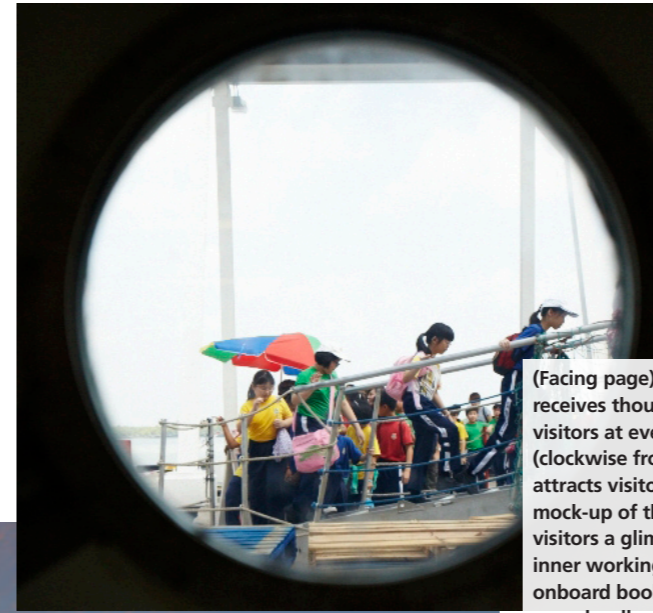


Hope floats

The living quarters are tight – and that’s putting it mildly – and the food is nothing like what it is back home. Yet for the crewmembers of *Logos Hope*, such hardship is insignificant given their mission to bring change to the world.

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(Facing page) *Logos Hope* receives thousands of visitors at every port of call; (clockwise from left) the ship attracts visitors of all ages; a mock-up of the bridge offers visitors a glimpse into the inner workings of the ship; onboard book fairs are a big crowd-puller



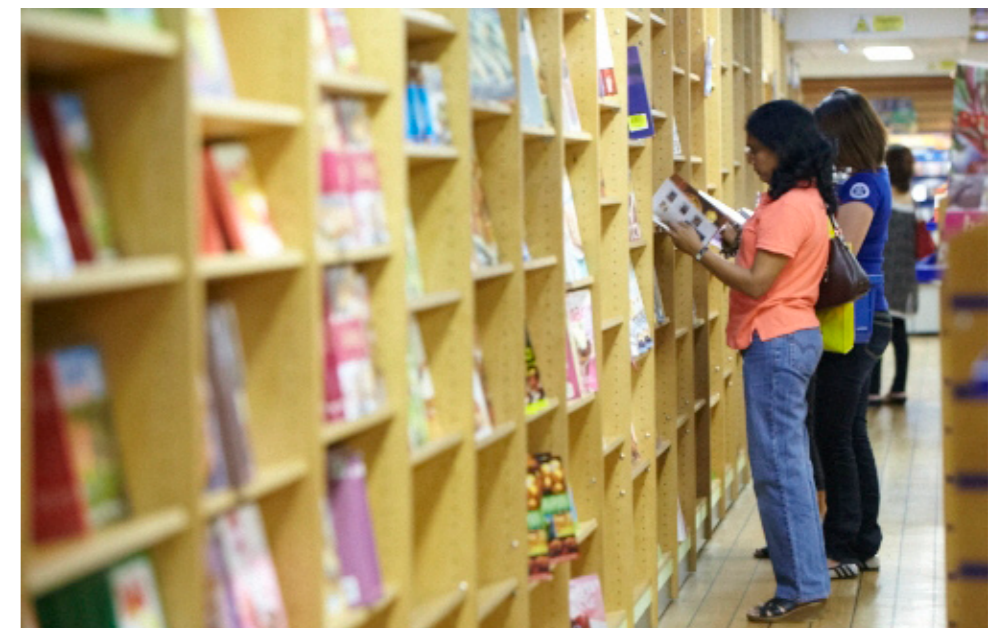
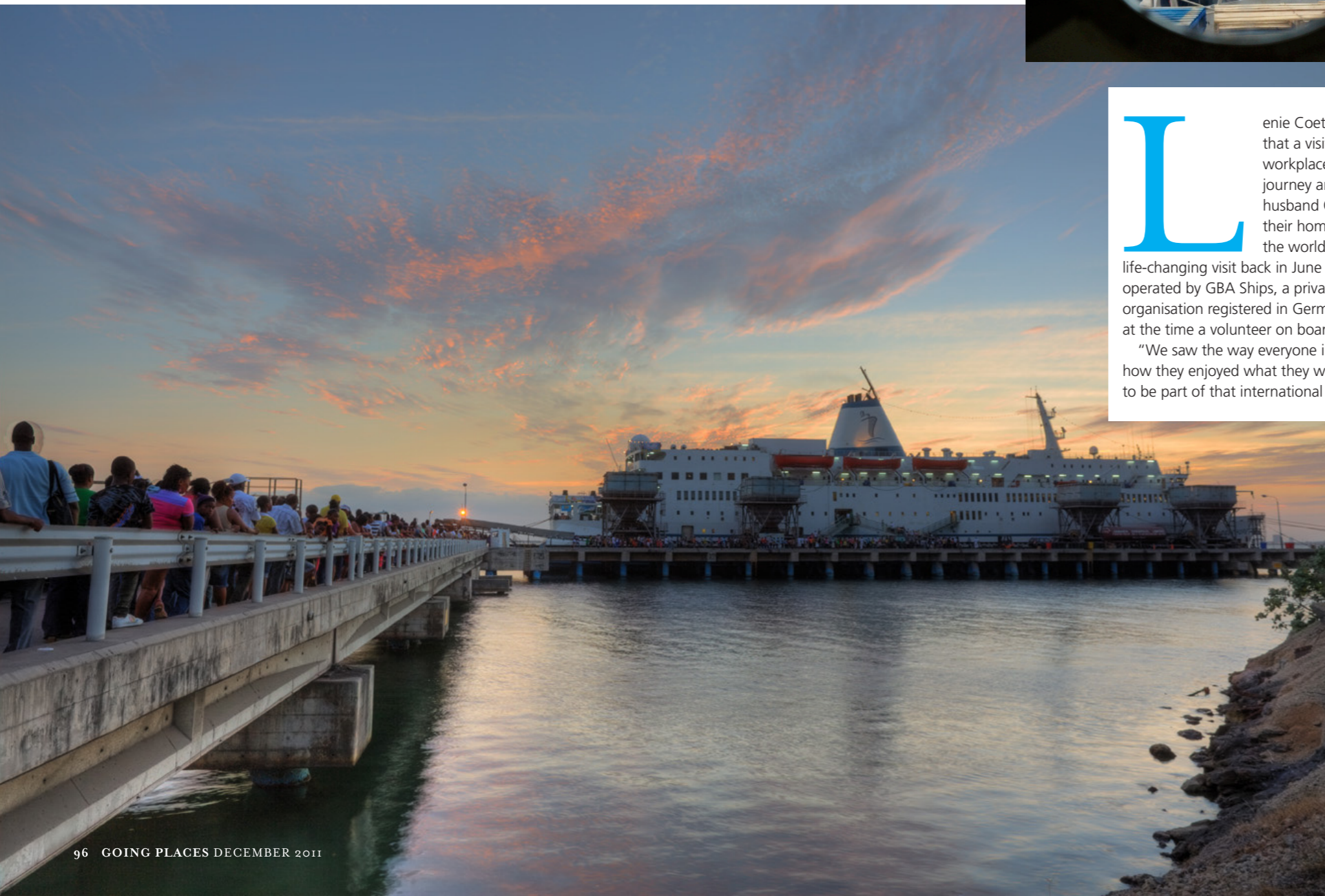
added bonus of being able to see a little part of every country where the ship makes a port of call,” says the 56-year-old who was a nurse in South Africa. It didn’t take long for Lenie and her husband, a civil engineer, to decide to up sticks and sign up as volunteers. They began their service on *Doulos* in Feb 2009, and a year later moved to its sister vessel, *Logos Hope* when the former was decommissioned. The word *Logos* is Greek, meaning ‘principle’ or ‘reason’.

As a nurse, Lenie serves as *Logos*’ resident doctor’s assistant and tends to minor ailments in his absence. Like most of the crew, she works eight hours a day (with one day off a week) but being part of the medical team means that she’s also on call for emergencies. “It’s a small clinic but it’s a very busy one...we’re like a general practice for 500 people,” she says. The clinic averages 180 to 230 patients a month, and patients can sometimes also include visitors suffering the effects of queuing in the heat to get on board.

For Lenie, the high point of the past two-and-a-half years has been the ship’s medical outreach programmes. A few are particularly memorable, like the two-day outreach programme conducted in Cambodia. “It was probably the first time they had consulted with a doctor, and maybe it would be their last for a long time. That we were there to offer our services and

Lenie Coetzer would not have guessed that a visit to her youngest daughter’s workplace would put her on a new journey and that she, together with her husband Ockie, would decide to leave their home and family to sail around the world to help people in need. That life-changing visit back in June 2007 was to *Doulos*, a vessel operated by GBA Ships, a private, non-profit charitable organisation registered in Germany. Her daughter, Magda, was at the time a volunteer on board the vessel.

“We saw the way everyone interacted with each other and how they enjoyed what they were doing, and we too wanted to be part of that international environment. There was also the





help was a moving experience," she says. On another occasion, *Logos Hope* also organised a blood donation drive. "We were in West Africa and there was a hospital ship offering cleft lip and palate reconstruction surgery and they needed clean blood. They approached us, and our crew donated about 80-100 units of clean blood," says Lenie. The crew later learnt from the medical ship that the doctors on board were able to perform many surgeries as a result of the blood they received. "It's these programmes that have made the experience so meaningful," she adds.

A giving career

Like Lenie, there are many other individuals on board the *Logos Hope* who enjoy making a difference in the world. Logos' 400 crewmembers are non-salaried volunteers; many serve in their professional capacity as engineers, electricians, teachers, cooks and nurses. To qualify as a volunteer one must be 18 or above, be in good health, and able to raise enough money to cover living expenses on board. The current crew includes retirees as well as children of families serving on the ship. Most stay for two years, and there are those who extend

their service for many more years – like Gian Walser.

Gian began his service on *Doulos* together with his wife Eveline. He left his home country of Switzerland to work in the ship's galley. Twelve years and four children later (ages ranging from 10 to four), Gian is today *Logos Hope's*

LOGOS' 400 CREWMEMBERS ARE NON-SALARIED VOLUNTEERS. THE CURRENT CREW INCLUDES RETIREES AS WELL AS CHILDREN OF FAMILIES SERVING ON THE SHIP



(Top left & bottom) Exhibitions and book fairs are the key attractions of the ship; (top right) Lenie's time on board *Logos Hope* has inspired her to dedicate her life to serving those in need



Ready to help

Since 1970, GBA Ships has had four vessels – Logos (1970-1988), Logos II (1989-2008), Doulos (1977-2009), and Logos Hope, which began service in 2009. To date the ships have made more than 1,400 port visits in over 160 countries, welcoming over 42 million visitors on board.

The ships are known for their floating book fairs which offer a selection of more than 5,000 titles across a wide range of categories such as science, sports, cookery, the arts as well as languages and philosophy. The books come primarily from publishers in USA. Some books come from the UK and others (especially local language books) from publishers or booksellers in the country where the ship is berthed. Publishers often donate books that have been removed from circulation following the release of new editions in the developed countries. This allows Logos Hope to offer these books at a fraction of their original price.

Besides the book fair, the ship also offers varied programmes for visitors. For its visit to Malaysia, Logos Hope had AIDS awareness programmes, a businessmen's dinner and many school visits; the latter is hugely popular at many ports of call. Children are treated to a cultural showcase, which lets the junior visitors take an imaginary voyage around the world. A typical programme might include dances from Scotland and Mexico, a song from Japan, as well as a drama about the ship and a few ship-themed games.

Logos Hope made its maiden visit to Malaysia this year. Its sister ship Doulos paid 36 port visits to Malaysia from 1990 until 2009. In this maiden call, Logos Hope visited Penang, Port Klang and Kuching. From 18 Nov-4 Dec, Logos Hope will call at Kota Kinabalu before visiting Singapore from 16-28 Dec.

managing director, and he's as enthusiastic as he was the day he joined. He talks about *Logos Hope's* mission of spreading knowledge through its book fair and the 5,000 titles across a wide range of subjects that are available for visitors. "Our aim is to make good books available at affordable prices...books are a great way for people to acquire knowledge," he says. Apart from book sales, *Logos Hope* also extends literary aid to people in developing countries and has donated textbooks and reference volumes to schools, libraries, community groups, colleges and universities.

Sailing from one port to another, *Logos Hope* is also in a position to extend help wherever it's needed. The ship has community service programmes in every port of call, particularly when the ship visits less developed countries. Its crew has helped build orphanages in Myanmar and Liberia, and raised awareness on HIV/AIDS in West Africa. Almost every crewmember is involved in the community work.

An equally important mission is spreading hope to people around the world. "Without hope people will perish," says Gian, pointing out that the cultural diversity among its 400 crewmembers is an advantage. Hailing from some 45 countries, crewmembers set aside their differences to understand and work together, and through their interactions with visitors and the people they meet, they inspire others to do the same.

For Romanian Raluca Cardos, the assistance extended by so many countries to her nation following the fall of the Iron Curtain inspired her to join *Logos Hope*. Her

▪ Mission



family thought she was crazy to volunteer, but having served more than three-quarters of her stint, the 28-year-old has no regrets about her decision. On board, she is a secretary for the vessel's advance team who are responsible for the documentation required ahead of the ship's call at a particular destination. "By interacting with people from so many cultures and getting to know them, I've realised that while we may appear different, at the heart of it we're really all the same. We desire the same things, we hurt the same way and we hope for the same things," she says. The friendships made are especially meaningful, she adds, as bonds are formed from shared experiences. Despite the bouts of seasickness, Raluca says she would do it all over again. "It's a small price to pay for the things I've learnt."

A lesson in culture

Despite the life-changing experiences, life on board isn't always a bed of roses. Raluca admits that there are times when finding things in common with crewmates can be tough. "In different

cultures different things may be important to them...so that takes some getting used to," she tells. For Jong Min Lee, being in a multicultural setting was challenging initially, given that his home country of South Korea is among the world's most ethnically homogeneous.

The 27-year-old who serves in the advance team also found it tough to adjust to the food served on board. "In Korea we eat a lot of rice...we eat rice for breakfast, lunch, dinner and sometimes even supper. Here we have cookies for breakfast which is what we'd have for dessert back home...I miss the food the most," he says.

Then there are the cramped quarters and bunkmates with different personalities and sleeping habits. Media relations officer Jessie LaPlue remembers the time she bunked with nine other crewmates when she first began her service on board. "Some would still be awake at 3am while others would be trying to sleep because they had to be up at 5am... it was challenging. I guess this was why we were told when we began our service that we needed to be FAT...flexible, adaptable and teachable!"

While living in a tight space is daunting, Lenie says it teaches one to realise what's truly important in life. "You learn that you can get by with very little, and that material things aren't that important after all." And while she misses her three children, being able to help those in need is a big plus. The experience has left such an indelible impact on Lenie and her husband that the couple have signed on to serve for three years on a medical boat based at Africa's Lake Tanganyika once they complete their tour of duty on *Logos Hope* next March. "This kind of help and service is what we want to do for the rest of our lives," she says. 📺

H For more information on the ship's next port call or how to sign up as a volunteer, visit www.gbaships.org



(Clockwise from left) Publishers often donate older editions that allows *Logos Hope* to offer books at a fraction of their original price; everyone on board from the cook to the captain are un-salaried volunteers; with 12 years of service under his belt Gian is as enthusiastic as ever about the ship's mission