



Franck and Meng Ngee Ibanez, together with their two daughters.

Letter From Constante

Franck and Meng Ngee Ibanez, together with their two daughters (Carmen now 5; Julie, 3 ½), left Singapore almost two years ago, on a sailing adventure around the world aboard the *Constante*. They give us an update on how life has been treating them at sea. Here are excerpts from their letter.

Hi family and friends:

As we write from a wonderful anchorage somewhere in a terrestrial paradise near Rio de Janeiro, we think of our life and friends back in Singapore and it brings smiles to our faces; how we would love to show you the wonderful places we've seen.

Constante Singapore has completed two ocean crossings - the Indian Ocean and the South Atlantic. While it took a year to tackle the former, it took about a total of 51 days from South Africa to Brazil during which time we had to brave very strong winds above 100km/h despite our careful navigation.

Our visit to South Africa was amazing! The people are very welcoming, friendly and live healthily in one of the most spectacular natures on earth. We have seen great animals living freely in huge game parks; even at sea, the same exuberance of life greets us all around the coast.

We left the tip of Africa for a muscular 14-day crossing to St. Helena where we stayed for 18 days, after which we started our longest ocean passage so far. 2,060 nautical miles and 19 days later, we arrived at one of the world's most beautiful bays - Rio de Janeiro - and are overwhelmed by green mountains everywhere, the imposing Sugar Loaf on our left, the city and the immense Statue of Christ hovering over our destinies. The magical moment was only marred by Meng Ngee being forced to leave Brazil to purchase a visa into Buenos Aires, Argentina two days later. Amidst all that, we still highly recommend all cruisers to sail around Ilha Grande, Angra dos Reis and Paraty. These islands, west of Rio, are filled with beautiful fine sandy beaches and lush mountains, untouched and unspoiled by civilisation. We're truly awed by this spectacle, so much so, we've just extended our 3-month visa for another 3 months.

Franck





Offering some personal insights, Meng Ngee lets on that throughout the entire non-stop cross, Franck has to do 25-minute watches at night (till dawn) to look out for other boats and cargo ships since they don't have a radar on board. During the day, the couple takes turns keeping watch as he catches up on sleep. Their daughters' routines are not disrupted; they both have their full 10 to 12 hours of sleep at night and their full play-time in the day.

However, with no distractions at sea, the couple is able to focus on each other's needs and feelings, as a spouse and a parent. With more time spent on the waters, comes more experience and less sea-sickness. Not forgetting the girls are a lot older and communicative, independent and playing together, Meng Ngee feels that they are able to achieve more things that were less easy when they were in a marina.

While on board the *Constante*, the Ibanezes function like any normal family: They watch movies, have sing-alongs and eat hearty healthy meals. The only difference is to pay attention to details like not watching TV when there is no wind generator moving, no sun, and no engine; knowing how to select foods that will keep well in sailing conditions, and carrying out vigilant maintenance of the boat.

What Meng Ngee relishes the most is the freedom they taste at sea: The long conversations over a cup of tea or a meal with each other without having to rush off to work. "We had time, lots of time, almost too much but it felt really wonderful - just the sea, the sun, the moon, the stars, the boat and us." 🌊

