

**Ocean Challenge Live!—The Vendée Globe**  
Solo, non-stop, around-the-world race

WEEK

# 5 Invisible Places

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**By Rich Wilson, Skipper**  
**Aboard *Great American III***

In this race around the world, we will pass many places and peoples.

Some will be nearby, as were Spain, Morocco, and the Cape Verde Islands. Others will be very distant and far over the horizon, as will be South Africa, Madagascar, Australia and New Zealand.

In spite of their distances from *Great American III*, these places stimulate my imagination. What are the people like? What are the places like? What is the terrain of each country? What kind of weather is dominant? What variety of natural resources do these places hold? What forms of government do they have? What styles of food do they eat?

In the United States, one can identify regions

with distinct differences: the northeast, south, southwest, west, mid-west, northwest, etc. In spite of the differences between regions we are all Americans, and we embrace and honor these differences within our society.

On a larger scale, we are also citizens of Planet Earth, and we should embrace and honor the differences among peoples, cultures and places worldwide. As we have come to travel extensively within the US, so should we try to travel extensively outside the US to learn firsthand about the rest of the world.

Out here, we are always sailing past invisible places. Although glad to be in the race, I know that I am missing a lot, and vow to visit many more countries afterward.



## Invisible Places

**By Captain Eric Wallischecke**  
**US Merchant Marine Academy**

Although Skipper Rich refers to the land that he is passing as “invisible”,

I think it really is the ocean that is invisible. A whopping 360 million square kilometers of the earth's surface is covered with seawater, yet at most we can see 2.4% of the oceans from all the world's shorelines. Thus, with so little of the ocean being visible from the shore, it seems like it is the ocean that is invisible; not the land. And since we cannot see Rich from the shore, maybe it is he that is invisible, too.

It's not easy being “invisible” to others, since humans are social beings. We like to spend time

with our family and friends. Spending long periods of time away from others can make you lonely and sad. In the early days of ocean travel, voyagers spent months, even years, away from their homes, communicating only by mail. Babies were born, and people died, while their family members were isolated in the middle of the ocean.

Fortunately, Rich has access to the Internet, so he can stay “visible” to us. We can ask him questions, and follow his progress. He can talk to family and friends, follow the news, and get football scores. So, while he may be in an invisible place to us, we can see him and he can see us.

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