



Fred and Fredo Jougla on board the Fredoya. It's 17 metres long and five metres wide and took 15,000 hours to build from scratch, which they did themselves with the help of friends. PHOTOS: JOE O'SHAUGHNESSY.

# SWELL TIME

● French sailing adventurers enjoy 20-year love affair with Galway

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ANYONE walking along the Docks this week will have spotted a rather unusual visitor

Berthed by the roadside wall opposite Hynes Carpark is a magnificent yacht that is 17 metres long and five metres wide, with four huge sails and four cabins inside.

More surprising to sailing enthusiasts, whose curiosity draws them for a closer look, is when they learn that this aluminium 56-foot yacht was built from scratch by its French owners, Fred and Fredo Jougla.

The design of *Fredoya* was partly inspired by their winter living in the Galway Docks with three small children two decades ago, the only people living at sea there at a time when a marina didn't even exist in Galway.

Their children were aged four, seven and nine when they experienced snow and frost so severe in Galway that taxi drivers would not take fares, as they recorded in their diary of that first European adventure, which lasted four years.

"The Irish do not understand that we can live like this with three children in a boat, even if they envy us a little and tell us to continue," the diary records.

During their four months here on the *Ulisse*, they socialised at Biquets wine bar where owner Marcel hailed from their hometown of Martigues,



Fredo and Fred charter the yacht out to guests, bringing them all over the world. Fred works as skipper and chef on those adventures.

outside Marseilles. There was also a Guinness or two at the former early house Pádraic's, where Rúibín currently trades.

The two spent a lot of time with the children in the library, where they could use the internet for free. They had tried to get into a local school but found the siblings would have to be split into single-sex schools, so Fredo continued with home-schooling.

"There's no electricity in the Docks, no sun, no rotating wind. We have to invest in a generator," a diary

entry calmly states as the family prepared for Christmas of 2000.

Harbour Master, Captain Brian Sheridan, let them use the office address for post and offered them periodic use of the computer to keep in touch with family. He also gave them a permit to stay there over winter.

"There would be no charge for a large French family," the diary happily records.

They sailed to Inishbofin, Kinvara and Inis Mór during their time here and in each place had memorable encounters with both locals and visi-

tors.

On that sailing trip, they lived for lengthy spells in Ireland, Portugal and Norway. They financed the four-year odyssey through savings and money they earned working on a museum exhibition in Norway, where they caught the bug for the Arctic.

"You don't spend so much money living on a boat if you're careful," confides Fred.

On their return home, they spent six years building three huge yachts, two of which they sold to pay for the *Fredoya*, which took 15,000 hours to build from scratch.

"We did a lot of the work ourselves with friends. Fred did all the welding part. We knew what we wanted on the boat exactly after living on *Ulisse*. I even have a washing machine which I didn't have for those four years. It's a perfect fit for us," remarks Fredo.

Since then, they have travelled more than 100,000 nautical miles across the world, chartering the yacht out to a minimum of four people. On board, Fred is the cook and skipper. Prices for a trip start at €170 per day per person.

They find people are most impressed with Greenland, with its icebergs, whales, polar bears and midnight sun. The vessel is particularly known for its trips to the Arctic Circle.

But they have noticed the impact of climate change where they travel.

On the west coast of Greenland there is much less ice and they notice a volatility in the weather systems.

Reveals Fredo: "There's no stability, it's changing faster and faster. Before there would be a high pressure, a low pressure, it was easy to read. Now it's moving, now it's more extreme. Norway to Scotland this summer had south winds, that's not normal."

Their next big trip will be to Alaska, where they can travel 15,000 miles through the Caribbean and Panama Canal or by going along the Northwest Passage, which is just 3,000 miles.

"But that's boring. It's nice to enjoy the warmth of the Caribbean," smiles Fred, eyes twinkling at the thought of that paradise.

Their hairiest moment over the years was in May 2018 when they hit wind speeds of 75 knots and waves 10 metres high between Greenland and Iceland. It knocked one of the sails and caused €20,000 worth of damage to the inside of the vessel. But outside, the *Fredoya* was largely unscathed, proof that their handiwork over those six years was very fine indeed.

As they prepare to head to France, the pair reflect on their happy times in Galway.

"We like that it's a melting pot of people. When we go to a pub in Galway, we meet so many people. That's why we come. The West coast is swelly. It's nicer to sail."