

# Mile off maximum city

## Vasco Da Gama rally becomes a sailing point for Mumbai

**I**NFINITE H2O. Infinite blue. Infinite pleasure on a finite platform — Isis, a 17 metres viewing platform to the infinity beyond. An invitation to go sailing off Mumbai's Chowpatty beach stretch, in the middle of a working day is a temptation hard to resist. When the vessel is a sleek, white \$1.4 million catamaran, Isis, with a 100 sq metre main sail and an asymmetrical spinnaker of 180 sq metres, refusing would be foolish. Especially, when the hosts are kind enough to offer a joy ride, politely refusing any offer of help. Isis' owners, George and Elizabeth Wijnalda are 60 and 61, extremely fit and prefer to sail their home themselves. Also, this is their "Boat number 7, with a preference for a catamaran as its more comfortable" and they have been sailing since '73. The only difference is that Boat number 7 is now their home. A home, which smells particularly good that morning, with the aroma of freshly, baked bread coming from the extremely tidy kitchen.

Four years ago, the couple sold everything and invested in Isis and chose the "fun and freedom of the sea over being tied to the routine of the land". Investments were wisely made so as to support this life, as cost of living is cheap, in fact as cheap as \$5,000 a year but the maintenance of their home, which could work out to as much as \$20,000 annually, is not. Which is also one of the reasons that Isis is opting out of going on the Vasco da Gama Rally on its last leg to Goa.

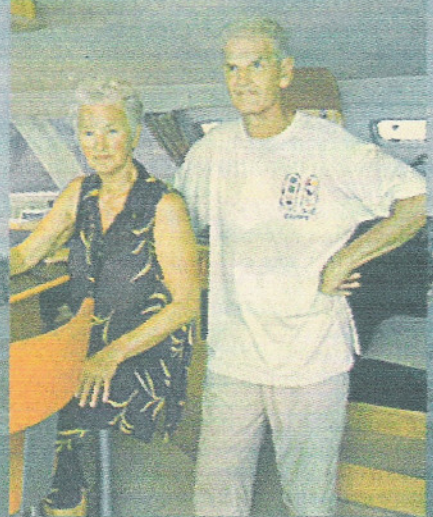


Photo: DILIP THAKKAR



"My insurance company will not cover any damages until the place has a guarded marina and Goa has only a guarded anchorage but not a Marina," explains George who has been visiting India over the last many decades for business but is sailing into India for the first time. "The only big difference is you clear in and out much faster on land than you do when you arrive by sea. It can take days and that is a bother," says George, who will sail off with Elizabeth to Langkawi on Monday.

Along with Isis, there are 15 other boats varying in sizes from nine metres to 17 metres from



Holland, France, US, UK, Italy, Germany and Australia who began their journey over 4,266 nautical miles to India, last October from Finike Marina in Turkey, crossing the Arabian Sea all part of the first international off-shore yacht race to hit India shores. Also part of the journey are Patricia Thompson and Stephen Locher with their 14 metre UK made Camper Nicholson, (approx \$80,000) named Equus.

A farmer's daughter, Patricia had always been closer to land in Ohio than sea. The only sailing she had been part of was the Wednesday night races and she had loved them. So, four years ago, when Steve offered her an alternative life on sea, the QS9000 executive opted out of a new position for her first 16 day offshore experience. "I just fell in love with the water. The sea filled a space inside me, made me confront my fears and was in the beginning a real cleansing period," says the grandmother of four, who visits home every year for two months. For Patricia, besides the sea, it is the travel and the diverse cultures she comes across which have really influenced her, Italy being a particular favourite. In fact, for the certified yoga instructor, who juggled in a few classes of Iyengar yoga in Mumbai, came very similar to her Italian experience. There are many a times though when all wish to give it up. "Amongst the women who sail, we have an analogy — we say its like childbirth. After the labour pains, we promise ourselves never to go through it again and yet, we are there again!" ends Patricia.

With interest in sailing growing slowly but surely, this has been a great opportunity like Gautama Dutta, a veteran sailor says, "For the yachting community here it's great to see some big boats in action at the high seas."

**NANDINI RAGHAVENDRA**

**KALEIDOSCOPE**