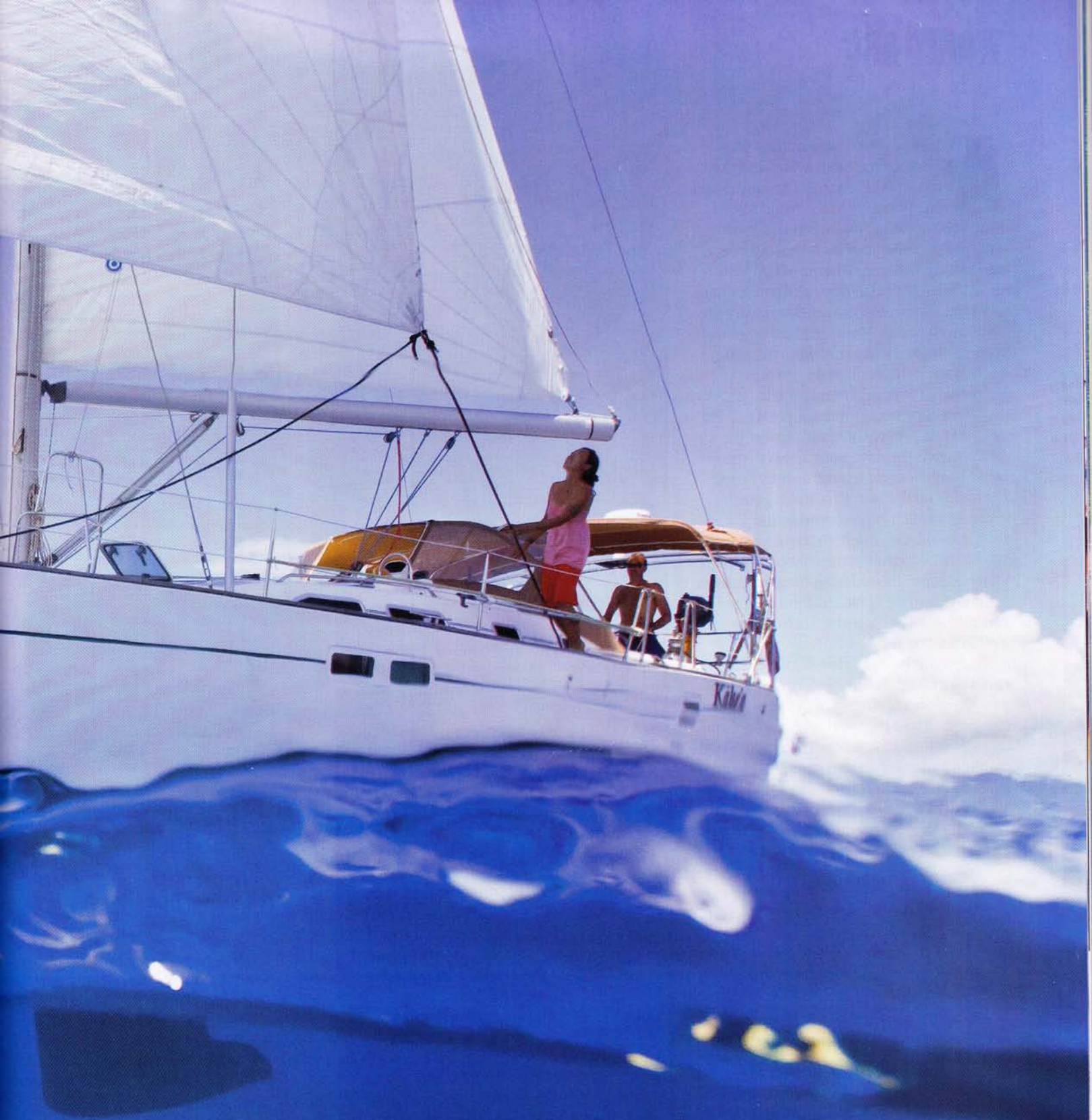


# JUST THE TWO OF US

**HOW TO PERSUADE YOUR WIFE TO SAIL ROUND  
THE WORLD WITH YOU – AND ENJOY IT**





*When one partner is keener than the other on the idea of a world cruise it can make that dream of a life at sea seem unattainable. But it needn't. Elaine Bunting sails with two couples on the World ARC to determine the recipe for success in enjoyable double-handed cruising*



**A**s dark fell, the craggy outline of Mauritius retreated astern and the wind and the seas rose. Around us, the other 19 yachts in the World ARC round the world rally were settling down for a night at sea on one of their shortest ocean passages, to the French island of Réunion.

In the lee of the island a calm patch where the wind had backed was quickly replaced by tradewinds and suddenly the brakes were off. A surprisingly cool 25-knot wind fed in from a touch abaft the beam and 2-3m seas propelled us with urgent little surfs.

I was sailing with Dutch couple Hans and Emmy Huis in't Veld on their Contest 50, *Drammer*. As the navigation lights of the other boats went on around us they furled the main and the boat strode along easily under a smallish, high-clewed genoa.

The World ARC, in which 20 yachts are taking part, has shed some crews and gained others as it progressed from the start in Saint Lucia last January. Hans and Emmy joined in Australia, having cruised there from the Netherlands at their own pace.

They joined the rally for what they knew could be a fast-paced and often boisterous passage of the Indian Ocean to South Africa, compressed into the short favourable season of the North East Monsoon. Their three children had been worried about them and persuaded the couple to do it in company with the rally. They were, at first, sceptical.

"We had decided not to go through the Red Sea, then we read that you could do part of the World ARC. I didn't expect to enjoy it as much as we have as we are quite independent," says Emmy. "But you can go your own way if you want, there is scope. You can leave earlier or later if you prefer and that was a big relief."

They found it easier than they'd imagined

**“ We read that you could do part of the World ARC. I didn't expect to enjoy it as much as we have as we are quite independent. But you can go your own way if you want, there is scope**

to slot in and make friends and their chief memory of the solidarity of the fleet was when they were being shadowed by a fishing boat close to Bali. They were very worried and broke into the World ARC's daily radio sched. Within an hour several other boats had circled wagons and the fishing boat retreated.

This World Cruising Club round the world rally is the third I've covered and sailed in since Jimmy Cornell's first in 1992. One of the big differences I've noticed, which has come from the continuity of the rally every two years, is the flexibility for crews to drop out

Réunion, the VHF came to life. Buddy crews chatted to each other. Reports from the bigger boats ahead were sent about changing wind conditions and direction – the kinds of conversations you get on the radio after dinner and before the night watch system starts in earnest and silence falls on board.

As it became fully dark, a full moon rose in our wake, so bright it obliterated the stars and lit every crease of the waves around it. You could put your hand out and see a shadow cast on deck; the shadow of the sails skimmed along our leeward side. With her



Dutch couple Emmy and Hans Huis in't Veld joined the World ARC in Australia after sailing halfway round the world. Their Contest 50 *Drammer* (above right) was shadowed by a fishing boat (right)



of the rally at any point, or to join up along the way.

I had sailed with this rally at an earlier point, when I went through the Panama Canal with Swiss couple Charles and Marie Stutz. The Stutzes have had a few headaches with their Hallberg-Rassy 48 and decided to stay in Australia, make repairs and rejoin the next World ARC in 2012. Others, like the Huis in't Velds, have joined in after sailing halfway round the world on their own.

You can feel the camaraderie in the fleet right away. As night fell on our passage to

modest jib, *Drammer* scooted on effortlessly at 7-7.5 knots and we all lapped up the glorious tradewinds sailing.

When the mountains of Réunion came into sight in daylight other yachts converged and we made our way into port close to the capital of St Denis. The World ARC team, Paul Tetlow and Suzana Buraca, were there to take lines and dispense information. Even after so short a leg of the rally, the crews were delighted to see each other again and, as sailors do, headed straight for the nearest bar.

The particularly strong bond between the double-handed couples is fascinating. When I covered the last World ARC in 2009, the drop-out rate among couples was quite high, and one crew who made it to the finish admitted that the pace of the rally, which goes round the world in 16 months, had been very hard work. This time more couples have stuck with it and seem to be coping fine.

Why the difference, I wondered?

"I don't have the feeling that the two-handed couples in our fleet are finding it particularly hard work," comments event manager Paul Tetlow, who has been in almost every port with the fleet. "I think the double-





It's important that both partners feel capable of handling the boat on their own. And both have to enjoy the sailing part of the voyage!





Charles and Marie Stutz aboard *Dreamcatcher*, a Hallberg-Rassy 48. When the world cruise was first suggested Marie had serious doubts, but swallowed her fear and decided to give it a go

handed people benefit more from a rally because they are short of hands coming in and the information we can give them cuts down on the legwork."

The double-handed crews on the World ARC impressed me and I think many of the ways they organise a circumnavigation have lessons for crewed boats. The strong bond that forms between the double-handers on the rally from their shared experience is unmistakable. Aside from realising their sailing ambitions, you can easily sense how the crews in this World ARC, like its predecessors, are in the process of making friends they will probably keep for life.

## Double-handed does it

Sailing long-distance double-handed has been growing in popularity. At one level the reasons are fairly obvious: mainsail furling systems, electric winches and windlasses make it easier to sail a large cruising boat

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short-handed and many people find cruising more enjoyable quietly as a couple with occasional visiting friends or family.

But the other factor that is not so widely discussed, and which ultimately may decide whether or not you go long-distance at all, is whether your other half buys into the idea. For many people a long-term cruise remains a dream because their other half doesn't hold the same vision of Nirvana.

So how do you arrive at this happy state of affairs, where your wife or partner is every bit as keen to sail into the sunset as you are? How

do these double-handed crews manage to make it work, particularly on a rally such as the World ARC, which circles the world at a fair clip in 16 months and balances all the sailing, repair work and logistics on only two sets of shoulders?

I met Charles and Marie Stutz when I sailed on their Hallberg-Rassy 48 *Dreamcatcher* through the Panama Canal last year. Charles, who is Swiss, and Marie, who comes originally from the US, have had a mixed year. They dropped out of the World ARC in the Pacific after an accumulation of boat problems: serious repercussions from a tsunami in the Galapagos Islands plus persistent teething problems with their new boat. They are repairing and refitting in Australia and plan to slot back into the next World ARC in 2012.

"When Charles first brought up the subject of doing a circumnavigation I was not really comfortable with the idea, nor committed," says Marie "When I started to consider the proposal seriously, all those doubts came to light. What if I get seasick? What if I miss being on land? What if I can't learn all the instruments or I can't manage the boat on my own?"

"What if one of us gets seriously injured or I can't handle the stress and the fear? What if, what if, what if... The list was endless. And there it was, that familiar word – fear."

Marie's comments get to the nub of many women's reluctance to venture far offshore. It mainly comes down to anxiety born of lack of control, or training, or an uncomfortable feeling of over-reliance on their mate.

The most successful double-handed couples I've met are those who are interdependent and have broadly overlapping areas of sailing and technical



Tor Johnson

competence. That starts with training – Chay Blyth always used to drum into his amateur crews facing the Southern Ocean the motto 'knowledge dispels fear'.

"I read a book about 15 years ago, that I would highly recommend, entitled *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway*, by Susan Jeffers," says Marie Stutz. "She writes: 'At the bottom of every one of your fears is simply the fear that you can't handle whatever life may bring you. If you had the confidence to handle anything that comes your way, what would you have to fear? Nothing!'"

"I knew from my past experiences I would be able to handle the circumnavigation and if I passed up this opportunity, it might not be available later in life – we were not getting any younger. My husband and I discussed our concerns and decided to give it a go."

John and Jen Greenwood joined the World ARC in Thailand – they stopped there a while





One of the worries many partners have is standing a watch alone – the couples on the World ARC each worked out their own way of doing things

after taking part in a previous Blue Water Rally. The Greenwoods are comparatively new to sailing and have approached it in an organised manner, almost as a project-managed venture. As a personal observation, I've found couples who have taken up sailing and gone about gaining knowledge this way to be some of the most meticulously prepared, as they apply the disciplines of business life to their 'project'.

"We started sailing ten years ago when we went on a Sunsail holiday," says John.

"Then we both did our RYA Day Skipper and Yachtmaster courses at night school," Jen adds. "We learnt to sail jointly and in 2000 we bought a Jeanneau 43 and sailed to Tenerife where we sailed and chartered it.

"When we decided we were serious about

going round the world we took on an instructor to live on board with us on our boat [their new Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 54, *Tzigane*] for four weeks in the Canaries. He was very old school and he taught us a lot."

This all fits with Jen's background – she had a training business. John had an advertising company. "I was the one who

pushed to do it," she says, "and I organised all the courses. Because we are relatively new to sailing we do everything by the book."

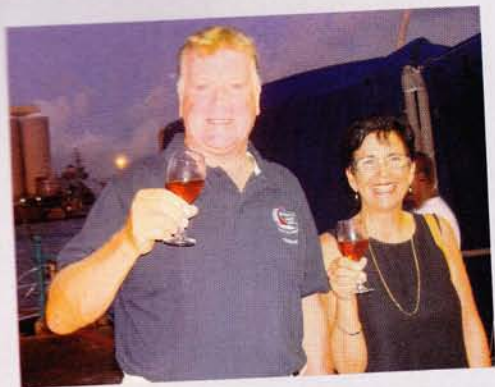
In contrast, Hans and Emmy Huis in't Veld have been sailing since childhood. Emmy was a mad keen Solo dinghy racer as a student and the couple later sailed with their growing family in a succession of cruisers.

World ARC fleet sets off together from Vanuatu – the camaraderie has proved a boon for most couples



World Cruising Club





John and Jen Greenwood are relatively new to sailing and set about their round the world 'project' in an organised manner, learning together and buying their Jeanneau SO54 *Tzigane* (right) for the trip



Despite – or perhaps because of – this depth of experience they embarked on their round the world cruise conservatively. They both did additional training. Emmy had to get official qualifications to satisfy insurance requirements and took coastal navigation, VHF and ship's medical courses. "Although I've sailed all my life, I learnt a lot," she says.

"It is very important to know that you can bring a boat safely back to port. I wouldn't feel comfortable if I didn't know how to sail and navigate the boat and I often do the navigation. You have to enjoy the sailing part; it doesn't work if only one of you is enjoying it."

For his part, Hans did an engine maintenance course and got instruction in repairing and maintaining other key equipment, which also helps give them trust in each other's abilities.

"It is very important to have confidence

**“ It's very important to have confidence in your boat. We have been uncomfortable, but never afraid. We wanted to sail *Drammer* for two or three seasons before leaving because there are always a few things to fix**

in your boat," says Emmy. "We have been uncomfortable, but never afraid."

So their number one tip is? "Know your boat. Even after 50 years' sailing there are things you learn and you should start with boat preparation. We wanted to sail *Drammer* for two or three seasons before leaving because there are always a few things from the yard [to fix]."

Their recommendation echoes everything we have learnt, year on year, from our annual Great Atlantic Gear Test: that the best way to make sure equipment is

reliable, and that you don't spend too much time fixing systems, is to fit them and get them working long beforehand.

Charles Stutz says: "If you have problems with a new boat it will be both very frustrating and tiring. Frustrating because you will spend the few days in each stop in your engine room or elsewhere, fixing problems while everybody else is enjoying themselves. And tiring because you will tend to spend all the hours you are awake either working, chasing help or on the phone or computer arguing with the boatbuilder or the equipment manufacturer about who is responsible."

The Greenwoods concur: "If you are thinking about long-distance cruising, sail your boat for at least a year. The yard will put switches and filters and so on in silly places and because boats have low volume sales problems take a while to get back."

The couples we talked to said the process of getting to know the boat helped them settle into a harmonious life on board. And most seemed to enjoy life together 24 hours a day from the start.

"We get on very, very well," says Jen Greenwood. "John and I probably get on better on the boat than we do on land."

"One of the secrets is to respect each other's wishes when it comes to how you sail," advises Emmy Huis in't Veld. "I don't like to push the boat. Hans respects this, although if he were sailing alone or with



Tor Johnson

friends he would sail differently. If one of us wants a reef there's no discussion."

A common denominator on board was that couples tended to keep watch according to their stamina, rather than operating an equally apportioned watch rota as you would on a fully crewed boat. The issue of trust and fairness that can sometimes niggle in a full crew doesn't seem to arise here.

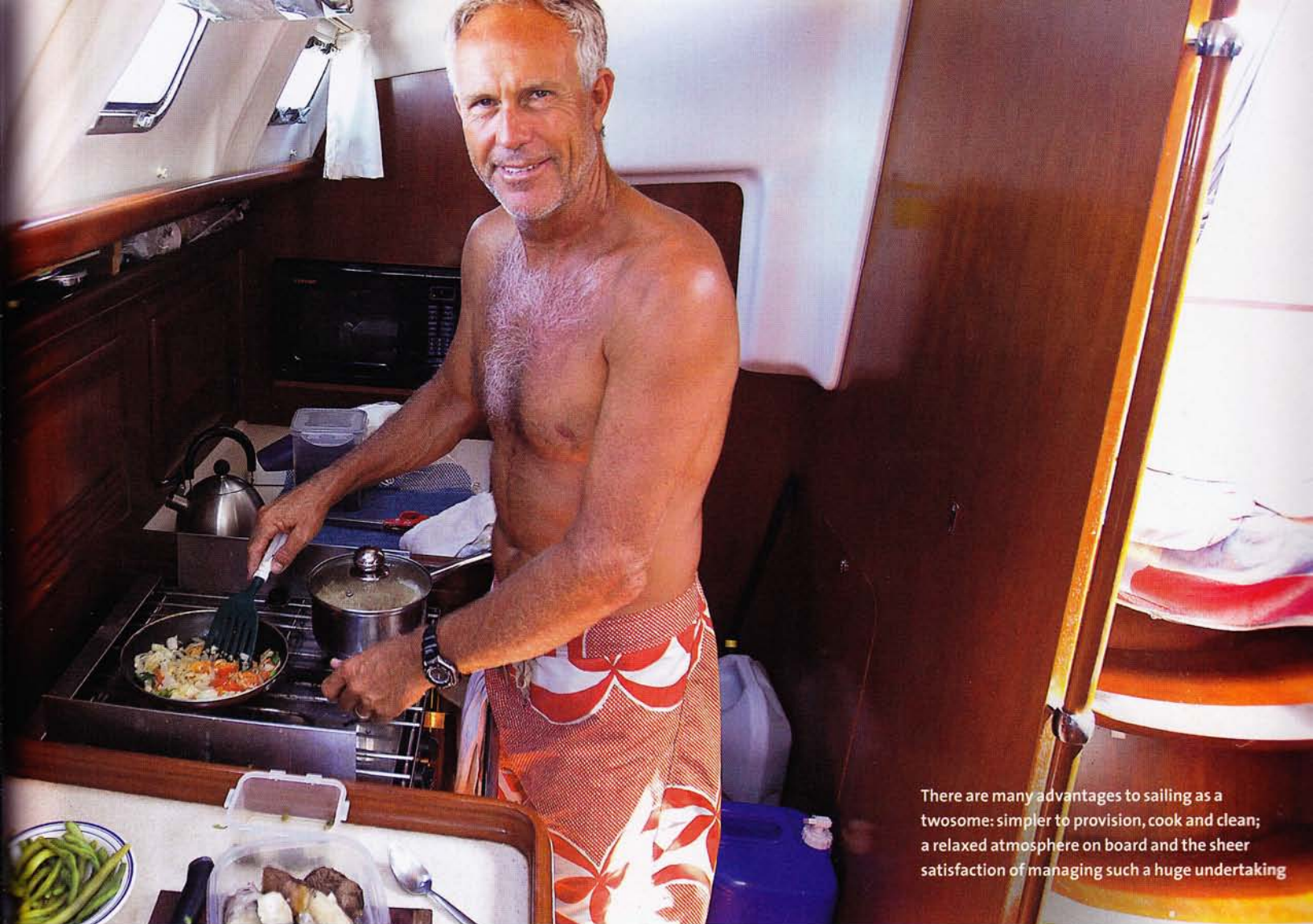
"At the beginning we did four hours on, four off, but it didn't work. Hans can't sleep for four hours and I need double the sleep he does," says Emmy. "We now have a variable: when Hans needs to sleep, he wakes me up and I go on watch." Emmy says she lets Hans sleep as long as he needs.

John and Jen Greenwood have a more structured watch system of three-on, three off – "but if someone needs an extra hour you say so." When the weather is fine John often snoozes in the cockpit when Jen is on watch and they say they work on the basis of 'when in doubt, call out'.

They say they have complete confidence in each other's decision-making. "I don't think I've ever woken up and thought: 'I wonder what's going on?'" John comments.

Although these long-distance sailing couples strive to be equally competent sailors, when it comes to day-to-day chores





There are many advantages to sailing as a twosome: simpler to provision, cook and clean; a relaxed atmosphere on board and the sheer satisfaction of managing such a huge undertaking

on board the division of labour tends to be along more traditional male-female lines.

"I do the domestic stuff and John does the boat," says Jen Greenwood. John says he was always "fairly handy". Mechanical know-how is absolutely critical to a long-distance cruise because even if you get someone else to repair key equipment, it can go wrong.

"Know where to get urgent spare parts," says Charles Stutz from bitter experience. "Shipping to certain places is close to impossible and to find a supplier willing to ship to you is sometimes very difficult.

"If all else fails you can get on a plane and fly to the closest of either New Zealand, Australia or the USA to get your spare part and take it back with you in your luggage."

Have a plan to stop if need be along the way, they advise. "It's important to both enjoy what you're doing, but it's also important to be able to go home to children and grandchildren," says Emmy Huis in't Veld. "When you are doing a circumnavigation in stages like we are, you should learn where you can leave or store your boat safely along the way, like the Canaries, Trinidad, Ecuador, Tahiti or Australia. We also have an amount of money set aside to ship our boat home or to get a

skipper to deliver her if needed and that gives you peace of mind."

One thing everybody stressed was the importance of a good, strong, reliable (possibly over-specified) autopilot, or even duplicate pilots. "Go overboard on the autopilot," say the Greenwoods.

"The major risk to us is autopilot failure,"

### How to cruise double-handed - and enjoy it

- Get to know your boat and its systems thoroughly before you leave - cruise for at least one season
- Fit a really good autopilot - or even two
- Increase both your skill levels with plenty of appropriate training
- Make sure you are both comfortable with navigating and sailhandling
- Be prepared to share out areas of responsibility (and control)
- Discuss your fears upfront and your plans for emergencies
- Consider trips back home at various points to see parents/children/grandchildren
- Sail within the comfort zone of the most cautious partner

comments Hans Huis in't Veld. "This is one of the most critical points and we check the whole system in every port."

"Redundant systems are crucial if you sail double-handed," agrees Charles Stutz. "Ideally you would have two independent autopilots installed, as in our case, or at the very least carry all the parts."

Double-handed couples highlighted things that made life easier than with other crew: simpler to provision, cook and clean for two; a more relaxed atmosphere on board; and the sheer satisfaction of managing such a big undertaking as a couple. "There are far more upsides than downsides," declares John Greenwood.

Marie Stutz highlights the achievement: "Even though I didn't achieve the skill level I would have liked before we set sail, I have managed to sail double-handed halfway round the world. Wow!

"And guess what? I get seasick, I miss land, I've been injured, I get stressed and it probably will take me the entire circumnavigation to gain a full knowledge of all the equipment on our boat. And I would be lying if I told you I don't get scared sometimes. But it's all worth it. My advice: embrace the adventure and you will surprise yourself how well you cope."