

The breath of our experiences is contrasted by the tight confines of our family life. Squashed together into a space barely forty by twelve feet at its largest, we have had to learn how to live cheek by jowl, shoulder to shoulder and all sorts of other claustrophobic comparisons. We have divorced ourselves from the normal tools of separation – no one leaves for the office, the kids are not in school half the day, there are no babysitters, play dates are few and far between. If we socialise, the kids go too. For the first six months, we were never apart for more than two hours.

It is a recipe for closeness and bonding as well as madness and fury. There is no hiding, tempers will flare and bad days must be faced not brushed under the carpet of the daily routine. All of the little niggles that exist in any relationship and family can no longer be avoided and being together without infanticide, fratricide, parenticide (is that right?) or other such violence takes effort and work.

From my point of view, being a father and husband in this situation is the hardest and best thing I have ever done. When setting out, we and everyone else thought about the physical safety of us all on the wild and dangerous ocean, but it is our emotional safety that really hung in the balance. We may be living in paradise but the real paradise is something we create, not something we visit.

We have watched with wonder as our children grow and learn so fast and so magically in this environment. With few other children around, they interact with adults with ease, make friends fast and adapt to new circumstances with hardly a blink. There are flip sides; being used to constant attention and a captive audience but we know that their coming years of school will add the necessary rough and tumble of normal social life and knock some edges off them in a good way.

We have seen how we become more open with our feelings, less inclined to hide concerns and worries. Gesa has learnt the practicalities of navigation and sailing much more than she ever dreamt or will probably admit. She has immersed herself in parenting books and turned theory into practice with tremendous results. I have had to work out how to be an attentive father and partner, without the excuse of the business to drag me away from things I don't want to be bothered with. Still working on that one, we're all far from perfect. We have, on and off, home schooled our stubborn and wilful children and realised that teaching is not a profession we will be pursuing in the near future.

It has been amazing where our dream has taken us, and opening ourselves up to the risks and rewards of an adventure like this has allowed us to grow and develop in ways we never expected. We may have been a family with few troubles by most reckoning, but adventure is not an escape from them, it is a wonderful tool for coming to terms with them and hopefully finding routes to contentment and satisfaction in everything we do.

I encourage you to have a dream, and find a way to realise it, you never know where it will lead.

Oh, and we took some photos along the way....



The neighbours chill out on a rock in Vinalhaven, Maine.

American East Coast – June to November 08

Key: Left to right then top to bottom

- Max getting into the spirit of the 4th July celebrations in Thomaston, Maine.
- Staying ashore in California, Legoland becomes a favourite.
- Acadia National Park, Mount Desert Island, Maine.
- (and below) Lighthouse in Maine.
- Wrapped up warm in Baltimore, anchored in the heart of the city.
- In front of the Mayflower II in Plymouth, Mass.
- Blowing bubbles at the Boston Children's Museum.
- Anchored right beside some funny statue.
- Empty dock on Block Island, New York.
- Hiking in Acadia National Park, Maine.
- A Caribbean picture creeps in – we're back on Jost Van Dyke, BVIs (Dec. 08).
- Halloween in Solomons, Maryland.
- Little lobster caught in Maine – we put him back, of course.
- Old lightship in Baltimore.
- On a beach in Carlsbad, California.
- Rockpooling at Chebeague Island, Maine.
- Staying on a farm in Canada when taking a trip ashore.
- Sunset at Sachem Head, Connecticut.
- Getting close to the jellies at the New England Aquarium, Boston.
- Rock formations in Pemaquid, Maine.
- Visiting Santa in Norfolk, Virginia.
- (and below) Ty Dewi in downtown Boston.
- Nick goes racing with friends on Martha's Vineyard.



For the whole run down of our adventure, visit our blog: www.tydewi.co.uk. It is the night before Christmas Eve as we sit here bobbing gently in Great Harbour, Peter Island, in the British Virgin Islands, while 25 knot winds whistle through the rigging. These are the Christmas winds. Not what Gesa asked for Christmas!! Unfortunately they are set to be with us for a while, but with all things we will adapt and change plans accordingly. While the north hunker down for the Christmas holidays amidst snowstorm warnings, we will set out extra chain, find a sheltered beach, and enjoy the holidays Caribbean style.

Wishing you all happy holidays, merry Christmas and all good wishes, happiness, adventure, excitement and peace for 2009.

Love,

Nick, Gesa, Issie and Max