



April 2012

DEAR FRIENDS AROUND THE WORLD,

We haven't been very good at giving news, and it may be more than a year since you have heard about us. We do think about all of you quite often, and we do hope that you find all satisfaction and joy in the various paths that life takes you through.

Fleur de Sel and her crew have been pursuing their around the world voyage, logging a bit more than 23'000 nautical miles on the way (or about the distance around the globe in a perfect circle). We have been very lucky to be able to visit wonderful places with great scenery, and meeting fantastic people in the various destinations we went to. Brief accounts of our trip to those places follow.

Although we only make the effort to publish our logbook in French, do not forget to check it out:

- there are several maps of our voyage, which should speak for themselves :
<http://journal.belle-isle.eu/parcours/>
- pictures also speak more than words :
<http://photos.belle-isle.eu/>
- and then there's a summary in English :
<http://journal.belle-isle.eu/english>

Fair seas to all, we wish you all the best, and we look forward to hear from you !

HEIDI & NICOLAS

SOUTH AMERICA

- **Brazil** (July - October 2010) - We sailed down the east coast of this huge country, which was already enough to fill up more than 3 months' time, especially as we stopped a long time in Salvador (Bahía). Other notable ports of call were the wonderful Abrolhos reef, famous and spectacular Río de Janeiro and the nearby Costa Verde. In Brazil, it would be possible to overdose regarding green lush vegetation there, as well as doing the same for the friendliness of the people!



Fleur de Sel navigates the mangroves of the Brazilian coastline

- **Uruguay** (October - November 2010) - A few weeks stop in this relaxing and retro-feeling country was just perfect to get our Spanish back into working order, although it was a bit contaminated with Brazilian Portuguese at first !
- **Argentina** (November 2010 - January 2011) - Just across the huge Río de la Plata, we first stopped in the sprawling capital of Buenos Aires. The perfect place to go dancing tango, as well as visiting a bit, and leaving "Fleur de Sel" a few days for an inland trip to the Iguazú falls : spectacular ! Then we headed down the the wild and barren Argentinian coast, spending Christmas along the way. We enjoyed wonderful marine life, with numerous penguins, sea lions, and Commerson's dolphins, as well as the guanacos on land. The highlight of it all was a week spent in Isla de los Estados, just about the end of the world, as far as South America is concerned. That was just before making it into Ushuaia, the southernmost city in the world, on the shore of the Beagle Channel.



Tense navigations along the Argentine windswept coast

- **Chile** (January - July 2011) - This is where we crossed into Chilean waters, and where the climate changes from very windy and dry to very windy and very wet. Of course, the Patagonian channels are not the easiest to navigate, but they are not as tough as some would say, and it offers superb rewards: unspoilt Nature for hundreds of miles, with many glaciers running from the top of the Andes all the way down into the sea. Flightless ducks, cormorants, dolphins abound, along with the occasional whale. We enjoyed very much the months away from it all in this maze of canals, inlets, fjords and islands, up to the island of Chiloé.



- **Andes** (May - June 2011) - We left "Fleur de Sel" for a few weeks in Valdivia, Chile, to travel inland once more. Traveling by bus, we saw the colorful and sun-drenched Argentinian North-West, the hypnotizing Salar de Uyuni and the nearby colored lagunas and volcanoes in Bolivia, as well as the Desert of Atacama and the Elquí Valley in Northern Chile. So much sun was a change from the Patagonian rain, and being at 4'000+ meters altitude (15'000+ feet) is not what we're used to aboard !

PACIFIC OCEAN

- **Pacific crossing** (July - August 2011) - After a full year there, it was time to say farewell to South America. We set off Northwesterly at first, calling at Robinson Crusoe Island, before altering our course to Westward. After our longest passage ever (19 days for 2'270 miles), we made it to Easter Island, a magical place to be ! We then continued over to Pitcairn Island, where we were unable to land because of the swell.

Rapa Nui (Easter Island) was a truly mystical (and really isolated) place to visit



- **French Polynesia 1** (August - December 2011) - Our 2-month Pacific crossing ended in the Gambier Islands, a little Polynesian paradise where we stopped for 6 weeks ! We made good friends there, and learned about the Polynesian lifestyle, eating coconuts, oyster muscles, and fish. We also enjoyed the warm waters and the snorkeling ! But French Polynesia is huge, so we moved on to visit (less slowly) the very seldom visited Austral Islands. People there were also very friendly and we had a great time before sailing North to the Society Islands. There we saw the greatest Polynesia outrigger canoe race before island hopping our way to Tahiti.
- **Europe** (December 2011 - January 2012) - This is where we left "Fleur de Sel" once more, but on the hard this time, as it was cyclone season. And we were fortunate enough to be able to fly home to Europe, where we spent Christmas and the holidays with our families and friends. We had left nearly two years before !

These are the contestants in the *Hawaiki Nui Va'a* outrigger canoe race, and they gave us quite a show!



- **French Polynesia 2** (January- April 2012) - We returned to Tahiti, where a long work awaited us : painting the hull anew, and that took us three weeks of harsh and tiring work. But once this was done, we set off once more, heading East this time, as we wanted to visit the Marquesas Islands. As this meant going into the prevailing winds, we dashed with the first acceptable weather window, barely touching the Tuamotu archipelago along the way. We are writing you from the Marquesas Islands, after spending a great six weeks there.



OUR PLANS

Now the cyclone season is coming to an end, we plan to continue sailing through the Pacific Ocean, stopping in some island groups along the way, such as Tonga and Fiji. We will cross over to New Zealand in November 2012, in order to get out of cyclone's way once more. We should be spending the holidays there, and going to Australia after that. 2013 will be the year we cross the Indian Ocean to get to South Africa by December 2013, before sailing up the Atlantic Ocean back to Europe by the end of Summer 2014.

As you can see, there is still quite a bit of "work" to do. In fact, we haven't reached the midpoint yet! So we think it will take us another 2 years and a half to make the full loop. Of course, we hope we will continue meeting friendly and adorable people. But for all of you also sailing somewhere on the seas, perhaps we can meet again? As for those of you leading a more "normal" lifestyle at home, it would also be a great pleasure to meet you somewhere along the way!

