

s/v Bluesky: South Africa to Saint Helena, South Atlantic Ocean, April 2010

[gallery link="file"]

[Jamestown](#) is located in a deep volcanic valley on the remote English Island of [Saint Helena](#). The 1500 mile passage from Saldanha Bay took 12 days. The first four, we experienced 25-30 knots of wind with 12 foot seas. It is very difficult to photograph large seas, which I tried to do but failed. The toe rail would dip underwater causing large amounts to flood the decks, we even took a large wave on the stern of the boat. Thankfully *Blue Sky* has a large freeboard, and with the center cockpit and fully enclosed dodger we stayed high and dry. The winds finally abated and we had two days with no wind so had to motor. Our tanks hold 1000 litres of fuel, which would be enough to motor for over six full days. Fortunately we only motored the two, as Diesel is very expensive on a remote island. Everyday we tried to catch a fish for dinner to no avail. The anchorage was deep, dropping the hook 40 feet down into the clear warm water of the Atlantic. A nice change from the cold temperature of the ocean in South Africa.

[Joa da Nova](#) sailed passed the uninhabited island in 1502, having a fresh water supply and protected anchorage, it was a perfect stop between Europe and South Africa. The British took possession in 1659, as a replenishment station for the ships of the [East India Company](#).

The fortress extends the entire length of the valley along the water front. One must walk through the main gate in order to enter [Jamestown](#), which is like stepping back in time. Following the footsteps of Captain Cook, Blythe, Charles Darwin, the astronomer Arthur Halley and Napoleon. After the [Suez Canal](#) was opened in 1869, few ships stopped here and the economy collapsed. As there is no airport, the tourism industry is solely dependant on yachts and cruise ships.

[Jacobs Ladder](#) with 699 steep steps, was built in 1829 as an inclined plane. It was used to haul manure and trash up the hill, to stop the villagers littering the harbor, and to bring goods down. Wagons were pulled up the inclined plane by a capstan at the top which was powered by mules. The view at the top is amazing. *Blue sky* is anchored to the right in the center of the fleet, we are the white ketch.

The [Consulate Hotel](#), a mid-18th century building, located in the center of town, was one of our favorite spots to relax after exploring. Hazel, the owner is restoring the property to it's grand splendor. The restaurant below features artifacts from the old sailing vessel, Fairport, with the masts' as pillars and the floor as the ceiling.

Another local hang out is Anne's place, pictured to the right. The cheeseburger's were great. The owners have a teenage daughter, who babysat Phoebe and Drake for us one night. Taking advantage of this, we enjoyed a first class meal at the consulate hotel with our host Hazel and Lynn, from South Africa. During our stay we met many families who chose to move to Saint Helena for work, most of which were on two year contracts. To the left is Jaimie and Amy, who have two boys, from the UK, he is in charge of the National Trust. This is an independent non-profit organization launched in 2002. It aims to promote awareness and protect and enhance St. Helena's environmental and architectural heritage. Everyone was very friendly and helpful during our stay. It is definitely somewhere we could go back to.

To the left is a photo of 'The Run', this walled channel flows on the line of the original stream which watered Jamestown. It was paved in stone in 1857 and built as a dual purpose, as a sewer for the town and to accommodate the water course.

To the right, Johnie, a local Saint, who owns a pub in town and the swimming pool, graciously drove us around the island one day. He is pictured with Jim and Jonah and one of the famous tortoises. The first stop was the plantation house, built in 1792 by the East India Company and is the current residence of the Governor. The land around the house is home to the oldest inhabitant of the island, a giant tortoise named Johnathan. He was brought to the island as a mature adult, which is said to be 50 years old. Presented as a gift from the Seychelles in 1882, making him approximately 178 years young. Being the oldest living animal on the island and thought to be the oldest living example of his breed. There are six giant tortoise's

enjoying the lush surroundings.

The second stop we drove down the steep, winding road to Sandy Bay, through the lush tropic grass land into the stark barren cliffs of the ancient crater of the volcano. Situated along the cliffs are the remnants of an old fort, with canons lining the hill side. Jim hides another bottle of wine inside one of the canon's, once again, for coordinates email us.

The [Queen Mary II](#) arrived for one day while we were anchored in Jamestown. It took them three days from Cape Town, after which they were off to Rio. Everyone ashore was very excited and hopeful that the guests of this large ship would be able to disembark and come ashore to spend money. So many times in the past a cruise ship has arrived, only to discover that it is too rough to get the passengers ashore. This is the tallest ship in the world and has over 5000 passengers and crew, there are only 3500 inhabitants on the island. The weather was perfect and over 2000 guests went ashore to explore the island in the eight hours they were allocated. Taking the dinghy up close, we could not believe the size of this massive ship. Unfortunately they would not allow us on board for a tour, the Captain, mentioning he would, only if his passengers could have a tour of *Blue Sky*. The whole town was very excited to have such a successful day.

In the harbor we had the pleasure of snorkeling off the wreck of the [SS Papanui](#), this ship caught on fire and sank one hundred years ago. The steering gear can be seen above the water. The wreck stretched 100 feet along the sea bottom. 372 people were rescued and remained stranded on the island until another transport ship arrived.

One day we decided to hire a car and explore the island on our own. Our American friends Jonah off s/v Brillig and John off s/v Dancyn joined us. The first stop was The Briars Pavillion, this was the first home for [Napoleon](#) when he was exiled to the island after his defeat at Waterloo in 1815. His permanent home was not completed, so he stayed in this one room cottage, while his entourage stayed in make shift tents. They had a view of the heart shaped waterfall, above. Once Longwood House, top right, was completed he moved in and remained there until his death in 1821.

After our [Napoleonic](#) tour, it was time for Jim and Jonah to play golf at the Saint Helena Golf Club. This is the remotest golf course in the world, where there are 9 holes and 18 tee boxes.

The endemic [Wirebird](#) lives on the golf course and in the Millenium Forrest. This is the world's rarest bird, with only 500 native surviving. They are a small plover and the last survivor of a number of bird species unique to St. Helena. We were all fortunate enough to get more than one glimpse of this special bird.

The last stop was the [Prince's Lodge](#) a private home, owned by Robin Castell. While in Simonstown we had the privilege of meeting him, where he told us about his home on Saint Helena. The home displays many paintings of the islands proud and illustrious heritage. He is a published author and poet and has written a few books on the history of the island. On sight is a guest cottage called Drake's cottage to commemoratete the landing of Sir Francis Drake.

After ten relaxing and memorable days on Saint Helena, we were ready to depart for our 1900 nautical mile trip to Salvador, Brazil.

To see more of Blue Sky's adventures go to <http://www.thevoyageofbluesky.com>