

## Merry Christmas from the Crew Imagine

Season's Greetings from the Caribbean! Marc, Jane, Caroline, Grant, and Noah wish you all a wonderful Holiday Season. From Thailand all the way back to the Caribbean, the crew Imagine has been blessed with safe passages and wonderful experiences throughout 2011. We wish you and your loved ones a wonderful Christmas & a very happy and adventurous New Year!

### WE DID IT!!!!



*Closing the loop in Barbuda (Eastern Caribbean) – Dec 2011*

On December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011 after a 2,961 mile 19 day passage from the Canary Islands on the eastern side of the Atlantic Ocean, Imagine & her Crew dropped anchor off the stunning 11 mile pink sand beach of the island of Barbuda to close the loop on our World Circumnavigation.

Over 3 Years and 35,650 miles sailed since Imagine & Crew departed from Chicago, IL in 2008 on our family adventure to 'sail & see the world'. Below are some of fun facts and trivia of the year for Imagine & Crew.

#### 2011 - A Year in Review – Fun Facts & Numbers

**Miles Travelled:** **13,119** This was our most miles in a single year – unfortunately a lot of them motoring around the Indian Ocean & Gulf of Aden.

**Longest Passage:** **19 day, 2,913** mile passage from Canary Islands to Barbuda

**Best Passage:** Our best passage this year was also our longest. We had 15 days of sailing without using the engine and with fairly calm seas we all stayed busy with school, reading, music, and art projects.

**Scariest Moment:** Our scariest moment this year lasted about a month during the **'Pirate Passage'** from the Maldives in the Indian Ocean to Egypt in the Red Sea. This took the wind out of our sails and had a major impact on our adventure. During this peaceful time of year, we won't say more on this subject, as we've said plenty on the topic in our blog.

**Nights at Sea:** **84** nights on passages on the open ocean. Again a record for us!

**Nights on a dock:** **Way too many to count this year...Ouch!**

**Countries Visited:** **18** (Thailand, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Maldives, India (for 1 day to refuel), Oman, Yemen, Egypt, Israel, Turkey, Greece, Croatia, Italy, Spain, Gibraltar, Canary Islands, Barbuda & St. Maarten) That's a lot of Visa's & stamps in the passport.



**New Kid Boats met:** This year we've met **18 new kid boats with 36 KIDS!** Our good friends aboard Mehari get the kid boat award with 6 KIDS aboard!!!!

**Camels:** **400** was the number of camels offered to us for Caroline, by the Egyptian camel herder. Regrettably, she received many more proposals. It was - in her words - "Disgusting".

**Visitors from home:** **4** We were again blessed to have family visit. Philippe and Michele, Marc's brother and wife, joined us for a relaxing week of island hopping in the beautiful Greek Islands. Marc's parents, Fred and Margot, made their third trip to see us in the festive Balearic Islands of Spain.

**Crew:** **2.** We were incredibly fortunate to have Mike Felner & Kieran Dooley join us, to help with the pirate passage. Mike met us in Sri Lanka & Kieran in Oman where Jane & the kids left Imagine. **Many Thanks Mike & Kieran!**

**Wake Up Calls:** **4 AM.** This was the time that we were awoken in the Islamic countries by the "Call to Prayer" being blasted throughout the towns. Although we really tried to appreciate the cultural diversity....but at 4AM, ouch!!!

**Siesta:** **5.** The number of hours that most shops and offices (including banks) were closed during the middle of the day in Spain. We tried, but never quite adapted to "siesta time" and had a "few" frustrations doing business.



## 2011 Highlights & Favorites:

### Historical Highlights:



**From viewing the architecture of the ancient Egyptians to sailing Columbus' course from the Canaries to the Caribbean, this year was one giant history lesson. Although we enjoyed and learned from it all – below are some of our favorites.**

**Giza Pyramids, Egypt:** Although being in Egypt immediately after the revolution was both nerve wracking and a little frustrating, the first glimpses of the 4500 year old ancient pyramids and great sphinx were absolutely awe-inspiring.

**Israel:** From Bethlehem, Nazareth, and the Sea of Galilee to the Palm Sunday Pilgrimage and the Stations of the Cross walking in the Path of Jesus during Holy Week was truly something that is nearly impossible to put into words. We are so thankful that we made the decision to visit this holy and conflicted land and experience its passionate history.

**Turkey:** Exploring the ancient Greek and Roman ruins of Turkey was a wonderful surprise. We thoroughly enjoyed our inland trip to the ancient city of Ephesus, but had even more fun seeing the more remote sites, especially those right in our anchorages. Often, we would just “drop the hook” and go explore some 2000 year old ruins – how cool is that?

**Italy:** Although not really a “cruising destination”, our land travel in Italy was definitely one of our highlights this year. What could beat stepping out of the Rome subway station and walking directly into the massive coliseum or playing with the kids in the grassy square in the shadow of the Leaning Tower of Pisa? We loved sharing it with our friends on Mehari.



### Memorable Experiences:

**New Year's Eve Celebrations in Phuket, Thailand :** With fireworks exploding around the bay from dusk until dawn and thousands of Chinese lanterns lighting the sky, the New Year's Eve celebration at Patong Bay was the perfect way to ring in 2011.

**Wahiba Sands, Oman:** After an incredibly stressful passage from the Maldives, the crew of Imagine with Mike & Kieran, desperately needed some fun and relaxation and the deserts of Oman provided a perfect excursion. Staying in rustic Bedouin huts, we had a blast riding camels, dune boarding, and manic 4WD dune bashing.

**Music Nights:** One of the real treats this year was spending star filled evenings enjoying music sing-alongs with our friends from other boats. Thanks to the musical talents aboard Anima, Mehari, Emmanuel, and Heartsong for some amazing memories.

**Church Bells:** Wow, do you hear that! Was what we all said when we first got to Greece and heard the church bells ringing. After the many “call to prayers”, it was music to our ears.



**Food Favorites of the Year:** On our no income, cruiser budget we don't often eat out but the food in the Middle East and Europe was so incredible we had to splurge a little and Imagine's chef was very happy for the evenings off.



**Shwarma:** We first tried it in Oman & couldn't get enough! Yemen, Egypt, & Israel also had variations of this delicious roadside treat of lamb, chicken or beef.

**Gyros:** The 2€ Gyros throughout Greece was Marc's favorite treat this year. Lunch or dinner, or both. Why not!

**Pizza:** For our first meal out in Italy and many more during our stay, it was hard to beat the 4-8€ pizzas in Italy. We think that our family count was about 25 pizzas during our visit!

**Ice Cream:** We also found the BEST ICE CREAM in the World in a small Tuscan Town in Italy. But the kids thought the ice cream in Turkey, Croatia & Spain were all pretty good, too.

**Köfte:** We loved all of the Turkish food, but Köfte (spicy meatball) kebabs and Turkish casseroles were tops!

**The Golden Arches:** Ok, so who would admit it, but after all of the foreign delights the crew Imagine did enjoy an occasional 'happy meal'. We can attest that the French Fries & Big Mac's do taste the same worldwide. This year, we found McDonalds in 12 different countries & tried to in Israel, but no buns during Passover.....Big Mac on a Matzah, anyone?

### 2012 – What's next for Imagine!

So, we've sailed around the world.....Now what?!?!

That's been the question asked by many and is still yet to be determined. But for the short term, we plan to continue cruising in the Caribbean, Turks & Caicos, and the Bahamas. After that, we are not exactly sure where we will steer Imagine but traditional schooling and the comforts of a house are calling us, so eventually we will be returning to life on land. Although our life at sea will end sometime in 2012, we hope that our life journeys & family adventures will continue.

**As we, on Imagine, count our blessings, we hope that this letter finds you all in good health, good spirits and enjoying the beauty of the season. We wish you a peaceful and joyous New Year!!!**

***Marc, Jane, Caroline, Grant, and Noah  
The Crew of Imagine***

