

Darramy on tour No. 7: China Holiday – Manamo river Venezuela
September- November 2007

Hi folks,

We are still travelling, so will try to update you with our news, for the few of you who thought our travel logs are to long this for you, **“we are fine and well and having a great time.”** For the rest of you its quite hard to make these logs short, as there is just so much to tell you which is different from the lives we used to live.

We came home in mid August, and it was good to catch up with everyone friends and family alike, Amy married Matt early September and it turned out to be a superb event, and hopefully enjoyed by all.

A few days later we flew off to China, a country Sue had always wanted to visit. We had arranged a tailor made trip with a London Company ironically called China Holidays, they were superb, and we would certainly recommend them. We ended up with a private guide and driver everywhere we went, the guides spoke good English, so we could really understand what they were explaining to us. We think we have history in Europe, theirs goes back over 3000 years, and call it modern history! For a brief outline of where we went here goes.:

Beijing the capital: Tian men Square, The Forbidden City, Summer Palace, Ming tombs the Great Wall, Temple of Heaven, a tea ceremony, the old town Wootong.

Xian: Terracotta Warriors, Huating Hot Springs, the Great Mosque, Market, the Big Wild Goose Pagoda, and the city walls, 14 Km long and 50 metres wide!, we persuaded the guide to take us up in the hills to see the



country side, they were a bit wary as we did not have a pass, but in the end agreed to take us, and it was an interesting visit.

We then flew to Yichang, where we joined our cruise ship for a 4 night cruise up the Yangtse river. We saw the three Gorges Dam project the largest civil engineering project in the world, for water conservation and hydroelectric power production. The scenery on this river was breathtaking one gorge is 88 km long.

We disembarked at Chongquing and had a good day there with a lovely young guide who worked really hard to enlighten us about Chongquing. Then it was a late

flight to Chengdu, where we set off for Wolong to see the Pandas in their natural environment, then it was off to Shanghai, the Jade Buddha temple the old town, the famous Bund, the Yu Gardens, we visited Suzhou, and went on the Grand Canal and the Humble Administrators Garden. We were in Shanghai there for the National day, and it was good to see all the people out on the streets, again in party mood, (we do seem to have the knack of finding



festivals and carnivals)! Then it was off to Hong Kong for 3 days to do their sights before returning home.

So those are some of the places we visited, China was just steeped in history, the food we had was superb, we tried many regional dishes from dumplings to a type of fondue. Strangely to us the food is brought out in whatever order it is cooked in then the rice is brought out towards the end of the main meal which is followed by soup to finish off with weird to us but natural to the Chinese.



Terracota Warriors

We found everyone industrious, quite up with western stuff from two mobile phones each to designer clothes, the youngsters seemed to have a philosophy of looking after their parents as they got older and helping to keep them financially and housing them maybe a philosophy our children might adopt, (I feel a new yacht on the horizon!!!).

We found the people we spoke to quite realistic in how they thought, and ones we met with our natural sceptism sometimes

could agree with us, but were careful on how they commented. Most people from a political stand point felt the government were doing a good job, but they just wanted like most of us an improving lot in life. China is an immense country, the people were very helpful and informative, interested in the West and our short history, most children learnt English at school, pretty much like the rest of us really we did sit in parks and people watch quite a bit because on looking at where we visited it seemed like a lot, but really we had loads of time to relax, and the guides found requests to sit and look unusual, but we found we were nearer to the real people, and they found us unusual in doing this sort of thing but it was great. We arrive home in time for our birthdays (Oct 8th if you did not know) had a good celebration with family, and got ready to return to the boat towards the end of October,



Fondue Chinese style

It was great spend some time at home but also great to be back on board and we relaunched Darramy on 30th Oct, a quick shake down, and then we were to be off on another adventure, but before that we went to the Asa Wright nature reserve and stayed overnight in the old plantation house, very colonial, but the many different types of exotic tropical birds coming in to feed early in the morning was a sight not to be missed, we also the same week went to celebrate Divali in a Hindu village, again a wonderful experience.

We then set sail with "Malarkey" another Brit boat with Trevor and Jo on board, we had met them back in the Canaries over a year ago, we headed south to the Orinoco Delta and a river called the Manamo in Venezuela. This turned out to be a real exploring experience, the area is inhabited by the Warao Indian tribe who have been

there for hundreds of years and still live very much the way they always have, they live in huts on stilts by the river, no walls, and just a palm thatch roof, they sleep in hammocks and have very little in the way of comfort, most villages now have electric, and we noted some had a TV and



Typical Waroe Village

DVD's, but very little else. We had done quite a bit of research about them and we were prepared for trading with the natives. As we approached a village log canoes would head out usually with women and children in paddling over to try and trade baskets, carvings and bracelets and necklaces that they make. It was quite an experience, They would show us their wares, and it was not easy to refuse them, but we had to be disciplined as we had a fair bit of river to travel and did not want to use up all our trading items the first few days as we knew they would be waiting to catch us again on our return down river later on. We did have jumbo biscuit packets we were able to dig into and hand out to some whom we did not buy from, it was hard to refuse them as they had wonderful smiling faces especially the little children. We made our way up stream slowly as we did not know where the shallow places were, but we knew other boats had been there but we were warned to take care with the navigation so we always went with a rising tide. We had a basic hand drawn map, and by the second day we arrived at a small Cano (tributary), where we found a lodge that took tourists out onto the river to see the wild life, this was quite a find as we were able to have a beer and food and talking to the warden who spoke English and we learnt more about the region. We learnt the Sir Walter Raleigh (he of potato fame) navigated up the Manamo and joined the Orinoco quite a bit higher up than where we could go, and sailed back down the Orinoco to the sea. We were not prohibited by the depth of the water, but by a set of overhead power lines crossing the river something Sir Walter did not need to worry about..



Where did these come from?

We stayed by this lodge for two nights, one amazing thing was the amount of water Hyacinths that floated up and down the river, we woke up to find the boats surrounded by a complete garden, and not a drop of water to be seen near us, it made quite a picture, and when we eventually sort out a site for you to view our pictures that is one that will be amongst them. We had gone prepared, as we had purchased a machete in Trinidad,

purposely to hack our way through the water hyacinths, and of course the jungle or rain forest, it really is a useful tool (watch out Ray Mears) amazingly it was made in Sheffield and cost about £5.00!!

One afternoon Malarkey called us over as they had found a snake on board, quite a cheeky chap really as he crawled out of a pair of Trevor's shorts which were hanging to dry!! Could have been a nasty experience for him! We moved on up river and discovered a village called Santa Domingo, and guess what it was the day of the Warao carnival. Loads of boats had been whizzing up the river full of families and

had all rendezvoused at this village. We went ashore, and met the chief or said he was anyway, he spoke some Spanish as well as his native Warao tongue, we stayed for a while enjoying the carnival atmosphere, then the power boat racing started, not as we would know it, but Chevas the President of Venezuela had a deal with these people and he supplied them with 40hp or 75hp Yamaha outboard engines, originally we were told they were for free, but later discovered they are on a five year loan, and even better (financial instincts come back to me) if



they don't repay they don't get any more, ever, and this is a socialist country, sounds good to me!, anyway these funny shaped canoe type pirogue boats set off round a course on the river, covers off the engines, the official boat started the race with a blast from a pump action shotgun, so it was serious stuff!. Two races later, one sinking and high spirits everywhere, we felt it was time to head on upstream and find somewhere to anchor out of the way as we realised that later that night over 100 boats would probably be heading home worse for wear, or at least the crew would be, and we did not want them bumping into us. Security wise we felt very safe, but as normal kept a wary eye open. We carried on upstream the next day and we then came to another village, where the power cables crossed the water; this was as far south as we could go. We went to the local market the next day and got some chicken, we could have had fresh but the feathers would have made a hell of a mess, and we did not think the girls would eat them anyway after they had killed them! So it was frozen chicken again.

We headed back down stream exploring small Cano's on the way we went fishing for Piranha, and went on a night time hunt for Crocodiles, fortunately (I think) we did not catch or see any, but the wild life generally was amazing, Monkeys in the trees were a high point, wonderful bird life so colourful. We visited another village, met another chief, or he said he was anyway!, Sue traded for a basket with a lady who was making it whilst we were there, we explored 5 miles up another Cano in the dinghy early one morning to discover a lodge which was idyllic, we regretted not bringing the boats up that far, but Trevor listened to Jo, and bottled out!! Or we would have been the second yachts ever to visit there according to the warden at the lodge.



We called at another lodge we had previously visited and had met an English speaking family, originally from then British Guiana, they had moved to the Manama in the 1970's and had made a home for their family's by this lodge, they came out to visit us on the boat, we gave them proper English high tea, and the children were wonderful very well behaved, and anxious to learn more about us. They were all

fascinated with the toilet on the boat so all had to use it!! We took a load of photos of them as a family and off they went. The next morning Philip the father gave up his mornings fishing and took us off in his boat to see monkeys and other wild life, we did see the red howler monkeys right by us, we had a great morning. That after noon we went to visit their house, which was a bit more up market as they had sides on it, we had printed off the photos of the family, and they were pleased to have them, we gave them magazines and food and some clothing, they were very grateful, but they kept giving us produce from their land, Cacao chocolate, coconuts, and showed us how to open the water coconuts for a drink (that machete again), fresh lemons, herbs and spices all freshly picked for us, I also took the opportunity to paddle a log canoe which was a magical experience, as an ex canoeist, I could not let the opportunity pass, the locals were impressed, I did not want to capsize it anyway as one of the family had just caught a Piranha a few minutes before so it kept me concentrated on paddling.

We left and headed down stream to an Island called Ibis Island, here we anchored and awaited the Scarlet Ibis birds return from their days foraging, they came in about 5.00pm hundreds of wonderful scarlet coloured birds; hopefully the pictures will



come out and as I said before will sort out a site to view them, but there's so much to do and so little time!

Before returning to Trinidad we were able to fill up with diesel at Perdenalles, this was no easy task as we had to fetch it by dinghy in containers we rented, but it was worth it, it quite reasonably priced and when we had filled up the total Venezuelan trip cost us 50 pence for fuel (half a pence per litre) (Tobermory and Astralis eat your hearts out)!,

So now we are back in Trinidad and are heading for Tobago this week, it will be good to be on the move again, we are missing anchoring off beaches and are now ready for a change. Trinidad has been a great base for the hurricane season; we have had a few jobs done to get us ready for the new season. Here Christmas is as commercial as at home, its funny to listen to all the Christmas music on the radio much of it in a rap theme. We hope to be in the Antigua area by Xmas and meet some friends from Holyhead, Kim and Wendy who keep their boat in St Martin. We have started updating the Pangolin site again so you can check our progress here is the site again http://www.pangolin.co.nz/yotreps/reporter_list.php go down the list until you come to MBDF4 or Darramy, click on that and it should show you where we are, we will try to update each week, but we are only allowed 80 characters of comment so not very newsy.

Any way we have stores to pack so its time to wish you all a superb Christmas and New Year, we will be thinking of you back in the UK, whilst we try to keep out of the sun, Take care
Brian and Sue

Forgot to mention trading items included soap, flour, fishing hooks and line, and most of all a great hit was the children's clothing we brought back from the UK, thanks again Michael and Laura for growing out of your clothes, the local Warao children were delighted. Congratulations to Cousin Graham or rather his son James on the birth of a daughter another generation of Wallace's is coming on stream, first of many?

