

Cruising Tasmania - 2020

By Dennis Shepherd

Sorry but this is not a Jaguar related story, but my Hobart sailing friend was the one that introduced me to Jaguars while we lived in Hobart, so it sort of is. I did get to drive his 2015 XF Jaguar several times during this holiday. I played tour guide to some visiting New Zealand friend's but this is not about Jaguars. This is also not a cruise ship story either. I like a REAL Adventure with some challenges and where I get to helm the boat. Having had 50 years of yacht racing and considerable time cruising yachts in Tasmania, a cruise ship is not on my bucket list. Even less so at present!

Jenny and I lived in Hobart in 2011 to 2015 and then returned to Hamilton. For those of you who have been to Tasmania, you will appreciate what a wonderful place it is. For those that have not been yet, put it on your bucket list of must visit places – when Covid 19 has settled and it's safe to travel. We made some great friends and I have travelled

back every year since to sail with a wonderful Ex pat sailing couple who own an Elan 434 (a very nice keel boat for those not into sailing). I have sailed lots, racing and cruising around Tasmania, including twice completed the Bi-Annual Circumnavigation Cruise, run by the Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania. There is a huge sailing culture in Tasmania with far fewer



launches than yachts. Both racing and cruising are very popular. The Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race is one of the toughest ocean races in the world.

Not to leave out the “Mechanical stuff” the Elan is a 44-foot (13.41 m) keel boat with a draft of 1.9 metres, beam 4.1 metres, water tank 500 litres and diesel fuel 270 litres. She has a 55 hp Volvo Penta sail drive diesel engine which uses just 2.75 litres/ hour motoring at 7 knots. She has 2 heads (toilets for the non -nautical types among you) The boat is a 3 -cabin version. This is not a big space, so everyone needs to get along!

On the 13th February this year I flew to Hobart and after two days of provisioning the boat, we sailed away with four on board.

We divided the 4 weeks adventure into three 1-week cruises with some crew changes each week. This gave us some time to top up water and diesel tanks and re-provision the food, wine and chocolate! The first week was an “All Blokes” adventure (3 Kiwi’s and 1 Australian who we soon taught to be an “Honorary Kiwi”). We cruised the area between Tasmania and Bruny Island which is a magnificent cruising ground, although a little cold. Hobart is level with Kaikoura and their summer has been unseasonably cold, unlike our NZ North Island summer. We wore thermals and Off -Shore sailing jackets most days which often had a 14- 16 degree high and with the wind chill of the southerly/ south-westerly. It was cold but this is Tasmania at times.



Cruising is all about exploring adventures at sea and on land, great company and of course eating well. I have an iPod with 11,000 songs so we also had some great music to suit the variety of tastes. The 70 km D’Entrecasteaux Channel extends between Bruny Island and Tasmania and offers great sailing and anchorages. A visit to the Bruny Island Quarantine Station there was fascinating, especially considering the Covid 19 Pandemic affecting us all now. This was set up for returning servicemen at the end of World War 1 in an attempt to cope with the influenza epidemic that killed millions worldwide. We also took a day to sail out to Pedra Branca, a rocky outcrop 21 nautical miles (40 Km) off the SW coast of Tasmania which is a world famous “Big Wave Surfing” spot. Google it

when you get a chance. I forgot you have lots of free time maybe at present in isolation. The west coast of Tasmania records over 20 metre waves.

The second week we said farewell to our Australian crew member and welcomed aboard another husband and wife Kiwi couple.



At this point we had two doctors, one recently retired, a retired dentist, a Physiotherapist (me) and a retired science teacher. We sailed to Port Arthur which is the 19th Century historical penal settlement site. This was for secondary offenders only and was built by the prisoners themselves. A fascinating historical experience and the



second most popular tourist attraction in Tasmania. We spent 2 days there and having been to the site ten times, the skipper and I continued our tour guide role for our NZ crew. Setting sail in a 30 knot SW breeze we sailed around Tasman Island on the SE corner of Tasmania in 6 metre seas. There are magnificent cliff faces we sailed past of up to 1,000 feet high. This leg is always challenging and great fun but not for the faint hearted!

Then to the beautiful Fortescue Bay to anchor for the night. The next day we sailed up to Maria Island which again has a penal settlement history. Sailing back with a 4am start we motored through the Denison Canal at Dunalley which is Australia's only operational canal.

After returning to Hobart we docked down -town where you can park your boat in the city hub for a dinner of fish and chips. The next 3 days were spent restocking and visiting MONA (Museum of Old and New Art). This is a private museum which is a must see and the number one Tasmanian tourist attraction. A visit to the Tasmanian Maritime Museum was also a must for a bunch of aging yachties.

The third week was just three of us exploring some areas that were new, even to our skipper who own's the boat and lived in Hobart for 40 years, running a dental practice there until retiring a few years ago. Tasmania in many ways is much like New Zealand with snow covered mountains, rain forest, fertile dairy farming and lovely beaches. I am very privileged to have lived there for 4 years, made wonderful friends and had many Tasmanian sailing adventures.



Dennis