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SailingDestinations/Family time

With only themselves and a catamaran named *JAMBO* for company, a French family brave the Atlantic and the mysteries of South America in the first part of this around-the-world sailing account.

Text by Ewa Stachurska, in collaboration with Laurent Bourgnon

Photographs courtesy Sunreef Yachts

TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH



JAMBO navigates through Patagonian Channels



It took more than three years of meticulous planning and preparation, but finally French sailor Laurent Bourgnon's dream of sailing around the world with his family materialised in 2008. Having earned fame by winning numerous regattas and solitary ocean crossings, Bourgnon decided to make the trip a family affair by bringing along his wife Caroline and his four young children Lou, Basile, Jules and Justine.

The voyage took place aboard *JAMBO*, a 70 Sunreef Power catamaran, which was the first power yacht in the Sunreef range and custom-built especially for the journey. With all the necessary education in the field of naval engineering and mechanics, Bourgnon was able to co-operate effectively with Sunreef's in-house design and naval architecture team to design and build the boat.

Bourgnon also hoped to use the expedition to demonstrate the environment-friendly credentials of a power yacht and that, for a trip, it can cost almost the same as a sailing boat.



The family furnished the voyage with a short stop at one of the Canary Islands' fishing towns, Puerto de Mogán, where they finally found an Internet café. They could now send photographs to their friends and took the chance to create a blog...

Laurent Bourgnon and his daughter, Lou, taking in their surroundings.



Why? Where? When?

It was the picturesque setting of the French coastline that marked the beginning of the Bourgnon family's trip in September 2008. Nestled between an array of boats vying for attention at the Cannes Boat festival, *JAMBO* lay in wait, ready to take the family across the globe.

The catamaran was an exceptional boat in many respects. Luxurious and functional, it was equipped with ecological engines whose minimal fuel consumption equated to two litres per nautical mile. Because of this, the boat needed only 9,000 litres of fuel to cover the distance from Cannes in France to Punta Arenas in Patagonia.

The provision of two, 20,000-litre fuel tanks meant the yacht had a total range of 20,000 nautical miles at its cruising speed of 8-10 knots. Using

an optimal, performance-orientated hull design, the Sunreef Power catamaran was able to take maximum advantage of the natural wave force to maximise speed.

The Bourgnon family stayed in Southern France to complete all final preparations and gather provisions for the long trip ahead. Some objectives were also outlined. First, to discover the world as a family at sea and develop a sense of environmental awareness. Second, for the rest of the family, being relatively inexperienced sailors, to learn the art of navigation. Finally, to show the children the importance of speaking foreign languages and helping them to learn English and Spanish through direct contact. With everything ready, it was time for them to cast off on their dream adventure and, on November 8, they left France

and sailed towards the Cape Verde Islands, off the West coast of Africa.

Leaving Europe

Before reaching the Cape Verde Islands, the family stopped at Porto de la Duchesse, a small and charming Spanish port, where they stayed the night. Back at sea, they passed Gibraltar and were greeted by the glowing red of an African sunrise climbing over the Moroccan town of Essaouira, where they arrived on November 16.

After six days in Essaouira, it was time to navigate down the West coast of Africa to the Canary Islands. The family furnished the voyage with a short stop at one of the Canary Islands' fishing towns, Puerto de Mogán, where they finally found an Internet café. They could now send photographs to their friends and took the chance to create a

blog, on which they could upload their news and photos.

The stop-off was short-lived and, after spending the day at Puerto de Mogán, the Bourgnons left for the Cape Verde Islands, which they reached four days later on November 27. Despite being a short crossing, the harsh weather conditions and a choppy sea made it a rough affair. Although Laurent's wife and children were not used to daily life aboard a ship, they coped pretty well and no one complained.

Any heavy weather conditions were quickly forgotten when a pod of bottlenose dolphins suddenly appeared, breaching in the bow wave of *JAMBO*. They followed the boat for most of the journey to Cape Verde and provided an amazing experience for the children.

Despite being in the midst of all this fun, if the children thought that the trip was an excuse to miss schoolwork, they were much mistaken. Although it wasn't

easy for the four of them to follow their classes, their parents insisted that they continue working, even if they were in the middle of the ocean. This was achieved by setting a daily learning time to be strictly respected and sending all the homework, via e-mail, to the teachers.

Another simple pleasure of living on a boat manifested itself in the form of a metre-long sea bream, which was caught and subsequently became the main ingredient for the next couple of meals. The entire family was slowly getting used to their new life at sea and becoming aware of the various treasures hidden in the vast ocean.

Towards new lands...

The visit to Cape Verde was an unforgettable experience thanks to fascinating encounters with the local people, who are always welcoming towards travellers. The stay would have

been longer in this isolated archipelago of ten volcanic islands, but the family were in a hurry to cross the Strait of Magellan with favourable weather.

By December 5, they were making progress towards their next destination, Fernando de Noronha Island. The equatorial climate was beginning to show and the weather was getting better along with the days becoming much warmer. On the evening of December 8, they crossed the equator and said goodbye to the relative mildness of the Northern hemisphere. From now on, the *JAMBO* crew would have to be ready to face the strong winds from the East and South-East, all the way to Brazil.

December 10 marked the arrival of the Bourgnon family on Fernando de Noronha Island, the so-called 'pearl of the Southern Atlantic'. Sitting approximately 354 km off the Brazilian coast, it represents the central island of an archipelago composed of 21 islands, islets and rocks of volcanic origin. Here, they dropped anchor and treated themselves to a three-day stay to witness the amazing landscapes and the deep clear water surrounding the island, which was ideal for scuba diving.

With little time to dwell on such places, the family set sail for Salvador de Bahia in Brazil, where they arrived after three days of cruising. But it was not before a surprise — "In the morning before our departure, all kinds of sea animals seemed to approach the boat, especially to say goodbye to us. Justine (the oldest daughter) was amazed when suddenly the whole group of dolphins began playing and dancing around *JAMBO*," recalled one of the sons, Jules.



Salvador de Bahia represented the first port of call on the South American continent. The Bourgnons spent three days in this ancient city, cut off from the rest of the world by a chain of mountains. Although being the first colonial capital of Brazil, it is most famous for its street carnivals and diversified cuisine

On December 19, they departed for Rio de Janeiro, where the family celebrated Christmas and rested a couple of days before heading south. As they sailed down the coast, the Bourgnons called in at the beautiful colonial town of Paraty for a few days. The next stop-off was Santa Catharina on December 29, which represented a combination of the huge granite



Bourgnon's son, Jules, taking the dinghy to Puerto Natales village

"Any heavy weather conditions were quickly forgotten when a pod of bottlenose dolphins suddenly appeared, breaching in the bow wave of JAMBO."



"Despite being in the midst of all this fun, if the children thought that the trip was an excuse to miss schoolwork, they were much mistaken."

rocks of the Seychelles, the luxuriant vegetation of the Marquesas Islands and the islets and channels of the Bay of Morbihan. In fact, the family enjoyed the colourful place so much that it became host for their New Year's celebrations. It was also a perfect spot to practise water sports such as windsurfing, diving, snorkelling and canoeing. Yet, even though they were having a fantastic time and discovering so much, the explorers remained aware of the necessity to press forward and pass on to the other side of the American continent.

Their next destination was the upscale and exclusive summer resort of Punta del Este in Uruguay, where they arrived on January 8. With beaches that are famous all over the world, the resort attracts many tourists — mostly Argentinean, Brazilian and European — and is filled with luxury yachts and glamorous inhabitants. The next stop was Buenos Aires, the world capital of the sensual tango. They decided to wait here until January 18 so that Bourgnon could see his friends participating in the world famous Paris Dakar rally, which was being held in Chile and Argentina that year.

Reaching the limits...and leaving again

After a week in Buenos Aires, the next stop was the Valdes Peninsula in southern Argentina. The coastline is inhabited by marine mammals such as sea lions, elephant seals and fur seals, and its calm waters are also where whales come to give birth. It is because of this that the important nature reserve was listed as a UNESCO World

Heritage site in 1999. The peninsula also has a particular climate — the Andes mountain range offers protection from rain clouds and it enjoys a mild ocean breeze.

Seeping into Patagonia, the Bourgnon family called in at Punta Arenas and later in Puerto Natales in Chile. They navigated through sumptuous Patagonian channels, passing looming blue icebergs and solitary villages inhabited by the indigenous people.

Before entering Patagonia, Bourgnon provided a weather report. "We've been blocked for a couple of days by a series of depressions which are bringing strong, North Western winds of up to 60 knots of speed and lots of rain. It's quite cold during the day, with the temperature ranging between five to eight degrees, and at night, it falls to zero. So even though it's summer here, we have to put the heating on!"

JAMBO was slowly making progress towards Puerto Mont on the West coast of Chile. This was to be the launch pad for the second big stage of their journey. Before that, they stopped in Puerto Eden, a tiny village where curious locals came to greet them at the port. After all, it wasn't often that foreign travellers visited their remote location.

The Bourgnon family reached Puerto Mont on February 22, thus signalling the end of the first big stage of travelling. It was here that they took some time to make the necessary preparations and restock provisions for the remainder of their trip.

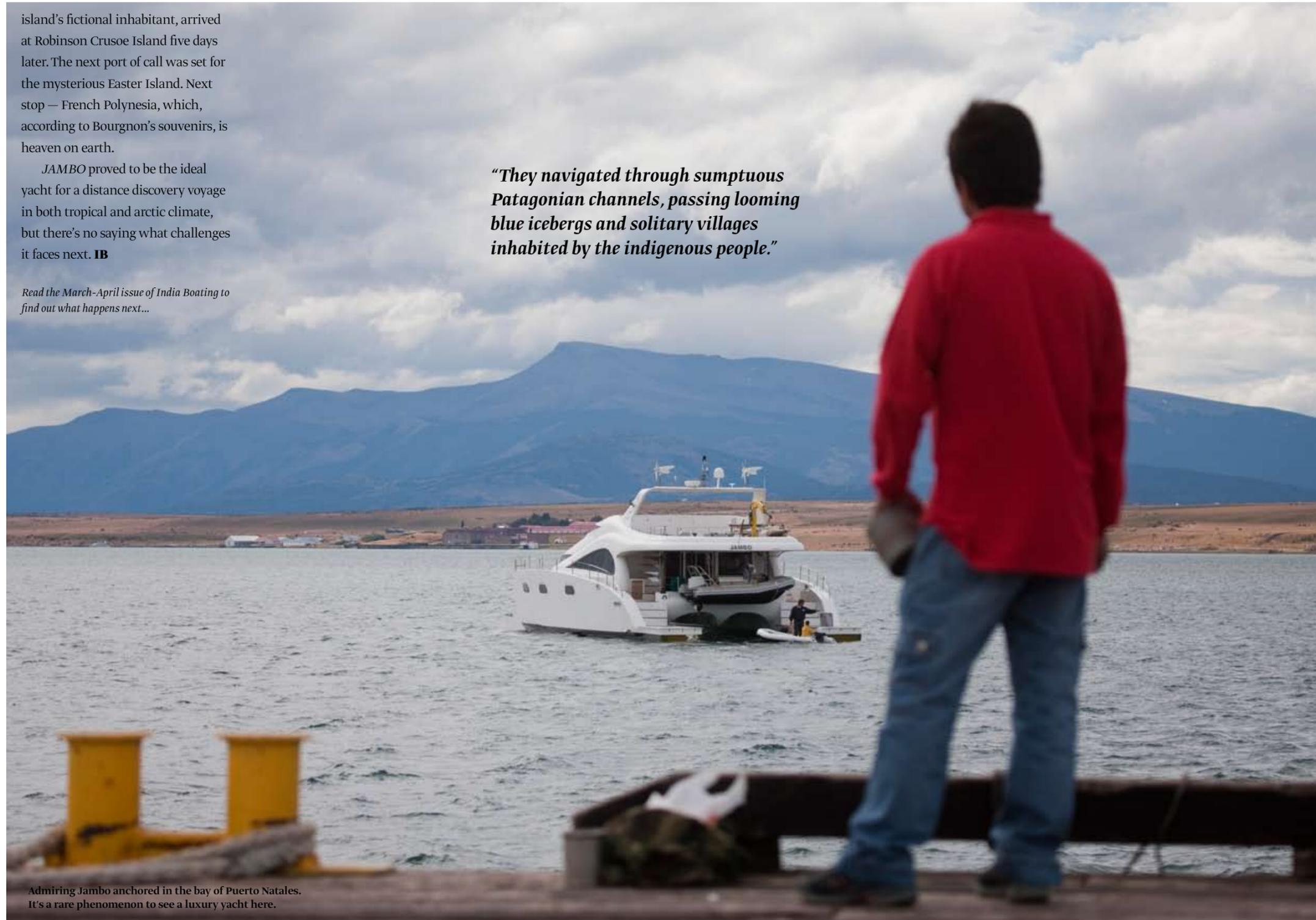
They set off on March 5 and, hoping not to incur the same fate as the

island's fictional inhabitant, arrived at Robinson Crusoe Island five days later. The next port of call was set for the mysterious Easter Island. Next stop — French Polynesia, which, according to Bourgnon's souvenirs, is heaven on earth.

JAMBO proved to be the ideal yacht for a distance discovery voyage in both tropical and arctic climate, but there's no saying what challenges it faces next. **IB**

Read the March-April issue of India Boating to find out what happens next...

"They navigated through sumptuous Patagonian channels, passing looming blue icebergs and solitary villages inhabited by the indigenous people."



Admiring Jambo anchored in the bay of Puerto Natales. It's a rare phenomenon to see a luxury yacht here.