep us company.  
 They get out of the water and start accelerating using their tails.



Then they extend the rear "wings" and glide over the water for quite a long distance.  
 It is a stunning performance. It is their way to flee from a predator.

On Monday, July 21, we are already passing West Sahara.

Again we are all busy with our pictures / films.  
 Izabela has a problem that she cannot find music that suits her in their Argentine movie.  
 It should be music that is not protected as otherwise she will not be able to upload it into YouTube.  
 So Ruedi offers her his own creations and Izabela is happy.

In the evening we all come for dinner ... but no Bryan is waiting for us .... and the door to the kitchen is closed .....



And this time Rocco has really outdone himself.  
 The feast starts with garlic spaghetti and / or penne a la arabiata, followed by T-Bone steaks, filet, chicken, sucking pig, fish, roast beef ....  
 We stuff our faces with the good things.  
 According to the schedule on the internet we should be in Tilbury on July 26, at 4 PM ..... that is only 5 more days of Rocco's cooking.  
 Then his shift finishes and we all hope that the next cook will be a good one too.  
 Overnight the clocks are set forward for one hour.

On Tuesday we come past the Canary Islands.  
 The ship passes near the islands and the crew is busy with their phones.  
 Even though the sun is shining the wind is very cold and does not feel like summer at all.  
 When after some 4 hours we leave the shelter of the island the wind even picks up a bit.  
 Later in the day on we pass the southern end of Morocco .....

On Wednesday we have already reached the northern end of Morocco, pass Gibraltar and start sailing past Portugal.



Thursday is antipasto day again ..... and of course pasta ...

We are informed that in the afternoon there will be another drill.  
 Around 4 PM the exercise is announced on the intercom.  
 When the alarm sounds we get ready with our helmet, lifejacket and survival suit.  
 Bryan comes to collect us and take us to the muster station upstairs.



This time we all remember to wear proper shoes and a jacket underneath the lifejacket.  
 As it is not as hot as last time automatically we all wrap up a bit better .....  
 The wind is very strong and we have to make sure that we don't lose helmets or lifejackets.  
 The crew has to attend to a fire and some injured people.  
 Then we all have to assemble at the lifeboat to abandon ship.  
 Then the exercise is finished and we can go down again.

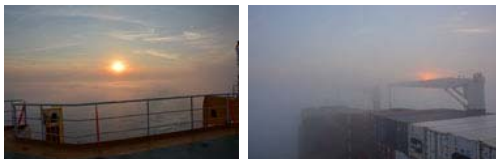
On Saturday, July 26., we reach the coast of England.  
 The Grande Amburgo has to wait until later in the afternoon for its turn to sail up the river Thames.



We are "parked" close to a large wind farm.



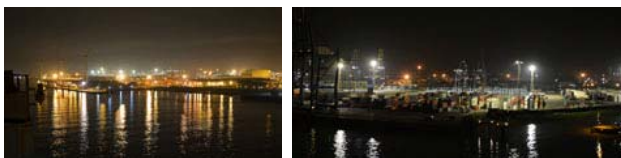
Today is the last working day of our cook, Rocco.  
 The last time we enjoy his great cooking.



After dinner the Grande Amburgo starts moving again.  
 We glide through the fog .....



The closer we get to the coast the better the wetter gets.  
 We manage to get a demo version of our South America movie going on the TV and show it to the other passengers.  
 As it is still a few hours before we reach Tilbury we all go to bed.  
 At 11:30 PM the ventilation dies ..... we wake up because we miss the hissing sound of the air.  
 What is happening?  
 Quickly we get dressed and head to the deck.  
 Nothing is different, we are still sailing up the Thames ....





We go back to the cabin and watch the nicely light port area slide past.  
Then a tug approaches the Grande Amburgo.



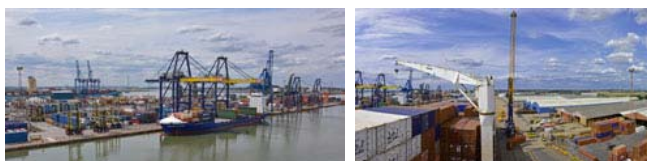
Quickly we go out again and can watch how the large ship is pushed into a lock that is barely wider than the ship.  
On the side some police cars are watching the manoeuvre ..... probably making sure that no blind passenger jumps ship ....  
At around 3 PM we have reached our anchoring place and we can finally go to bed.



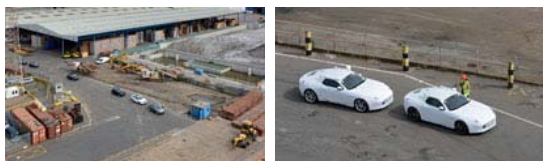
On Sunday morning we have to re-park the campers.  
The first officer and the captain are a bit angry because they had not been told that we will disembark on Antwerp and not in Hamburg.  
Well, we had booked it that way but the tickets were wrong.  
So we had sent them back .... but they came back wrong again!  
So we told it to the agent in Montevideo ... and one of the officers on board the ship ....  
What else do they expect us to do????



We have time to have a look at the cargo that the ship brings from Brazil.  
The graders from Volvo are obviously produced in Brazil .....



There is plenty of loading going on around us.



British cars are being loaded ..... some have protective covers on so they don't get damaged on the trip.  
As the new cook has not yet arrived, for lunch Bryan and the kitchen aid warm up the food that Rocco had prepared.  
It is not really hot but it still tastes nice.

During the night we leave Tilbury and sail down the Thames.  
One more time we adjust the clocks.

On Monday morning we wake up to a rainy day.  
The Grande Amburgo is anchored close to the Belgian coast.

The new cook has been active.  
Fresh pizza is served for breakfast ..... good one too ....



At lunchtime we can feel the difference in the cooking .... not much spices and the meat is tough ....  
No complaints, we have had worse!

But there is enough milk on board now and Izabela can prepare her cappuccinos again.



In the afternoon we hear the noise of a helicopter.  
When we have a look we see that the pilot and/or the coast guard is exchanged by helicopter.  
We have entered the Dutch waters.

The Grande Amburgo starts its journey up the Westerschelde.  
It is quite busy on the water way.



Special boats push cargo around.  
There are even "parking areas" for them to stop on their journeys.

After dinner we head to the decks again.  
We can watch the last change of flags for this trip when the Dutch flag is replaced by Belgian flag .....



We reach the lock that separates the harbour of **Antwerp** from the tidal waters.



3 small ships glide into the lock next to the Grande Amburgo.  
Then then locks close and the water level is adjusted to the one in the harbour.  
Once the way is open the small ships quickly leave.  
It takes a bit more time until the Grande Amburgo has picked up speed ....



As we travel to through the harbour we pass the Grimaldi Grande Bretagne.  
Shortly after 10 PM the Grande Amburgo reaches designated destination and is "parked" besides the Grande Francia and the Grande Sicilia.

On Tuesday morning, July 29, we have to get up early as we have to get the vehicles off the Grande Amburgo by before 8:30 AM.  
We manage to stow all away and punctually leave the ship.

After a bit of searching we even find the exit of the harbour and soon are on the highway in direction of Germany.  
We won't have to leave the highway anymore until we reach the exit that takes us to the house of Ruedi's sister ..... welcome back to Europe!  
And this is the end of this journal.

No liability for timeliness, integrity and correctness of this document is accepted.  
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[top](#) - [home](#) - [<< Previous sailing cruise <<](#) - [>> Next sailing cruise >>](#)