



THE BEACON



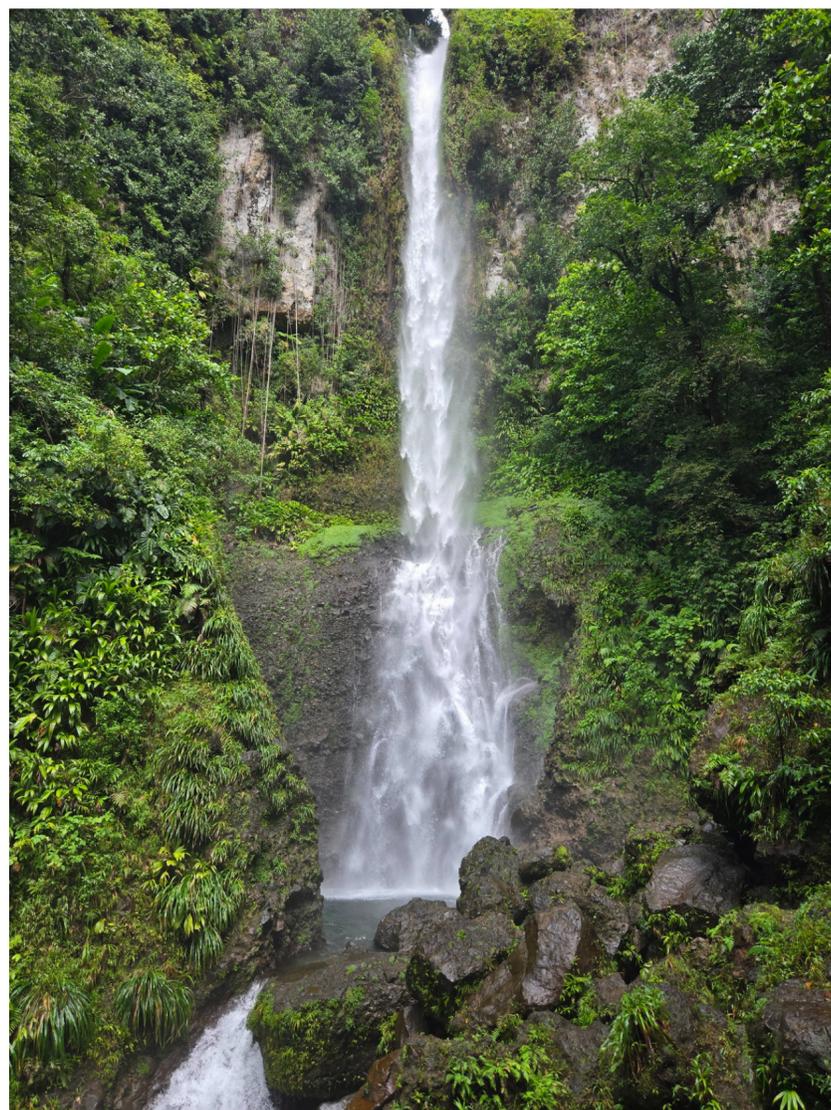
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A TRAVELLING SOUL

At six years old when I had my first day of school I'm told I said a quick goodbye to my parents and went back to playing with my new friends. I'm told that I spent my youngest years running wild, forcing my parents to chase me around. At eleven years old when I went camping without them for the first time I remember only waving goodbye to them, having to be called back to give them a hug goodbye. When I started high school, in year seven for us Australians, I remember suggesting that I could walk to school. Despite the distance when I started Class Afloat nothing changed. I said goodbye to my dad in Perth airport without a tear in eye, sorry dad, and I said goodbye to my mum in Berlin with a quick hug and a "see you later." It's not that I don't love my parents, but they raised me to be independent, and I'm sure they meant for me to just be able to manage myself back home but mum and dad, I'm sorry because I'm always happier when far away from the notion of that. There have been lots of things that have surprised me at Class Afloat, but one of the ones that has hit the hardest is what I'm finding to be the start of my young adulthood. Before Class Afloat, I wasn't lazy exactly but I definitely wasn't being as independent as I could've been. However, over semester one I had no one else to rely on for most of my daily functions and it was something I didn't expect to enjoy but really did. I found that myself and all of my peers developed a really strong work ethic, and it felt good to do it.

Then semester break came around and it was like a portal had been ripped open and suddenly I was dropped back into the same level of immaturity I had come from. I found myself lying around doing nothing while my parents offered to do nearly everything for me, and I hated it. I hated it so much that I can't fathom going home and risking falling into that trap. I can't believe that I will have another 18 months of school when I go home and then finally, finally I will get my independence back. By the time I got back to Class Afloat, I was ready to start watches and school again, 10 days off, it seemed, was far too much.

– Claire Cuddihy



THE SHIP THROUGH NEW EYES

When I saw the Alexander Von-Humboldt II for the first time, more than two years before I would see it again as a student, the most striking thing about it was its size and uniqueness. Maybe in larger ports across the world tall ships are commonplace, but for my friends and I watching it at anchor off of Carlisle Bay while we derigged our much smaller dinghies after an afternoon of race training, it was the first time we had seen such a large, intricate vessel. We were used to sailing with one, two or at most three sails, and instead we were looking out at twenty four spanning three separate masts and an unimaginable amount of rope and rigging.

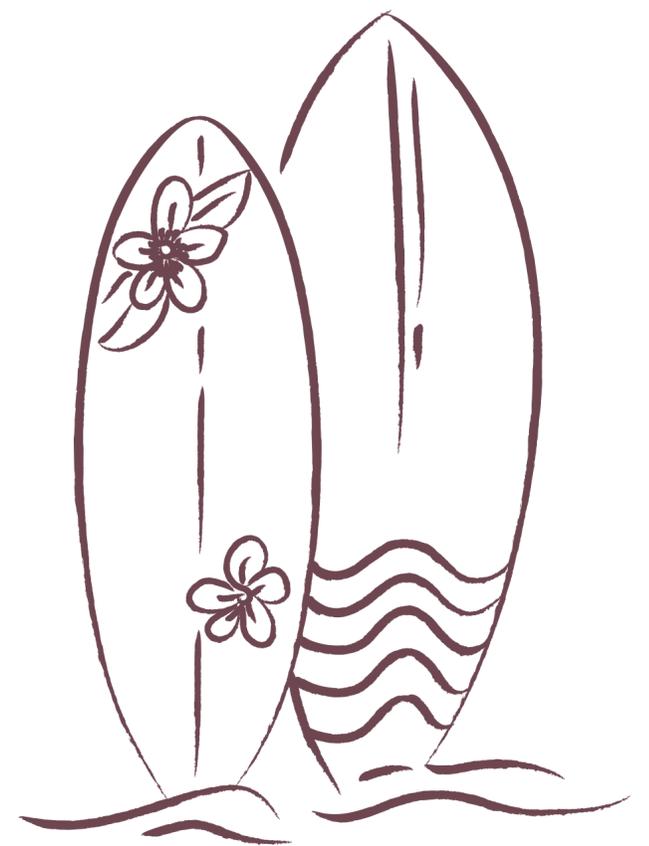
It was then that I seriously started wanting to find my way onto this boat, and two years later, when I boarded the Alex II with the knowledge that it was going to be my home for the next four months, it still seemed larger than I could imagine.

For myself and the seven other second semester students that joined the boat a few days before the semester began for orientation, the first thing we tried to figure out was 'where can we sit'? To fresh eyes, the rigging seemed so vast that we could not distinguish what was a 'safe zone' for new students and what was best left alone. However, even amongst all this confusion, we also began to start imagining which spots would become our favourites. Immediately, sitting on the aft deck (preferably on the roof of the chart house) or the fore deck to watch the sunrises and sunsets became my favourite part of the day, and once we got to climb up the rigging I never wanted to get down.

Below deck was a little different. It is not an exaggeration to say that life on a ship never stops, and the amazing DSST crew we have the privilege of sailing alongside and learning from run a seamless programme throughout the ship. To an outsider however, these routines appear to be more similar to a computer generating code than a community working together. It is so precise that if you are caught in the middle too early on, you will be left in a sea of German voices and moving bodies that is impressively cohesive and equally confusing. Even within this chaos, we still began to see the similarities to our own homes and schools. The mess was not all that different from our common rooms/study spaces at our old schools. The 'dungeon' feels remarkably similar to that one classroom that is so far away from everything else you always end up being late. The red salon is the perfect staff room, and escaping up onto the deck became my new way of taking a moment to go outside.

As we've become more accustomed to life on this ship, each space appears not just as a part of the system but also as a part of our community. Every bench and cabin is attached to some of the countless memories and lessons we've experienced so far. Each person shares in the collective responsibility to care for the Alex, and it is truly remarkable to see the one-of-a-kind experience that is created out of this shared purpose, passion and desire for learning. If it is true that the journey is more important than the destination, I couldn't be more grateful for it to be taking place on such an amazing ship.

- Anya DeCaires



ZERO EMISSION TALL SHIP PRESENTATION

The idea of using a zero emission tall ship to transport goods seems like a great solution to the issues of the shipping industry, especially when companies are saying they want to transition to shipping clean. The part that I found most surprising was the fact that zero companies actually want to use the zero emission tall ships. “Many companies say they want to become zero emission but in reality they don’t take the steps to be.” Southcott said, “I think these companies are afraid to actually do something.” Veer is still waiting to find a shipping client and I highly recommend you check out the website at veervoyage.com.

After Danielle explained the harsh reality, my hand went up: “Do you have a list of all these companies?” The truth is Veer is waiting to find one company that isn’t all talk. When I made a video interview with Danielle, I asked if this made her frustrated and she answered that it wasn’t frustrating because she sees it as an education for her, and she finds herself always learning more when she receives no as an answer. I’ll answer for her then, I was frustrated – I saw this tall ship, and it might be one of the coolest boats I’ve ever seen. These two faced companies don’t know what they’re missing. The last thing that Danielle said in our interview was, “I want to get clean emission out on the ocean, and when a company is ready to ship clean, the right one will come and we will be ready.” When I listened to her, it felt like she was speaking on something beyond her company, because she is trusting that when the world is ready and sees the urgency of clean shipping, Veer will be ready.



There’s something about Danielle being told no by multiple companies, and in some ways society as a whole, for not seeing the urgency of zero emission advancements, that is inspiring. When I asked her what she attributed her determination to, she said, “I think it’s when people tell me, ‘No, you can’t.’ And they tell me I can’t and I know I can— I think I just have to do it.”

To summarize Danielle’s presentation— it was inspirational. Multiple people afterwards asked how they could apply to work on Veer Voyage and I’m glad we connected Veer and Class Afloat. I’m also grateful to have had the opportunity to learn about a tall ship that might be a little cooler than the Alexander Von Humboldt.

- Klava Alicea



A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

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The Titou Gorge that we went through in Dominica was really cool. Getting to swim through the chasm where they filmed the scene where Jack's crew was held hostage by the cannibals in the second "Pirates of the Caribbean" and getting to pull ourselves up against the current was all really cool. As exciting as the journey into the gorge felt, it also felt strangely peaceful on the way back out. Once the sound of rushing water and people had dimmed down, it felt oddly quiet, something that there hasn't been much of so far. And I had a moment to relax, and I mean, truly relax. I wasn't cramped up, trying desperately to get to sleep in my bunk. I wasn't in the loud and rambunctious mess of the ship, with all of its people and dishes. True, undisturbed relaxation, I was able to loosen up, letting the slow current of the water carry me through the chasm, my life jacket keeping me afloat at the top of the water. The gentle coolness of the water, which reminded me of the waters back in Canada, worked with the heat of the surrounding air in a careful balancing act of hot and cold, a practice somewhat missing from the confines of the Alex. It was a nice break from the initial rocky start of the trip, but it was also an attentive reminder. A reminder that this won't be every day. A reminder that not every day will be the cool current of a stream in Dominica. A reminder that some days will be the stuffy heat of my bunk, the unrelenting noise of the mess, the exhausting pulling of ropes. And this was a warning that I took notice of. I know that not every day will be fun, but the next day always can be. I know that not every day will give me the pleasure of relaxation, but this was something that I was aware of before I even took my first step onto the deck of the ship, so this is something I am ready to encounter. This was a nice break though, allowing me to reset my battery that has been drained from the prior couple days of activity. I'm prepped for what is to come.

- Gavin Zoffman

THE START OF AN ADVENTURE

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So, the time has finally come. I am sitting in a classroom in the middle of the ocean. And I absolutely love it! All of the worries I had about this adventure were suddenly out of my head, due to the wonderful community that comes together on this ship, and whom I already have grown so close to within just a week. Although I spent my first day on the boat, emptying my entire stomach into the ocean, I am having the best time. We just departed from Dominica and are now on our way to the Dominican Republic, which will take roughly five days. Looking back, Dominica really left me speechless. The last few days felt so surreal, we had loads of adventures in such a short amount of time that it's crazy to think about what's to come. Dominica is a beautiful Island with hills covered in greenery, which we explored on a small hike to a huge waterfall. We went swimming in it, climbed up into a cave next to it, and jumped. That has to be one of the coolest things I have ever done; it made me feel so alive and I started to feel so thankful about this adventure, the opportunities I have had... and my life in general. We also had a lot of shore leave, which we spent roaming around the streets and beaches. Something that really stood out to me was how many chickens there were. We saw some on the beach, in the middle of the street, literally everywhere. The chickens really reminded me of home, since we spent the last couple of months looking after our little chicks. I had to send my sister photos of them right away. Another thing I noticed was how rundown all of the houses were; many of them are actually quite big and beautiful, covered in bright colors. From afar they look so pretty, but as soon as we got closer to them I could see the paint peeling off, broken windows, and rubbish everywhere. Although Dominica is quite poor, the prices in grocery stores are insane, which is apparently due to the high shipping costs that come with living on an island. It therefore is not surprising that the large population of Dominica does not have enough money to repair their houses.

Money in general was a big topic during our stay in Dominica. When getting money out of an ATM, our entire group pulled out 300\$ each by accident because we mixed up the currencies, which resulted in a huge scam by a taxi driver, who charged us 500 euro for a ten minute drive. Despite being quite frustrated over the situation, I always try to find the positive. We probably gave that man the best day ever, and who knows? He might even use the money to repair his house. Another highlight of Dominica was the two diving trips. It was my first time diving in more than two years, which made me really anxious at first. But in the end, I am so happy that I still decided to participate, even though I barely remembered anything. Once I went underwater, it all came back, and we ended up seeing so many unique fish, barracudas, and even a turtle.

- Luca Luboschik



RECIPES OF THE MONTH

Spaghetti and Meatballs

- 1 large egg
- 3 tablespoons finely chopped fresh basil (plus more for serving)
- 3 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds ground "meatloaf mix" (approximately equal parts ground beef, pork and veal)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup dried Italian style bread crumbs (such as Progresso)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese (plus more for serving)
- Large jar (32 oz) good quality Marinara sauce (such as Rao's)
- 1 pound spaghetti

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F and set an oven rack in the middle position.

2. In a large bowl, whisk together the egg, basil, parsley, oregano, salt, pepper, garlic and water. Add the meat, breadcrumbs and cheese and mix until just combined (your hands are the best tool). Do not overwork it.

3. Roll the mixture into golf ball-sized meatballs and place on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake for about 10 minutes, then remove the baking sheet from oven and use a metal spatula to turn the meatballs (they will stick a bit but should release easily when you scrape under them with the spatula). Put the meatballs back in the oven and cook for another 10 minutes, until they are nicely browned and almost cooked through.

4. In the meantime, bring the marinara sauce to a simmer in a large skillet. Taste it and adjust the seasoning if necessary (I usually add a healthy pinch of sugar and some freshly ground black pepper). Transfer the browned meatballs to the marinara sauce, leaving the fat behind. Cover loosely with a lid or foil and simmer for about 10 minutes, until the flavors marry and the meatballs are cooked through. Keep warm until ready to toss with pasta.

5. While the meatballs are cooking, bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil. Add the spaghetti and cook until al dente. Reserve about a cup of the cooking water, then drain. Toss the pasta with the sauce and meatballs (you may find it easier to do this in the pasta pot rather than the skillet, depending on the size of your pans). If the sauce seems dry, add a splash of the reserved pasta water to loosen it. Serve topped with fresh basil and more grated cheese.



OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

Time: 0120 UTC

Date: 01.02.2026

Weather: 26 degrees Celsius, still disgustingly humid

Sea State: 1

Wind: 1kn

Location: Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Sailing Status: At berth

Kms Travelled: 2220

NM Travelled: 8596

Days till Graduation: 110



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO...

- Simon, who turned 17
- Grace, who turned 18
- Megan, our program director
- Tiger, who turned 17
- Dawson, who turned 18
- Lydia and Andy, our wonderful crew



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“IF YOU WERE WAITING FOR THE OPPORTUNE MOMENT, THAT WAS IT.” - CAPTAIN JACK SPARROW

