



CRUISING THE WILD ATLANTIC WAY – Alex and Daria Blackwell. Published in soft covers by White Seahorse Publishing [www.whiteseahorse.ie] at US\$40.00 (£25.67); Kindle price US\$12.29 (£10). 304 203mm x 254mm pages, in full colour throughout with many photographs. ISBN: 978-1-5119-2265-4; Kindle B00Y6UXKB6

What is the ‘Wild Atlantic Way’? At 2500km (or 1300 miles) in length, www.wildatlanticway.com describes it as the world’s longest coastal touring route – and it runs down Ireland’s Atlantic coast, starting at Derry in the northwest and ending at Cork harbour in the south. The development and promotion of this amazing route has only taken place recently, and has inspired Daria and Alex Blackwell to take a look at the same stretch from the sea. Their book, while primarily written for the cruising sailor, will also be a useful guidebook for anybody travelling the route by land, due to the level of detail it includes.

Cruising the Wild Atlantic Way is divided into three sections. Section 1 provides all the detail that a visiting sailor or holidaymaker would need to know – referred to as ‘Getting Around’. It also briefly describes the history, heritage and culture of Ireland and the West. For any foreign traveller, the book is nearly worth its price for the information contained in this section alone. The opening paragraphs offer a very tantalising picture of the beauty of this part of the world, while at the same time painting a realistic picture of what to expect – eg typical weather and how quickly it changes. Tons of optimism here, but at the same time, no rose-tinted glasses!

An interesting inclusion in Section 1 is a list of birds and cetaceans commonly seen in these waters. Good detail on weather, tides and currents, and some navigation information is also provided, along with the more legal stuff – entering the jurisdiction, bringing pets, etc. Again, good thorough detail. Working into the second half of Section 1 we are briefed on what makes the Irish who they are – their history, culture and traditions – and why it’s such fun to be with the Irish. (I know – being Irish I’m biased!) Interesting reading, without being overlong.

Section 2 explores each location along the route, and provides details on local history, current state of affairs, services available and things to do and see, even describing when various annual festivals take place. At the end of each location section there is a list of useful web links, which can be as diverse as B&Bs, tourist board info, local heritage sites, etc. The list of locations in this section runs to 34, starting in Lough Swilly and finishing in Crosshaven, Cork. Being a sailor who has cruised a lot of the locations described, I found the detail (for the places I knew) very good and even learned some interesting tidbits – eg ‘there was a film made and it starred ...’ or ‘the name is the Irish for ...’. From my memories and knowledge, the info is pretty bang-on!

Section 2 also includes schematics of harbour layouts as required, and some basic pilotage info. It does not, however, provide all the information needed for safe pilotage

– this book was never intended to do that, and any sailor would be advised to carry the Irish Cruising Club's *Sailing Directions for the South and West Coasts of Ireland*, as well, in many cases, as charts for the relevant areas. (It is mentioned in Section 1 that there are few aids to navigation, and that chart datum may not equate with a WGS84 GPS reading.)

The final section – Appendices – provides what the Irish would describe as 'Founts of useless info', ie the stuff that's handy to know but may not be of too much value. For example, Irish flags and ensigns you may see, a lexicon of Irish place terms, etc.

Bottom line? I would absolutely recommend this book to any outsider visiting Ireland's Atlantic coast, as a 'must have'. It is a very comprehensive, useful and informative book which provides the sort of interesting and worthwhile info that the previously mentioned Irish Cruising Club's book cannot. I would also recommend it for local sailors, as there's a lot of topical detail in the book that one may not be aware of. It is well planned, well written and beautifully illustrated with stunning photos (sunset over Bofin being a favourite!) and elegant sketches. It is oftentimes a story of Daria and Alex's journey along the coast which, together with the stories of the different places, be they historical or folklore, makes it a particularly interesting read. Nice book!

JTP

