Caribbean - November 07 to May 08



Key: Left to right then top to bottom

- Issie smells the roses (bougainvillea, actually) on Marina Cay, BVIs.
- Devastation on Montserrat, volcanic mudflows fill the valley.
- Banana tree on Dominica.
- Max watches the aeroplanes on St Maarten.
- (and below) A ruined fort on Nevis.
- The family at the fort in St Lucia.
- Max on the beach on Antigua.
- The astounding Pitons (this one is Gros Piton) in St Lucia.
- The Baths on Virgin Gorda, BVIs.
- Perfect sailing, St Maarten to the BVIs.
- Ty Dewi at anchor, Guadeloupe.
- Fish on! Bonito coming aboard to be turned into dinner.
- In the rainforest inside the dormant volcanic crater on Statia.
- Issie on the salt pond mudflats on St Kitts.
- Diamond Waterfall on Dominica.
- Carnival on Martinique.
- The moving rocks turn out to be tortoises on St Barts.
- A mahi-mahi as big as Max. And boy did it taste good.
- Snorkelling together in St Barts.
- Looking out towards Diamond Rock from high up on Martinique.
- (and below) Gesa dives whilst Issie swings, Jost Van Dyke, BVI's.
- (also below) The family in White Horse Bay, St Kitts.
- A turtle in St Barts. There are lots of them out here.
- Not all play hard work in St Maarten scraping off the old paint.

Follow your dreams, and never run away from your troubles

This journey of ours has been ten years in the planning and doing. Our new life in Canada is only a matter of months away now and we are able to reflect on our amazing year just past as well as look forward to a wonderfully uncertain future. Maybe it's time for another ten-year plan.

Before we left, we wrote about who we thought we were and what we would get out of this trip and life beyond. Looking back over those words, it strikes me how little of the basic things have changed. We are still the same people with similar strengths and weaknesses but this life, this intense environment we have thrown ourselves into, has forced us to face up to who we are in a way we never dreamt of as we set out.

We have visited some amazing places, met all manner of wonderful and inspirational people and given ourselves and our kids an enlightening view of the richness of this world and its inhabitants. Our eyes, never closed before, have been opened ever wider to the delights that travel has to offer and our mode of travel has allowed us time to gain insights and depth that would have escaped us on any normal vacation.

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 neigbours chill out on a rock in Vinalhaven, Maine.

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 Dessert 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 jellys at the New England Aguarium, Boston.
- Rock formations in Pemaguid, Maine.
- Visiting Santa in Norfolk, Virginia.
- (and below) Ty Dewi in downtown Boston.
- Nick goes racing with friends on Martha's Vineyard.

American East Coast – June to November 08



For the whole run down of our adventure, visit our blog: <u>www.tydewi.co.uk</u>. It is the night before Christmas Eve as we sit here bobbing gently in Great Habour, 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