

WEEK 5 INVISIBLE PLACES

Position:
-34.4067, -5.62222
Time: 2016-12-01
08:24:00 UTC

Next Week:
Antarctica

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**By Rich Wilson, Skipper
Great American IV**

At sea, we see great swaths of ocean, and thereby of the planet. Sometimes on a long ocean voyage, we may be close to land, but more often we are hundreds of miles off any land. In either circumstance, I like to think about the people, the places, the cultures – just over that horizon!

In this voyage, we were near Cape Finisterre, and I could see the lights of Spanish towns. On our 2003 voyage Hong Kong to New York, we passed between Java and Sumatra in Indonesia, and could smell the spices of Sumatra. On our San Francisco – Boston voyage in 1993, we saw the lights of Recife, Brazil as we sailed past, and later were covered by dust blown two thousand miles from the Sahara Desert. These were direct connections to the lands we passed.

Yet if there is no such direct connection, you must use your imagination. Who are they just over there? What language do they speak? What religions do they follow? What is their culture like, and their art, literature and music? What is the geography and topography, the politics and the government?

It's a simple and friendly curiosity about our neighbors on the planet. Likely, they are more similar to how we are, than they are different. Likely they too will want a peaceful existence, good health for their families, adequate food and shelter, and a brighter future for their children than they themselves might have had.

Just as a huge night sky full of stars lures one to imagine one's place in the universe, this imagining among mariners about who and what lies just over the horizon, helps us ponder our role and place on earth.



**By Captain Yann Cariou
Captain of the Hermione**

The first time that I went to sea on a boat (I was 5 years old), I felt several very strong feelings: entering another world with different colors, a different smell and different sensations; the impression of travelling on a living being, which moved and smelt very salty. I also felt a certain humility, the impression of a great vulnerability but also the strong desire to discover, to experience and tame this world full of mysteries.

The first time that I crossed the Atlantic Ocean, I discovered the immensity of this liquid dessert and I realized that our planet was really very big. We were heading westward, towards America, the days and weeks passed and we still hadn't seen land in front of us yet. Life seemed absent: no sea birds or fish and few whales. A solitary and wild world, with no other guide than the stars and so far from man and civilization.

At night we progress without seeing the landscape pass-by, the celestial sphere is our only vision and we feel alone in the universe.

In the day, the sea is there with the waves, the clouds, the sun and sometimes a sea animal or a bird of passage; we can get very close to land without seeing it and that is very frustrating. I remember having come close to the island of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean; the land was roughly twenty miles away and we could smell the slightly spicy odour of its vegetation, see the coastal clouds and simply sense the pres-

ence of this great island, but there was nothing on the horizon, it was as though the Earth was imaginary.

The competitors in the Vendée Globe Challenge will cover over 24,000 miles, or right round our planet without ever seeing land unless it is a few faraway summits of some isolated island. For three months they will only see millions of cubic metres of salty water that make up the sea and the oceans. In these great desserts of solitude that they will cross, civilization will seem very far away to them and everyone, at a given moment, will wonder if mankind still exists. Is it real? It is in these great liquid desserts that man feels insignificant and vulnerable, and it is there, more than anywhere else, that he must be aware of the need to preserve and protect what is, after all, a fragile sphere of life.



(Excerpt from full essay, which can be viewed at <http://vg2016.sitesalive.com>)

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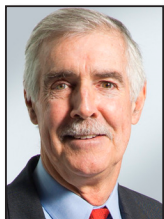
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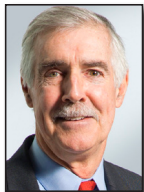


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