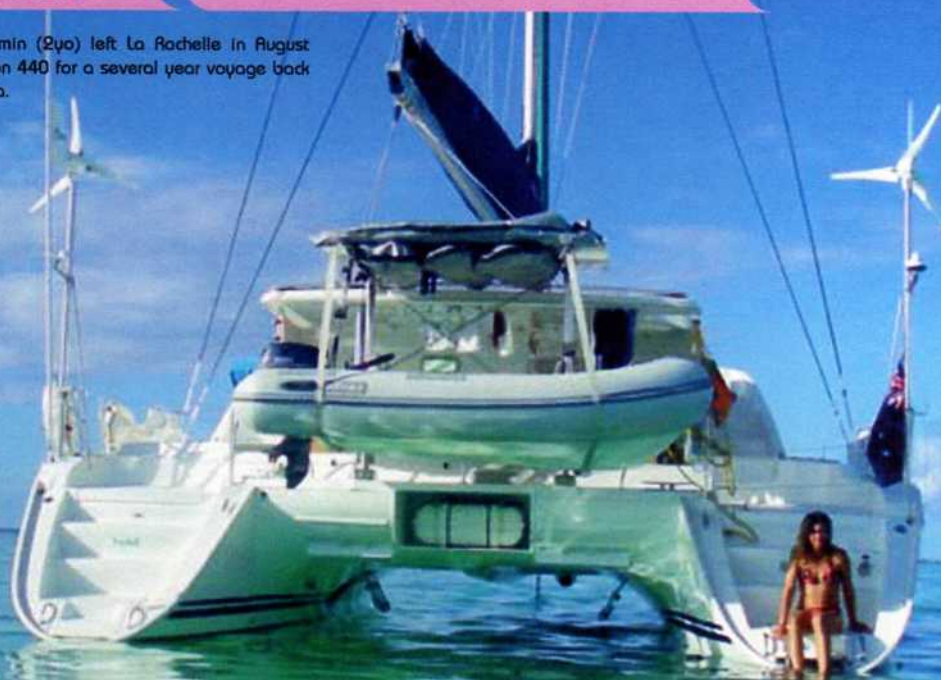


Nick, Melissa and Benjamin (2yo) left La Rochelle in August 2007 on their new Lagoon 440 for a several year voyage back to their home in Tasmania.



VENEZUELAN ISLANDS TURQUOISE AND TRANQUIL

LOS TESTIGOS, ISLE COCHE, LA BLANQUILLA, TORTUGA, LOS ROCQUES, AVES DE BARLOVENTO AND AVES DE SOTAVENTO ARE ALL VENEZUELAN OFF LYING ISLANDS THAT RARELY MAKE IT INTO THE POPULAR YACHTING PRESS. AFTER SPENDING SOME 10 WEEKS WANDERING WESTWARDS THROUGH THESE TREASURES WE WONDERED HOW LONG IT WOULD BE BEFORE THEY BECOME 'DISCOVERED'

Our cruising plans began to develop in Grenada as June approached along with the official hurricane season. Amongst the several secluded anchorages in Southern Grenada gathered a 'hotch potch' armada of international yachts who were also making critical sailing plans. Returning Americans were deciding on the best route north, many would be taking the usual jaunt south to Trinidad and Tobago, while others were anticipating the regular stops in Venezuela – Isla de Margarita and Puerto La Cruz for boat maintenance prior to returning

to the Eastern Caribbean. A few of us planned to use these islands as a relaxing part of the westward sail to Panama. Our biggest concern was the constant background 'hum' of robberies and violence along the coast of Venezuela and some of the islands. With our 20 month son Benjamin onboard we had vowed to keep a good stretch between Sonrisa and these genuine events. While we spent two days in Isla de Margarita clearing in there were two robberies from yachts (at the time 90 yachts were at anchor off the town) one which

included some physical violence. So there is a real threat, but with some sensible precautions and safe routing it is no more so than in any other relatively poor and overpopulated communities. Once at the outlying islands the menace, almost, completely disappeared.

TALK ABOUT ARMCHAIR CRUISING !

With the ever constant Easterly trades ranging from 10 to 20 knots, day and night temperatures of around 25 to 30 degrees C, a general westwards current of 1 -2 knots and water

of 26 degrees this has to be the most sublime and easy sailing anywhere. Distances are all relatively short with the odd overnight sail. During our time we had one 'Tropical Wave' which brought a little rain and winds from the south at 20 knots, otherwise the solar panels and wind generators were happily providing all the power we needed.

Los Testigos (The Witnesses) was our starting point, a comfortable overnight sail from Grenada. While not an official port of entry the helpful officials from the Guardia Costa will per-