

## Allure's travels

by Per & Erika Hammerlund (edited by A Almquist), Northern California Fleet

What do you do with a 90-year-old wooden boat, when on the one hand you spend almost every weekend restoring and caring for her and on the other hand need to move back to Sweden? We decided to take her to Sweden. The boating culture is especially strong in Sweden and the canals and rivers of Europe look interesting. And, of course, we can keep caring for her. So how to do it?

We talked to some wooden boat enthusiasts here in Sweden. They suggested using Roll-On, Roll-Off (RORO) shipping. We contacted a shipyard, Utbildningsrederi AB, in Gothenburg that specializes in education and restoration of old wooden boats. They had all the contacts with transport and other local facilities we needed. With RORO shipping you pay for the volume shipped and to a degree for the weight. Making *Allure* as small as possible was key. At Napa Valley Marina we proceeded to remove navigation lights, mast, davits, and chimney and stowed everything safely for the trip. Nothing could come loose! For example, mast and davits were screwed with wooden blocks to the sole. We decided that shrink wrapping *Allure* would be a great protection. We had never done it before, so we watched some YouTube movies and ordered the material.

We motored *Allure* from her berth in the Delta to the Napa Valley Marina where she would be lifted



Erika using a heat-gun to shrink the wrap on *Allure*.

photo provided by P Hammerlund

out and put on a trailer headed to Long Beach CA cruising at 60 mph on the freeway. *Allure* was finally loaded on the RORO ship, *Carmen*, and made her way down the West coast, through the Panama Canal, up the East coast, and across the Atlantic. After multiple changes of arrival date, we finally got the news that she had arrived Gothenburg and

had cleared customs. We left our home in Stockholm and drove to Gothenburg, a bit nervous of how *Allure* had fared the trip. We arrived at Utbildningsrederiet just in time to see *Allure* arrive. She looked just fine. Relief! With the help of some very competent drivers and big equipment operators, she was safely on the ground. Erika climbed up to the swim platform, unzipped the shrink wrap door, and crawled in. Relief again, she had shipped just fine.

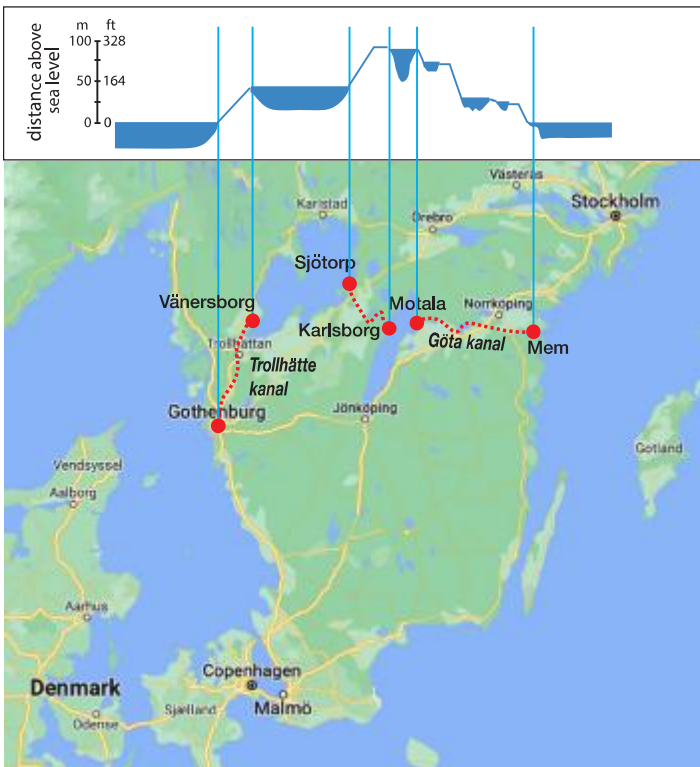


*Allure* high above the ground in the Gotenius Varv shipyard. photo provided by P&E Hammerlund

The priority before launch was to check the planking. There had been some drying. The most important task was sealing any possible leaks, prepping for bottom paint approved in Sweden, and quickly getting her back in the water. Once the new bottom paint had dried, we gently moistened the planking from the inside using a water sprayer.

*Allure* was moved next door to the shipyard, Gotenius Varv, where all the equipment and other projects made *Allure* look tiny. A massive crane took *Allure* flying while still in her cradle and she landed safely in the water. We left her in her cradle to minimize the pressures of the crane slings for the lift.

We stayed at Utbildningsrederiet AB for a couple of weeks after launch to make sure all systems were ready for the trip to Stockholm. After minor repairs, we were ready. There are two options to cruise from Gothenburg to Stockholm, either you cruise around the Swedish coastline, or you cruise the canals that run across the country. We opted for the canals. The canals can be crowded, and the old locks sometimes have exposed, uneven, granite, so take plenty



The canal and lake trip across Sweden. Up and down 90 m (295 ft). map developed from Göta kanal and Google maps by W Shain

of fenders. The canal, using the locks and mooring facilities, is not cheap, but compared to the cost of gas and mooring for cruising the coastline, it is the cost-effective solution.

The first part of the trip from Gothenburg to Trollhättan is up through the Göta Älv, a river with six modern, bigger locks. Commercial ships have priority in this part of the system; these ships tend to fill up the entire lock by themselves! The locks are easy to use, just wait for the traffic signal to turn green and enter. Their “double bottom” construction makes sure the water is let in quite gently. You can easily hold on to the side with a simple line or even a boat hook.

After having gained 44 m in the locks of Göta Älv you enter Vänern, Sweden’s largest lake. Vänern has a reputation of being tricky when it comes to waves and swells, but on our first day it welcomed us with a downwind cruise heading north to our first stop. On the second day, we needed to cross the lake from west to east, and now we got a small taste of the swells, they were manageable with about 45 degrees zig-zagging along the course.

We finally arrived at Sjötorp, the start of the old canal, Göta kanal. The Göta kanal consists of 58 locks and this year it celebrated its 200th anniversary. The locks here are quite small, about 100 feet by 21 feet. The walls are either stacked granite blocks, masterfully put together, or in a few places carved rock. Lock

keepers make sure everything works smoothly and safely. Only two locks are still manually operated. Going upstream, the water motion in the lock is quite strong, water is simply let in through hatches in the lock gates. The trick is to tie a static line in the stern, and then as the water rises, keep the line in the bow tight. It can be quite a strenuous task, especially if your boat is at the front of the lock and the bow gets caught in the water streaming out of the gate hatch.



Looking up a series of locks on the Göta kanal. photo provided by P&E Hammerlund

can be crowded. We ended up cruising it during the last three weeks of the high season, which was just as the schools started, so we ended up having no delays, only sharing the locks with at most one other boat. All very nice. (The canal is closed during the winter. Spring and Fall have “low seasons” when the canal is in operation, but you must travel together with other boats in a convoy since the locks are not staffed. During the Summer, in “high season” you are free to roam, and all locks are staffed.)

We reached the lock at the highest altitude, 88 m above sea level. Now it was all downhill. Going down is a lot easier, just keep two long ropes, one at the stern and one at the bow, and let them run through the eyelets on the side of the lock. Most locks are single or two locks in series, but there is one place with 7 locks back-to-back, a real workout.

For us, we lucked out on the timing and the weather. We highly recommend experiencing this canal trip, we will most likely do it again, but will allow more time since there is so much to explore.

The canal winds its way through the Swedish countryside, with stops in many small towns. All the stops are well maintained and fully serviced (water, electricity, showers, and washing machines). You will also find restaurants and grocery stores within walking distance. Göta Kanal

