

BERMUDA TO AZORES

VISTA CROSSES THE NORTH ATLANTIC

ANNA ERIKSSON

LEAVING ST GEORGE

DAY 1

It's early morning - Bermuda radio, VHF 27, gives us clearance to go to the Azores. A few dark clouds in the sky, and also the light - in our direction. We have around 1800 nm, at least two weeks in the North Atlantic ahead of us. The weather is good - SW wind, 8-10 knots, some rain showers.



A DELIGHT

We have loved being here. Bermuda is a well-managed island. Their slogan is: "a small island with a big history" - belonging to Great Britain.

All roofs are white, made of limestone and built in a cyclone-proof manner. Each house (roof) collects its water from the rain. This high standard and regulation means that everyone lives in a safe and solid house. All the people seem to have dignity, and they are also very polite and welcoming. The many beaches invite us to 25° turquoise water. Nerium is in peak season - they bloom in abundance.



THE FIRST NIGHT

I'm on my night shift at 1 am, and I'm looking around at the stars when I see something yellow on the starboard side of the Vista. Could it be the moon? It is so small. I check with my Sky View – yes, that's right, it's rising just above the horizon. I take some pictures even though it is very dark. They are like abstract paintings. Shapes and lights that I can't see with my eyes are revealed when I edit the images.

The wind has increased to 15 knots. We do 5.5 knots on the Genoa and the mesan. Another sailboat, Julia, is close behind us.



EAST WARDS

DAY 2

For the first time in a very long time, we are sailing east. The sun rises in front of us, today, shortly after 06:00. The moon is still up.

We're also back in the Northern Hemisphere, with longer days - the sun sets after 8 pm. We have had fantastic sailing all day.



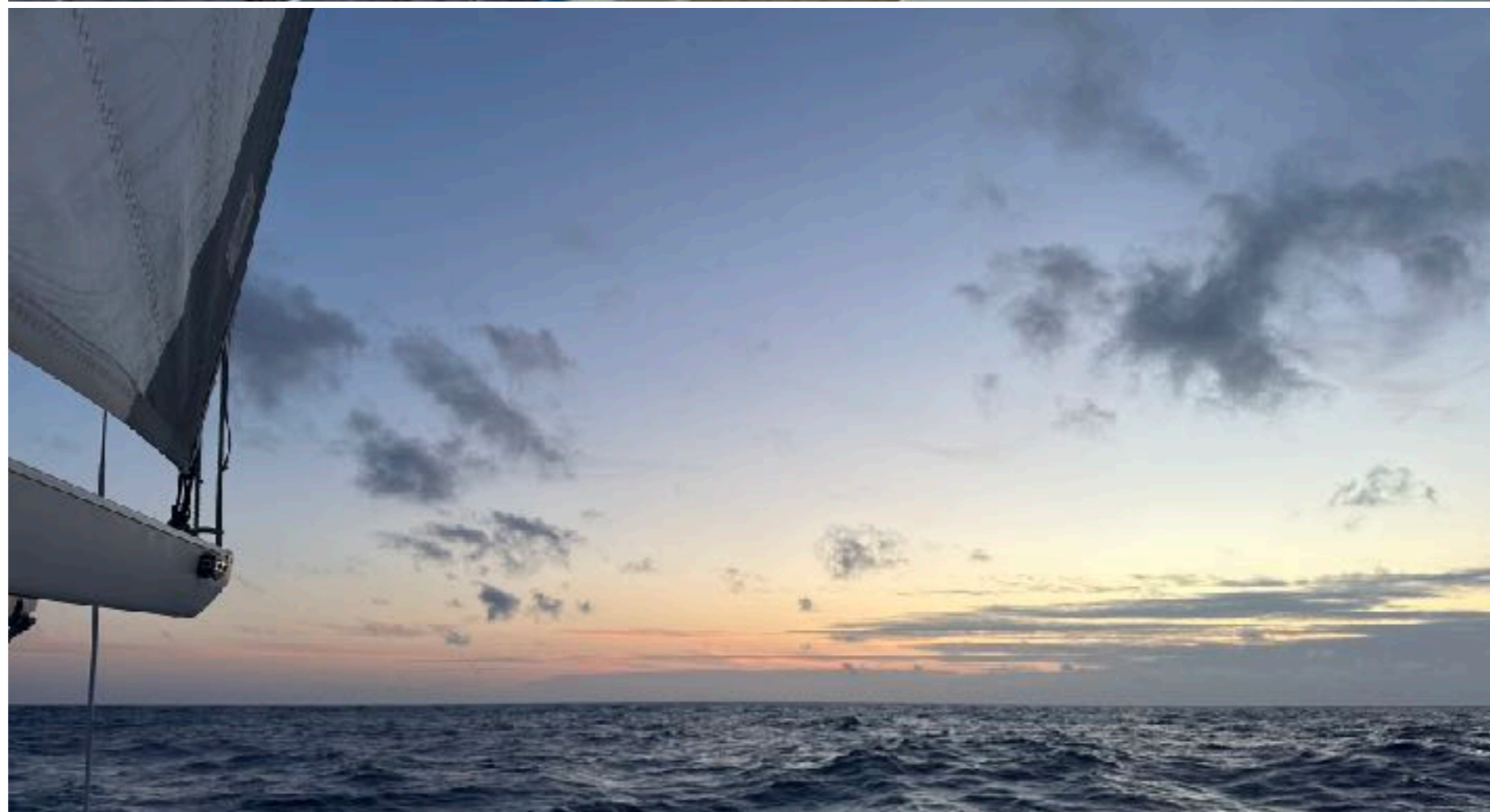


MORE WIND

DAY 3

After a nice day of sailing, the wind picked up after midnight, and it was time for the first reefing.

We are both tired today. Takes time to adjust to the night shifts.



GREAT SAILING

DAY 4

So far we feel very fortunate with the passage. We are having great wind for sailing, and the forecast forward shows that we can more or less sail on the rhumb line, which is unusual. The wind will go up again, but right now it is lower than the forecast, so if we are lucky it will keep on like this.

Arthur has baked bread and is playing guitar - a good sign he feels relaxed. And I will start to cook the dinner - Caponata with aubergine, olives and capris.



TRADE WINDS

DAY 6

Day 5 was grey and rainy, and after midnight the wind changed, and we had to set up the pole. A bumpy night followed before the waves and wind coordinated. Then we had a fantastic downwind sail for a whole day.

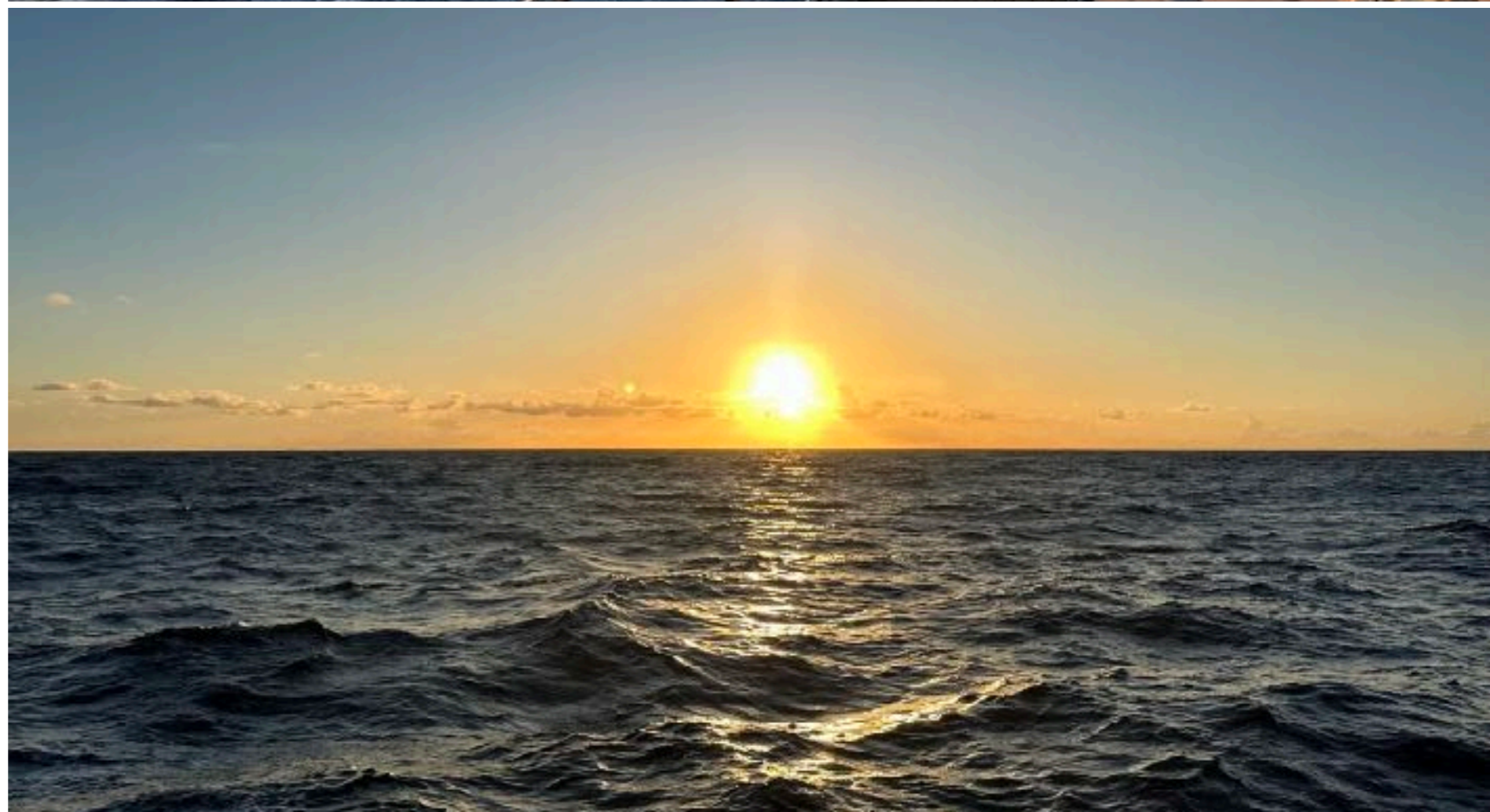
The evening offered some dark clouds with double wind for a short time.



A BEAUTIFUL DAY

DAY 7

Sun and light breezes, 10-12 knots.
We are gliding forward on a direct
course. We are halfway today!



ANOTHER DAY

DAY 8

Today, both Arthur and I were deep into our own things. I in writing, and Arthur in reading.



A SPEEDY DAY

DAY 9

Early this morning we drifted. The wind went down and shifted direction. We took down the pole. A couple of hours later we could sail again, this time first half wind, and now upwind straight on to Horta.



THE PEAK

DAY 10

This was the day we were closest to the low pressure moving around us in a northeasterly direction. The gusts rose above 30 knots, and the waves followed. It is intense, the strong forces are very palpable. Vista remains strong, and we use only a little sail to get ahead. The sun appeared at the last minute on this pencil-Gray day, just before a dark night took over. It's a new moon, so the night light will come in a few days.



LIGHT IS BACK

DAY 11

The sun rises early, shortly after 04:00. It is very nice to have long days. Today it is much calmer and just light grey. We are still going against the wind, not the best for Vista. We can't go that high in the wind, 50° maximum, normally 60-70° depending on the wind and waves. It's nice to sail, so we'll continue this way, even if it takes a little longer. We plan to arrive in Flores, the westernmost island of the Azores. It is a small island, 160 nm from Horta. As Horta has announced that they have no slots, we hope the weather will be calm enough to stay in the small marina at Flores.

Between these two pale suns, it has been grey all day. The wind is blowing 25 knots again - hard to believe when you see the second picture, but it's true.





GREY

DAY 12

The morning began with another pale sun. So far I have only seen them followed by bad weather. The rest of the day has been grey, with fog from the afternoon. The sun didn't even bother to say goodnight.

It is the first time we have sailed this northern route. We notice that the weather pattern changes a lot. From time to time we get sudden wind shifts. All six different forecast models suggest we take a wide arc north, 4.5 days to Flores. With the engine, 2.5 days for 280 nm. We just decided to go straight ahead, as there is a good chance that the wind will drop even on the northern route.



MAGIC

DAY 13

Early morning in fog, after a long time the sun shines through. So far, the decision to go straight on has been wise. We have a smooth sailing with all sails up, making four knots in the light wind. The waves have gone down a lot. Two cargos passed in the opposite direction this morning. And a bird circled above us in the afternoon.

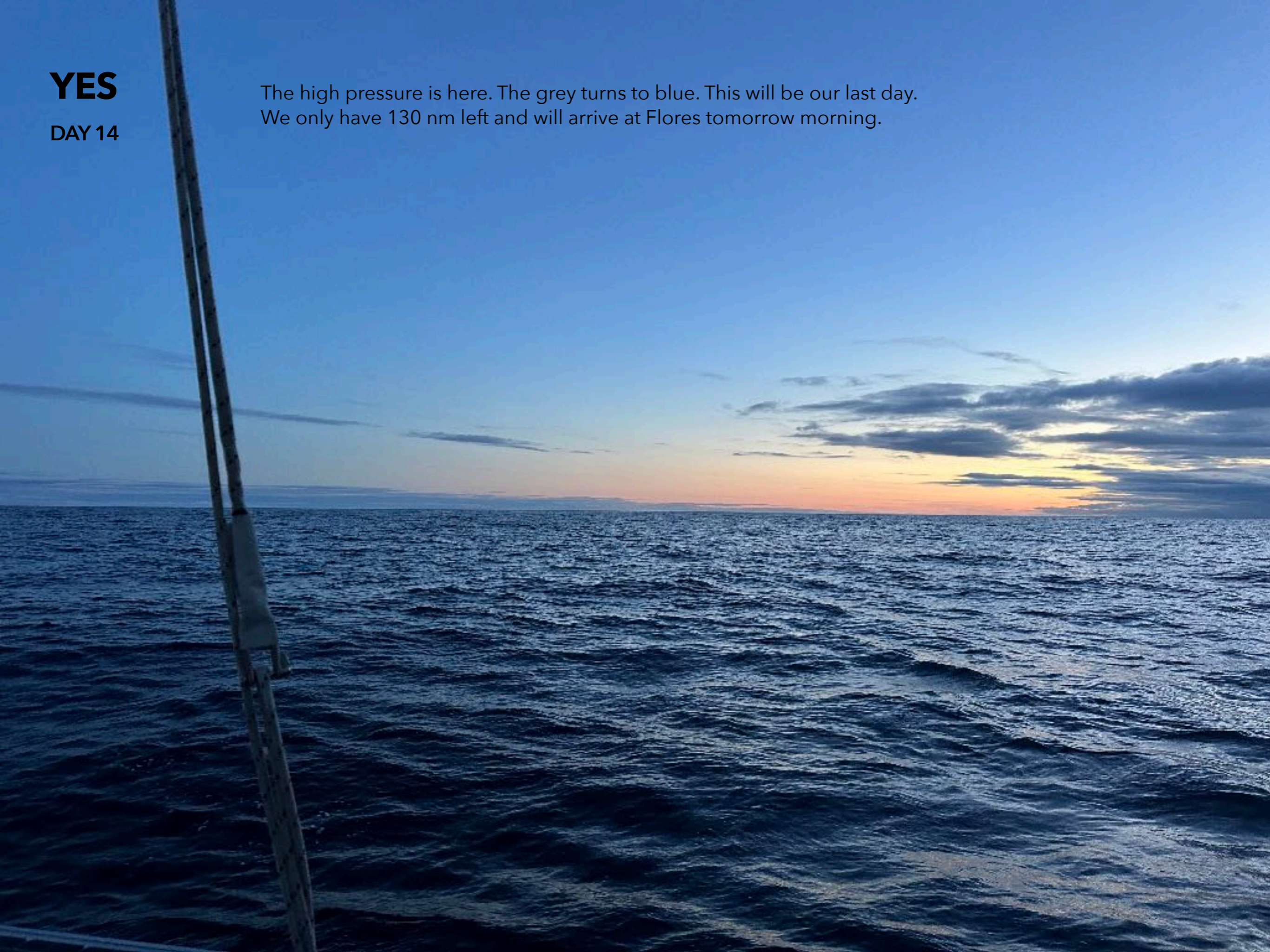
I forgot to mention, Arthur saw two big whales the other day. He thought they were Kaskelots/Sperm whales. I was cocking and could unfortunately not leave my position. The colours are overall colder here, I assume related to the lower temperature in the air (23°) and the water (20°). The sky looks different, with veil-or rather valk-like clouds. Must be rain.



YES

DAY 14

The high pressure is here. The grey turns to blue. This will be our last day.
We only have 130 nm left and will arrive at Flores tomorrow morning.





We had an incredibly nice day with smooth sailing, contrary to the forecasts. Feeling grateful.

LANDFALL

DAY 15

We got a magic morning, approaching Flores in the dawn. We are very happy that a tricky passage like this, with an unstable weather situation, has gone so well. With this landfall, we are back in Europe after five years. Feels very good.



Porto das Lajes, Flores, Azores

