

2017 CHOICES VAN DIEMEN'S LAND CIRCUMNAVIGATION



Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania in conjunction with Royal Geelong Yacht Club organise the biennial Van Diemen's Land Circumnavigation Cruise, with three Geelong boats, Bundaberg (John Kint) Maatsuyker (Bill Newman) and Pattermaker (Stuart Dickson) participating in 2017. This year a number of crew members in the cruise had travelled from New Zealand, Italy, Germany, USA, Scotland and five from England.

The aim of the event is to facilitate yachts and powerboats cruising in company whilst allowing crews to be adventurous, as safely as possible. The cruise plan allows for independent cruising, whilst encouraging crews to regroup for regular social events. The 2017 start date was scheduled to follow on from the Tasmanian Wooden Boat Festival to allow crews to enjoy both events.

Thirty-one boats started from Hobart and circumnavigated in an anti clockwise direction, finishing in Hobart 800 miles and five weeks later. Another seven boats started in Queenscliff, joining the fleet at various places on the north coast of Tasmania. A number of owners were able to experience real cruising, which is defined as "fixing your boat in exotic locations".

The mainland yachts joined the fleet in the Hunter Group. By that point the North Easterlies were in full swing, with the Hunter Shuffle between Three Hummock Island

and Hunter Island became the routine. Many crews opted to use the good breeze to head south early to Macquarie Harbour. Fortunately, "Hell's Gate" at the entrance to Macquarie Harbour, proved to be anything but, and was for most an anti-climax and huge relief.

Strahan is a great stopover with cruisers enjoying the local attractions, re-provisioning and re-fuelling, before heading off down the harbour to the Gordon River and the numerous other bays and inlets.

The expectation of the typical West Coast experience complete with gales, huge seas and wild weather was not forthcoming, and for most crews the voyage south was in bright sun and glassy calm conditions.

Port Davey and Bathurst Harbour are the prime attractions of cruising in Tasmania, and this year they didn't disappoint. The weather was outstanding, with most crews able to explore Melaleuca, the Davey River, and everything in between. A beach BBQ was organised for Bramble Cove, which fortunately coincided with a low tide, enabling the customary One Day International Cricket match to take place.

The trip across the southern tip of Tasmania was another outstanding experience. The initial large ocean swells on the lower West Coast, were very impressive, with yachts

aboard all but disappearing in the troughs. From South West Cape with its foreboding grey tones, to the sunlit South East Cape, the rugged outlines of the Tasmanian peaks opposite iconic Maatsuyker Island, all provided stunning vistas in near windless conditions.

The Port Esperance Sailing Club at Dover hosted an informal BBQ dinner for all participants. The highlight of the night was the fantastic jam session put on by local musicians. The whole building shook with the music and enthusiastic dancing. Those who weren't too slow the following morning headed off, again in perfect conditions, to the Port Cygnet Sailing Club which once again provided their fabulous sit down dinner.

These events clearly demonstrate how a group of dedicated volunteers can really put on an outstanding evening for their guests.

The final celebration was the Cruise Dinner and awards held at the RYCT in Hobart. The Geelong boats began the long journey home via the east coast with stopovers in Triabunna and many beautiful bays. Bundaberg made the trip home from Eddystone Point under sail due to a major engine problem.

RGYC is aiming at a total of ten Geelong boats for participation in the 2019 VDLC, so start planning your holidays and boat preparation!



Artwork by Kerry Mansell, from the Van Diemen's Land cruise log of Bundaberg