

# **Sailing Saetta interview English version**

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*In the column Vrijbuiters in the Netherlands and abroad section, we speak with different Vrijbuiters who have ventured the crossing every month. Regarding the Coronavirus, many of these Freebooters are stuck inland. In addition to the experiences of our Vrijbuiters, we are also curious about the impact of the Coronavirus on the off grid residents.*

*For this section we went looking for Vrijbuiters in the Netherlands and abroad, to find out what their off grid story is in combination with the Coronavirus. We ask these Vrijbuiters several questions to find out:*

- *Who these people are;*
- *Why they made their choice;*
- *What their lifestyle costs;*
- *What their experiences are.*

*This month you will read about the adventure of the Vrijbuiters Saskia and Miguel. In this blog they tell about their adventures at sea.*

## **Proposal round! Who are you and what is your adventure?**

We are Vrijbuiters: Saskia and Miguel. Our story started a long time before we met.

For me Miguel the story started a long time ago. During the summer holidays, I travelled with my parents all over Europe. Every night stay in different places and drive hundreds of kilometres. This way we could see more places. This was my parents' approach and since then the jitters and my love of travel started.

As I got older and cheap airlines became more popular, there were more and more options! Cheap flights and [couchsurfing](#): what a way to discover the world!

From my 23<sup>rd</sup> I tried to do as much as possible. Then came the thought of seeing the world sailing.

*"Years passed and after the university, job and career came into view, I started to travel less and less"*

During that time Saskia did her own thing in the Netherlands. One day, about 12 years ago, Saskia went on holiday to Portugal with a friend. Long story short, this was the time we first met. A summer love that grew into so much more. We will spare you the gooey love stories, but what I want to say is that I lived in the UK at the time and Saskia in the Netherlands. We were both busy with our work and tried to see each other on the weekends ... long-distance relationships are very difficult! And this left even less time for travel.

A few years into our relationship, Saskia decided to move-in with me to Edinburgh, where I lived and Saetta (the boat) was berthed. Saskia had little experience in sailing and travelling, and although it was not her dream to do something like this, she was happy to go on an adventure with me and share it. Around 2017 Saetta looked good! The equipment was in order and I started to master the boat, preparing her for long journeys and cruising. Or so I thought... This was the time that, a number of problems suddenly arose. A few became a few too many and oh so expensive. How expensive? Well, it literally bankrupted me!



We had to postpone our trip. The company where I worked also closed its doors and this freed us from Edinburgh. We decided to move to the Netherlands, where we have been busy restarting our jobs, savings and preparations. Around July 2019, we decided it was the time to bring out the big plan again. That meant making a few life adjustments-

We rented an apartment in Utrecht. It was mainly Saskia who lived there. I spent most days on Saetta. In October 2019 we gave up the apartment and Saskia moved-in Saetta for the final preparations.

Life on a boat gives so much freedom and comfort. Wherever you want to go, you take your house with you! Sometimes on long vacations, I started missing things from home; whether it is a kitchen, bed or whatever. Not with a boat! As for freedom, it does not only mean freedom for travelling.

*"One of the best things about sailing is the sense of self-reliance. You have to trust yourself and are responsible for yourself. You can't call a plumber, mechanic or police in the middle of the sea."*

You need to know how to take care of yourself and there is also a social aspect. Most boat owners and cruisers share the same passion for travel and freedom. Having a boat introduced me to like-minded people.

And why sailing? Before I knew how to sail, I would say it is environmentally friendly and comfortable. Now I know that this is not correct at all. Don't say it's wrong, but it's not as eco-friendly and comfortable. You still need diesel now and then and if you ever get stuck in a storm it is certainly not comfortable. A while ago we wrote about our first long journey from Edingburgh to Kristainsand, Norway, ([Click here](#) for the blog) where we got caught on a storm... thinking you're going to die is definitely not "comfortable"!

Despite that, sailing gives you so much more than I expected. Sailing teaches you to be patient and flexible. You cannot fight against nature; the wind and water win every time. So you will have to adjust your plans according to the weather. You adapt instead of complaining about circumstances that are not right.

Life in such a small spaces forces you to be smart about the things you have on board. We both cannot have eight sets of dresses, suits and shoes that go with it. Even if it's a t-shirt you got as a prize when you were young, there is not enough space for this. Because, you still have to carry all the food, water and spare parts for the trip. Economical and minimalistic that is what you learn to be!

And another big lesson: you have to take the bad if you want to enjoy the good things. For every day with good weather, there is the same bad weather.

*"To enjoy the solitude and tranquility of an anchor, you have to accept the associated things."*



## Why did you choose this lifestyle?

A number of things happened to me and my family six years ago. This forced me to reassess my life and find out what I wanted from it. The last blow happened during a flight. We were experiencing rough turbulence and I thought I was going to die. I thought, "I never went for my dream because it was not sensible and expensive, yet I am about to die and I have not even experienced it or ever tried it."

*"From then on I made a promise to myself. If I landed safely, I will continue with this, grab my boat and go for it!"*

Saetta was my life within a week. By then I had only a handful of sailing lessons that I took in the same year. I spent a lot of time on Youtube learning from others. There were and still are many questions and fear of sailing. I personally love the "learn by doing" approach. Given everything that happened, it made sense to get a boat sooner rather than later.

## What are the pros and the cons?

As written before, nothing beats the freedom and comfort of travelling while sailing! It's incredible to wake up at a beautiful anchorage alone and feel free! What about sunbathing and feeling the fresh breeze when sailing?! It's amazing!

But all that comes at a price, and not only financially. You need to be able to take care of yourself and the ship with little input, unless you don't plan to go far. And there's special maintenance required. Every year the boat needs a new paint and anodes for the parts underwater. And you need to keep an eye on the water and gas levels; it's terrible when water finishes halfway through a shower!

## What has been your highlight so far?

It is difficult to choose ... if you are in the middle of the North Sea where there is no land or ship to be seen, only you and the water. Enjoying a nice sail and anchorage on a quiet, sunny day with a few friends on board is a little piece of heaven!



## What does this lifestyle cost about a month and what do they consist of?

Our biggest expense right now is maintenance. The maintenance of broken equipment that is too old to use, etc. In the past three years, I have spent more than twice as much as I bought the boat for, on maintenance and new equipment.

On departure, we hope to keep our sailing trip at 1400 euros per month (for both of us). This includes everything: food, insurance, maintenance, port fees, visa costs, etc.

In order to become as independent as possible, we have equipped Saetta with solar panels, a wind generator, water maker and a solar oven. The solar panels and the wind generator charge our batteries, something our diesel machine normally does. The water maker filters the seawater, so we don't have to rely on rainwater or our 400 litre water tanks.

The solar oven allows cooking with sunlight instead of gas or coal. And to reduce gas consumption further, we have made a kind of "slow cooker", which is a well-insulated bag. For example, if we cook rice, we boil the food for a minute and then put the pan in the slow-cooker where the rice continues to cook without gas. We even have a distiller on board where we make our own vodka. And although we have almost no space on board, we are working on a small herb garden.



## **What are your plans after the Corona crisis?**

As soon as the borders open again, we leave. Our first major stop is Portugal, but we will make a few stops along the way. Given the weather we will have to leave before the end of July.

We hope to start our trip to the Caribbean around September. First the Portuguese and Spanish island off the coast of Africa. Then Cape Verde and mid-November we sail to the other side of the Atlantic. Those are our ideas for now. We have planned a lot in the past and have often had to change plans, so we have learned how to be flexible and not have hard plans.

## **If you could give advice to future off-grid residents, what would it be?**

If you're serious about something, don't buy things that distract you or make you too comfortable. A couch and TV for the home is great, but you slowly slide into a comfortable state and lose your eye from the ball. That has certainly happened to me!

If you are looking for sailing it is best to visit the marina and yacht clubs, even on Facebook, and ask to participate in their races. There is always a need for extra hands. This is a great way to get you on board and see what a boat is, how it works and what the details are. Again, you learn by doing it!

Once you get to a yacht club, just chat with the people. I have met a handful of terrible skippers and oh so many nice skippers who love to share what they know and their experiences. You can also contact us if you wish.

## Where can you find Sailing Saetta?

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