



Sailing with the SKS MOSEL from Las Palmas to Algeciras

Well before the novel coronavirus appeared on the horizon making life difficult for seafarers, Gard Claims Executive Osmund Johnsen happily accepted an invitation from Gard Member Kristian Gerhard Jebsen Skipsrederi (KGJS) to sail with the SKS MOSEL during a bunkering voyage from Las Palmas to Algeciras. He wrote about his experience for KGJS's newsletter which we are pleased to republish. We thank KGJS and the crew members of the SKS Mosel for sharing the experience and hope that in the not too distant future, we will once again have the opportunity to visit aboard.

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Bergen based Kristian Gerhard Jebsen Skipsrederi, is a long time and valued Gard insured. This year, Gard was invited to send along a claims representative to join the tanker SKS MOSEL together with the Vessel Manager, Leif Magne Kvalvaag for a voyage from Las Palmas to Algeciras. Since I have no seagoing experience (unlike many of my peers in the cargo claims group), I was asked by my team leader to join. What a great opportunity to gain valuable insight and experience from life onboard a vessel! I immediately accepted and started planning to go to Las Palmas where the vessel was scheduled to take on bunkers on her route back from Brazil, where she had discharged a cargo of condensate.

After a very early morning flight from Kjevik Airport (Kristiansand), I met Leif Magne at the hotel in Las Palmas, where we made dinner plans for the evening. The following day we were picked up by the ship's agent and taken to the immigration office before jumping on the service boat, which took us out to the anchorage where the tanker was waiting for the bunker barge.

Before climbing up the ladder, we had a tour around the vessel just to check for any hull fouling. Extensive growth can lead to reduction in speed and higher fuel consumption. As the vessel in ballast had some 14.5 meters of freeboard, I was extremely thankful for the mild Las Palmas weather. Climbing the ladder must be challenging in rough weather!

When coming onboard, we met with Captain P. Zaluska who was relieved in Las Palmas by Captain Marek Anuszkiewicz. As Leif Magne possesses an extremely in-depth knowledge of this vessel, and had also previously worked at sea, I soon realized that I was in for a treat, having no regrets having accepted the invitation. I was shown around the vessel and met most of the crew until the ship was ready to sail. Captain Marek informed us that the vessel had to proceed at slow speed to Algeciras due to no cargo availability. This is mainly to save fuel, which saves money and is lighter on the environment. I welcomed the longer stay on board with more time to learn about the life that goes on board a vessel.

With good sea conditions, it was easy to move around the vessel and to follow the work of a Vessel Manager, who was happy to explain and share his long experience and valuable knowledge. Undoubtedly, the crew appreciated Leif Magne's time on board, as it is much more convenient to communicate and discuss face to face, rather than exchange e-mails. At the same time, the Vessel Manager is made aware of any pressing issues and is able to make longer term preparations, for example, for the vessel's next dry docking.

With a well-developed "team-spirit" amongst the crew, focus during a sea passage is also on preparing for her next voyage, which includes ordering stores, provisions and bunkers so that ship and cargo can safely reach the next destination. Being present during the 10 and 15 o'clock coffee meetings together with the Captain, Chief, Chief Engineer or the electrician gave me interesting insight as to what is going on at any given time on board a vessel whether it was ongoing paintwork, or maintenance in the engine room.

Working in the P&I insurance side of the shipping business, we are mostly involved after a claim has arisen. Therefore, it was very reassuring to note the well-established safety culture, which is "safety first". For instance, it did not take long before the 3rd Mate gave me the basics on safety, such as where the meeting point was should the alarm go off. During the monthly safety meetings, I witnessed a good atmosphere where all kinds of issues were raised regarding safety and any other matters on board the vessel. This was also a good opportunity to convey the latest news from the Company.

So, having been shown around most of the available areas, such as the engine room, pump room and fore peak, I was shown an interesting video taken by a drone showing one of the cargo tanks, as we did not get a chance to access it. Empty tanks are kept in inert condition (less than 5% oxygen) to prevent vapours of the last cargo from accidentally igniting. Between the tasks, I enjoyed good food in the messroom and enjoyed some of the nice paintings made by Captain P. Zaluska.

KGJS offered various recreational activities to crew and I enjoyed hearing the good spirits coming from the recreation room where some of the crew gathered for a game of FIFA 2019 after a long working day. Another popular activity was basketball, weather permitting naturally.

So, after some two days of sailing, the Captain was informed about new cargo prospects, which would mean completing owners business at Algeciras and proceed towards Latvia as soon as possible. In addition to increased speed, it also meant a noticeable increase in activity. The seafarer on watch on the bridge, previously being at constant lookout for refugees in the open sea, would soon be more on the alert due to the increased traffic and fishing boats when approaching the Strait of Gibraltar. While drifting at the outer port limits of Algeciras to take on fresh supplies and stores, Leif Magne and I climbed down the ladder into the service boat, again in favorable weather conditions, watching SKS MOSEL sail on to her next destination.

Now safely back at home in Arendal, Norway, it only remains to pass on my sincere thanks to the Captain, crew and KGJS for this great opportunity. The knowledge gained will undoubtedly be helpful and I will look back upon the journey with fond memories in the years to come.