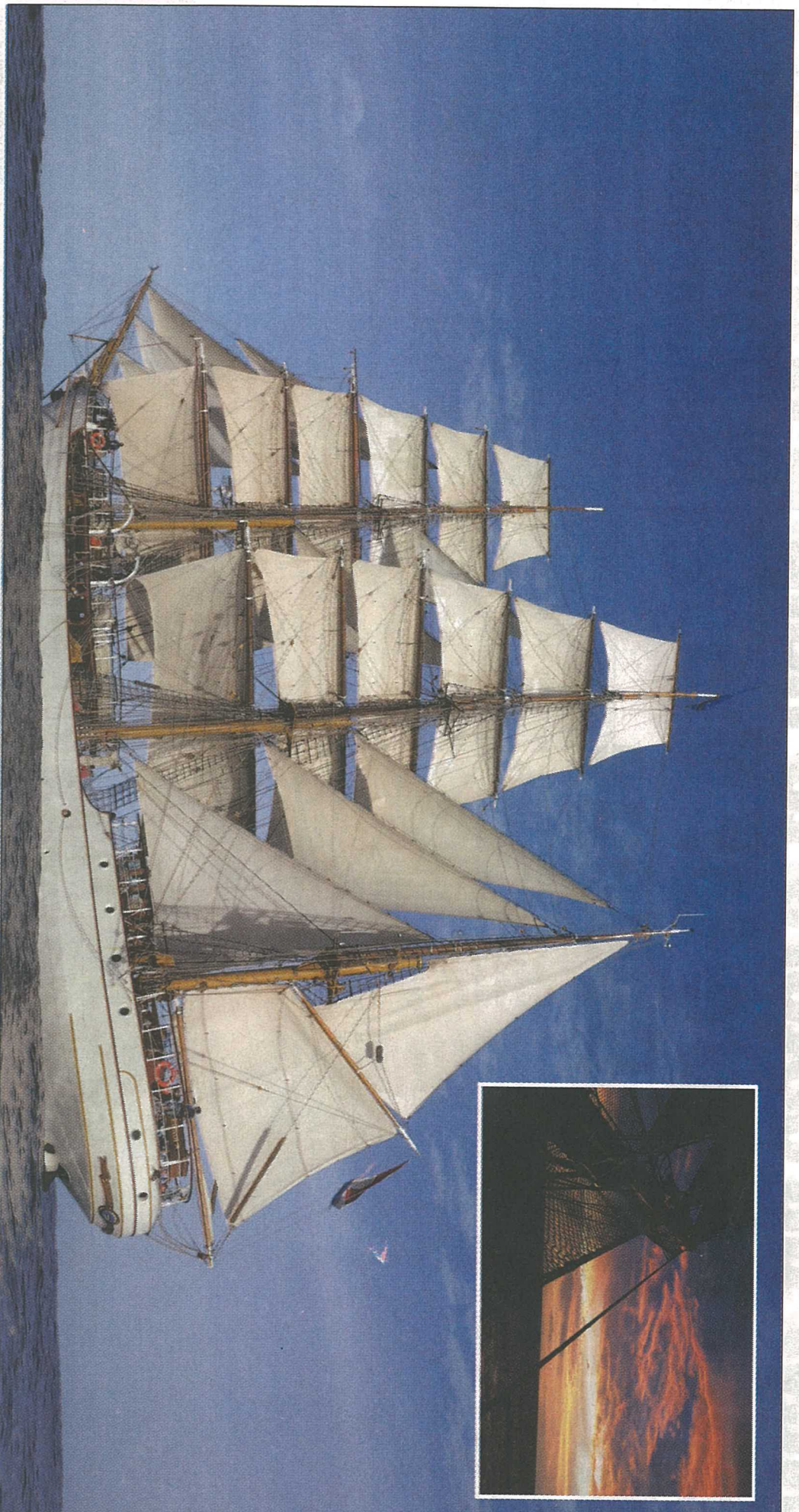


Out and about



Round Cape Horn to commemorate its discovery

Peter van Duyn*

IN DECEMBER last year I had the opportunity to sail around Cape Horn on the tall ship *Europa*.

The voyage was held to commemorate the discovery of Cape Horn 400 years ago by two Dutch explorers, Schouten and Le Maire, who were seeking new routes to the Dutch East Indies.

Cape Horn was named after the town of Hoon in the Netherlands where Schouten and Le Maire commenced their voyage.

In 1520 Magellan discovered a narrow passage between the mainland of South America and Tierra del Fuego, which connected the South Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.

In 1578 Francis Drake discovered

the Drake Passage, which is the stretch of water between South America and Antarctica. There are unsubstantiated rumours that a fleet of Chinese vessels visited these regions as early as the 15th century, however very little evidence is left of their visit.

The *Europa* left the Netherlands in September 2015 and sailed across the Atlantic to Salvador, Bahia in Brazil. I joined the ship in Salvador in November. The ship is run by a professional international crew (in this case 20 mainly young adventurous types) and has room for about 45 so-called trainees (mainly older adventurous types) as well as the ship's dog Sirius (named after the brightest star in our universe).

The trainees assist the professional crew in everything that is required to run a sailing vessel such as steer-

ing, lookout, sail and rope handling, help in the galley etc. and are required to work two four-hour watches every day.

The *Europa* began her life in 1911 as a lightship at the mouth of the river Elbe (Germany) until she was decommissioned in 1970. In 1986 a Dutchman bought the vessel and began restoring the ship into a bark using traditional materials salvaged from other square riggers.

She has an ice-strengthened steel hull and three masts which can carry up to 30 sails. In 1994 she began her new life as a sail/training vessel and is owned by a not-for-profit organisation in the Netherlands.

The ship makes regular sailing trips across the globe and in the southern summer conducts a number of trips from South America to Antarc-

tica. For more information visit www.barkeuropa.com.

Our intention was to sail around Cape Horn in the traditional way using sails only and sailing from East to West against the prevailing westerly winds and currents. The last tall ship to sail around the Horn in this manner was 75 years ago.

The longest recorded attempt to round the Horn by a tall ship was 90 days and the shortest passage was six days.

There are numerous ship wrecks scattered along the inhospitable coastline. We managed to do most of our trip without the use of the engine except when we had to divert to *Mar del Plata*, a port in Argentina, to evacuate two of our trainees for medical reasons (a broken leg and a suspected minor stroke).

We rounded Cape Horn on the morning of the 6th of December in daylight with good visibility and favourable winds (20 knots), however, by lunchtime we encountered a change in wind speed and direction and spent the next five days in the Drake Passage being blown towards Antarctica by gale-force winds accompanied by sleet, snow and a wind-chill factor of -10 C.

In the end we managed to make our way westwards and finally entered the Straits of Magellan and arrived in Punta Arenas (Chile) just before Christmas, the end of an epic voyage.

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