



BRUNO CIANCI

## EUROPE

# Small boat completes pan-Europe voyage

There were tears of jubilation and a welcoming committee at the Rahmi M Koç Museum (CB280) in Istanbul on 27 September, when small-boat voyager Giacomo de Stefano completed his 3,200 mile (5,200km) inland waterways odyssey from London to the Bosphorus.

CB met the Italian in Faversham, Kent, in 2009 when he was sheltering on the East Coast, waiting for a window to cross the Channel and join Europe's network of rivers and canals. Shortly after that, he was struck by a "near-lethal pneumonia" leading to six months in British and Italian hospitals, followed by a year of recuperation. Meanwhile, his boat, the Iain Oughtred-designed 19ft 2in (5.8m) wooden Ness Yawl *Clodia*, waited for him in Ramsgate, Kent.

## TRIALS AND HIGHLIGHTS

His arrival this autumn was to the tune of cheering, sirens, press boats and flags. "I was so overcome by

emotion I could not approach the dock for a while!" Giacomo relates. "After being so close to death at the beginning of the trip, I can't believe I'm here. Is it really true?"

"The best part of the trip was between Serbia and Romania, particularly in the Iron Gates, where the Danube is 300ft (90m) deep, with 1,000ft (300m) overhanging cliffs, steep waves for days, and a strong current. It was like sailing in a rocky hell. It's 65 miles (105km) of dramatic beauty, wilderness and history.

"It can be dangerous for small craft when the Koshava, a southeasterly wind, blows hard for days against the fast current. The hardest part was the Black Sea, not because it is particularly rough, simply because I am not a very good sailor – not a kind of Frank Dye [Wayfarer pioneer] or so.

"Now I want to ride a bike to hug Mr Oughtred in Skye – if he will allow me to do so, of course. He designed a



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**"The Iron Gates was like sailing in a rocky hell"**

sturdy and generous little boat. She has been my boat, home, kitchen, office and my girlfriend for nearly two and a half years!"

That little boat will be on display until April 2013 at the Koç Museum, which houses one of the best maritime collections in the world. Giacomo's journey has taken him through 12 countries and five capital cities: London, Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest and Belgrade, not to mention Istanbul. Along the way, he passed through 314 locks, 18 aqueducts, eight tunnels and under more than 2,000 bridges.

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