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## Aron Meder, arrived in Barletta after his around-the-world boat trip that lasted 3 years.

By Michele Lamonaca

After three years of sailing solo Aron had arrived last Friday in Barletta. He traveled approximately 30 thousand miles (more than 40 000 kilometers) visiting different marinas in his journey. This was a long journey around the world and Aron Meder age 30, a fine featured blue-eyed Hungarian did it.

The six-meter long boat called "CARINA" is also equipped with an engine. And he describes her as "broad and short, two features that have proven essential in the course of his long journey to give the vessel " great stability ".

"I loved sailing as a child -says Aron smiling- and to sail around the world in a yacht has always been my dream ever since I learned to sail on Lake Balaton, in Hungary. The lake is the largest lake in Central Europe. To achieve it I bought a small and cheap boat, only 1,500 euros. I'm not rich and neither is my family. "

The choice of a small boat also arises from the fact that "on a small boat everything is easier to do. It is 'easy to perform repairs, replace parts, and steer. This was the explanation of a technician of the sea, who is sailing since 1990 and also teaches it to others as an instructor from 1998.

Aron is a graduate in electronic engineering, a discipline that is really a far cry from the idea to sail around the world alone. But for him, this is very simple: "I thought that spending a few years of my life alone on a boat was the best way to learn, not from books, but from direct experience."

Once he started from Slovenia in September 2006 he got the experience. After passing the Strait of Gibraltar he has reached the Canary Islands, the island of Cape Verde and Barbados. He crossed the Atlantic Ocean. The voyage lasted 39 days and 2050 miles later it took him to the Caribbean islands and South and Central America. Then crossed the Panama Canal and ended up in the Pacific Ocean. And it took forty days at sea to reach the Galapagos Islands.

Visited Polynesia, the Cook Islands, Tonga, and Fiji Islands where he stopped for seven months to repair his boat and wait for the end of the hurricanes. And in the meantime he was engaged to a local girl. "I've learned a lot from those people. I found a job as a fisherman and a girl. The people are just like their way of life, kind and helpful."

He was even allowed a ride into the forests of Papua New Guinea. "I accompanied one of them to his village where the natives were impressed by the light color of my skin. To make friends, I showed him how to play football."

Then the journey reached Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Reached the Gulf of Aden, Yemen, crossed the Red Sea and then via the Suez Canal emerged to the Mediterranean, the starting point of his adventure.

Here he stopped first at Greece and then arrived at Otranto on August the 30th, where according

to his calculations, he got close to the end of his tour of the world. His boat journey will end where it started, in Slovenia.

Meanwhile, "Carina" is moored in the port of Barletta, and Aron Meder, always smiling and polite says "I did not feel special when I stepped on dry land" because, for us, who are accustomed to the sea conventions, the sea is incredible, extraordinary and gives such a mad feeling, that the best way to tell it is by the pen of a great novelist.

For Aron however, it seems quite normal. Even when he recounts some of the best moments of his great adventure: "I was on the ocean non-stop for 50 days. From the Galapagos to the Marquesas Islands with only the sea around me and at night the starry sky. The simplicity of my day was dedicated to steering the boat, catching fish, cut it, cook it and eat it."

"The people", he says, "has always helped giving me food, water, spare parts and hospitality in the ports. I started with little money and that ran out by the time I arrived in Panama. But many, when they found out my history and have visited my site, not that I ever asked for money or sought sponsors, have paid money into my bank account to help us continue the journey."

To hear the young Hungarian navigator, everything seems easy, but when crossing the Ocean, the difficult moments and incidents, and there can be several, has to be addressed.

On board "Carina", in case of emergency, there is all the equipment necessary to communicate the position by satellite, and there is an inflatable if there is no way to save the boat.

"I remember -says Aron- the cold I caught, which some days made me feel feverish, or the stomach ached when in Morocco ate some spoiled fish. But thankfully -he adds- I brought with me a box full of medicines, which helped me to feel better." The drugs are used to defend against diseases and infections, but against the sea that swells around the six meter long boat courage, strength and determination is what needed.

"In Papua New Guinea and Australia I have experienced the most difficult time" -he says- because the current was very strong and the sea stormy. While I slept the boat fell on one side and the mast touched the water. But in those moments you do not even have time to be afraid because you have to act very fast. In fact I thought about the things that fell into the sea, and to restore order in the cabin only when it was all over."

Now that the waters are calmer, and his journey is coming to an end, it is time to think about the future probably without any fear. Since his mind was seriously on the oceans, he might not be aware of the little everyday fears that often arise from the fact of being closed in the tiny slice of our world.

But Aron is a simple type, and has the virtues necessary to live three years alone on a boat of only six meters long: "I do not feel special for what I did. The boat is special and the land is special. I do not want to live like I did in the past three years. I intend to return to dry land and start working. And maybe try to have a family. "

Meanwhile, today, if the weather holds, he will leave the port of Barletta to arrive in Slovenia through Croatia. It is nothing for someone who has done better than Magellan.