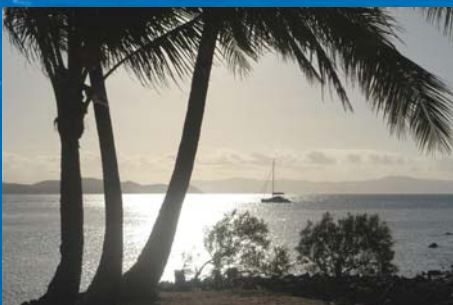
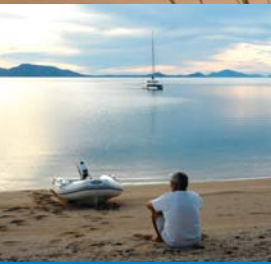


Take me there

been there doing that





cruising the kimberley coast

The Kimberley coast has become extremely popular with cruisers out of Darwin and also those travelling up the west coast from Perth and Fremantle. The number of boats visiting the area is certainly on the increase and quite a few tour boats take people in there now as well. The coastline is incredibly dramatic with rugged, towering escarpment and waterfalls along most of the rivers and lots of exceptional anchorages dotted over hundreds of kilometres all the way down to Broome. The Berkley River on the eastern extremity of the Kimberley cruising grounds, is a particular favourite and only a couple of days sail from Darwin.

Most Kimberley-bound sailors are keen to leave Darwin in late April directly after the 'Wet' (ie the cyclone season - from October to April), although each year is a little different. Leaving Darwin at this time gives sailors a fantastic opportunity to experience huge volumes of water cascading over the many spectacular falls, and these are good places to top up water tanks! Water can become a bit scarce here area towards the end of the 'Dry' (May to September) and, because of the area's remoteness, there are very few places to provision, refuel or take on fresh water.

Everyone we talk to swears the Kimberley offers the best cruising in Australia's and the photos certainly back that up. We know one lovely retired couple who live south of Perth but dry-dock their Crowther 10 cat in Darwin and fly up for the dry season every year. They have done extensive cruising along the east coast but now sail the Kimberley for about four-five months of every year then sail back to Darwin, crane their cat into a local boat park and fly off to Perth again to tend their fruit trees. They've been doing this for at least the past 15 years.

Getting to the Kimberley could be considered a 'long haul' for someone sailing from the east coast, particularly if they are intending to return home in the same year. From this perspective, most yachts head 'east' from Darwin towards the end of October (depending on weather conditions), which is when the south-easterlies tend to quieten down, enabling the 300 nautical mile dash across the Gulf of Carpentaria from Gove to Cape York, then back down the coast.

One of the best information packages we've seen on the Kimberley coast is on a website prepared by multihull sailors Dennis and Annette Ford. It details a wealth of information and is constantly updated - see <http://kimberleycruising.com.au/>

northward to the spice islands

Darwin is the departure port for three annual blue water international yacht races and rallies which lure hundreds of sailors from around Australia and around the world. On our way back to Darwin from Queensland last year we met many American and European sailors heading for Darwin so they could join the various fleets.

The historic Darwin to Ambon Yacht Race (starting 26 July 2008) is mainly made up of international yachts heading further west. Other popular annual options departing from Darwin harbour include the shorter and easier Sail Saumlaki rally (starting 19 July 2008) and the Sail Indonesia rally (starting 26 July 2008) which takes a course from Darwin to Kupang in West Timor then on through the Indonesian Islands to Singapore and Malaysia.

Needless to say, with these three events leaving at around the same time, Darwin Sailing Club is bursting at the seams with Aussie and international sailors - and a wonderful lively atmosphere. Goggle the event names to find full details on respective websites.

Cosmopolitan Darwin offers all types of services for yachties. They are easily available as most places are only a short distance due to the fact that Darwin is built on a peninsula (we locals complain if we have to drive more than 20 minutes to get somewhere). Many yachties will drop anchor in Fannie Bay (free of charge) and frequent the Darwin Sailing Club for a cool drink, superb lunches and dinners, an the chance to see the sun setting over the water!!

If you don't want to anchor in Fannie Bay there a four marinas, though only three - Cullen Bay, Bayview and Frances Bay (or 'the duck pond' as it is more affectionately known) - have locks wide enough to handle big cats. They all operate via a lock system because of the large tides in this area.

That's about it from our cruising patch in a nutshell - but if anyone wants more details, we are happy to provide.

Good sailing, Col & Kerry Sharp



ridgee didge, LW38



FOREWORD After achieving many cruising journeys previously on monohulls, Jan & Terry are converted cat sailors. Since Crossing to the Dark Side in 2004, they have clocked up even more cruising miles along the East Coast of Australia and are currently cruising Thailand.

CRUISING TIPS Be sure to have a PANIC BAG readily available. Basically we have 3 x 10 litre water proof bags which we tie together with a life jacket to ensure that they will float (writing the boat name on them may be a good idea but we haven't done that yet). Ensuring they will float is very important. Contents of the bags are listed at right.

Have ropes strung under the underwing.

Have an escape hatch installed in the saloon floor.

Have an emergency plan and discuss with all members of the crew. Practice man overboard drills, have backup charts of all waters to be navigated and backup working GPS.

Have waterproof handheld VHF.

Keep a manual lookout at all times and double check position in relation to land and reefs etc.

Tip on Cruising the top end of Australia...Crossing the gulf at the top can be very lumpy so if prone to seasickness be sure to have appropriate medication on hand and secure all loose items on deck and inside the cabin.

jan's panic bag contents

Passports in their own waterproof bag

Wallet with cash and credit cards etc

Keys that are important for land base

Mobile phone with memory of phone numbers of friends, relatives etc.

Waterproof handheld VHF radio (check batteries regularly)

Spare EPIRB

Handheld GPS (check batteries regularly)

Basic hand compass (none battery operated)

Change of clothes for each of us in their own waterproof bag (keeping in mind the need for warmth and sun protection)

Pair of footwear for each of us

Hats

Towel in waterproof bag

Flares

Torch (check batteries regularly)

Good length of **floating rope**

All purpose tool (e.g. combined screwdriver, spanner etc)

Sharp knife

Bright item of clothing for signaling (e.g. fluorescent workman's shirt)

Basic toiletries (e.g. toothbrush and toothpaste) and first aid (e.g. pain relief, bandages, special medication, lip balm etc)

Sunscreen and **insect repellent**

Energy food (check and change regularly for freshness)

Water (depends on room left in bags but we do have separate containers of water that we can access - need to remember that in an emergency it may not be possible to access the water in the boat's water tanks)

5 o'clock somewhere, LW45



5 o'clock somewhere to cruise in company to papua new guinea from queensland

Rob Robson, Owner of LW45 5 O'Clock Somewhere, recently saw a Rally notice and is planning to participate. For more information, contact Guy Chester, Director EcoSustainAbility and Rally Organiser

Guy Chester, an experienced cruising yachting from Cairns has announced the Louisiades Rally 2008. The Rally is being organised with the support of the Yorkeys Knob Boating Club and the Papua New Guinea Tourism Promotion Authority.

Guy Chester said: "After sailing in the race from Cairns to Port Moresby in 1991 we cruised a small section of the Louisiades and despite cruising around much of the Pacific and South East Asia over the last 20 years the lure of the untouched Louisiades has remained. We spent a month sailing in the Louisiades in 2007 with the idea of arranging a rally for 2008. The local people were so enthusiastic we knew we just had to make it happen. We have made arrangements for some great events, from traditional dancing, a skull cave visit, a traditional sailing canoe regatta, school visits and many other events. The locals are very keen to host the rally, already they provide a great welcome to the cruising yachts that visit the islands."

The Louisiades are 500 nautical miles from Cairns which equates to a two to four day passage for most cruising yachts. "We are providing support such as arranging customs clearance and flying in the PNG Customs officer to the yachts. We will have safety briefings and provide weather and safety reports for yachts, this allows sailors who have not yet ventured offshore to have the confidence to give it a go. I first sailed offshore in the Darwin to Ambon race many years ago and I know the benefit of venturing out for your first bluewater passage in the company of other yachts," said Guy.

The rally will start on 20 September 2008 and take yachts in company for four weeks to many island destinations. Yachts may then chose to carry on cruising the beautiful islands of PNG, head off to the Solomon Islands or cruise in company back to Cairns. The rally has as a major aim to contribute to the communities visited, where people live in a subsistence lifestyle and even the basics of health and education are not guaranteed.



hesaidshesaid

by 'Our Reflections' Tales in the South Pacific 2007

preparation

It seems no matter how organised you try to be there will always be those last minute jobs to organise. The plan was to have 95% of everything organised and completed 2 weeks prior to departure. In theory this would allow the captain and crew to be well and truly calm and confident knowing the boat was stocked, stowed, fuelled, safety packed, hulls cleaned and eager to burst its mooring lines for its first offshore trip – remembering all the time that this is what we bought the boat for, she was after all designed to sail offshore. Were we designed to go offshore though? This is the part you forget to put some effort into.

Well, this was all well and good in practice and most people who've sailed realise the best laid plans sometimes don't work out... The boat was certainly well stocked with food – it was apparent we would be able to supply all of Vanuatu with toilet paper, toothpaste, bread and yoghurt, these obviously being considered the staples of the trip considering the volume purchased (we are still getting through the yoghurt some 12 months later...).

Our two main issues – and considered the most important for the trip was the installation of the HF radio and desalinator. Choices, choices and more choices. Once the brands were selected they were ordered from the US. The HF arrived without hitch less than a week of its order. The water maker however, went AWOL in the Port of Spain and eventually told it had turned up after 5 weeks at Brisbane airport. Money was exchanged and package was found only to discovered that, no, no water maker in that box, our package was still in the South of Spain – on island time no doubt. Mild panic knowing at this point we had 3 weeks to leaving and it was imperative to have the water maker installed. Fortunately we had a 2nd option and ordered a unit from Qld for it to arrive within 1 week. Not the 12v system we wanted, motor driven instead which required additional bracket and installation to make it work. In a nutshell, the HF and the rigging of aerial, copper plating, testing etc. was completed 2 days prior to the sail day. The water maker was installed and tested 1 day prior – yes, salt water into fresh, brilliant. No sweat. Who was worried?

By the time we were given the two week sailing weather window there was enormous tension in the air. Our two sailing crew (brother and sister in law – nil sailing experience) arrived and we had all family

and friends come down to see us off the night before we were due to leave. We would have had around 20 people coming and going in amongst sorting out last minute problems while trying to be calm ready to leave in the morning. Emotions ran high.

leaving

Departure morning, variable winds, clear skies and we're off. Goodbyes said to our marina bound friends and let's good the bloody hell out of here. Well, we didn't get far. The first mate carefully stowed her straw sailing cap under the back seats which jammed the steering mechanism and shredded the hat. Great start. Dropped anchor in the harbour to resolve. Captain slightly unhappy with first mate... don't know why really.

Set the mainsail and screecher and set a course due east. Idyllic, spirits high.

Then, naturally, 7 hours into the trip – land a distant memory, the autopilot fails. Suggestion from crew maybe we should turn back. As if, not likely there were promptly informed. Decide props weren't cleaned enough (ie. not at all) and a quick swim is required to chip the barnacles off. Can't drop anchor at 3,000 metres so some bobbing around in mild swells where the first mate someone ended up the person with the paint scraper and rope tied to them diving under the clean the props. There are twelve sides to clean the first mate discovered and no sooner you get to the props in the swell, hold on and chip away a little, it's time to come up for air. Lots of salt water swallowed. Job done within an hour. Salt water negates seasickness pills and first mate feeds the fish for the next day or so. Great start.

Autopilot now working. Spirits high again.

sea crossing

Well, what can you say, 7 days is a long time at sea when you've not done it before. Yeah we know, people spend 70 days at sea without seeing land but we weren't that seasoned yet. The first two days you get some confidence that yes, everything will be ok, you find your rhythm, your routine, you read, watch movies, have a few drinks (yes I know, shouldn't do that) and generally start to relax a little. Oh, bugger, warning of a storm cell approaching (thank god for the HF and friends to sail with to warn you), shorten sails, ride the storm out (read: chant mantra 'I will not be sick, I will not be sick) and wait for the next day. All is reasonable but what the bloody hell are we doing out here? Well, that's the first mate's version.

The captain would say he was like a cat on a hot tin roof from day



one. In retrospect and speaking to well seasoned travellers this is quite normal and being captain holds an enormous responsibility which is highly stressful. Our captain starting dropping weight from stress on day 1!! Let alone by the time our little 'storm' experience hit. A captain has to make those on the spot decisions, he has to fix the breakages and things that inevitably go wrong, he has the feeling all lives are in his hands and land is still a long way away.

The captain had three perfect days at sea, well, apart from zero wind and motoring all day. Tip: you can always do with more fuel that what you think you'll need and then add some again. Unless of course you want to bob around in the water which would mean more time at sea and more chance of hitting bad weather – bugger that, we're motoring.

The third night we hit the storm, gusting up to 45kts (so the first mate is told) and time spent in the middle of a water spout to spook the crew out. Weather threw the boat everywhere, the normal waves crashing over boom type. Main double reefed and boat slowed as much as possible. Captain and brother ride out the storm while the first mate and sister in law try not to be sick. Lots of fun. Twelve hours later storm is over, seas flat again and a beautiful day ahead. Some rather frayed nerves and that was the worst of it really. Next 3 days spent making into port at Noumea.

Lot's of celebrating, adrenalin highs, champagne to be drunk – bugger sleep, too excited.

the people and experience

The islanders you come across that have so little (at least we would say that) live the simplest of lives and are always smiling and friendly, eager to learn about you, your boat and where you've come from (and, yes, to trade things for food, rope, sheets etc.). It's an amazing experience where the people of Vanuatu readily accept boaties and proudly show off their villages. Each village differs so much from the one around the corner. Some have running water (courtesy of Aust. 7th Day Adventist groups) others do not and collect by digging a hole in the ground. The kids are so innocent and happy, very shy but intrigued by the people in their boats.

From traveling around Vanuatu with a 56ft monohull we've learnt the islanders find it much easier to paddle their dug out canoes to the catamaran, much easier point of entries so we inevitably had a hoard of canoes around our boat, sometimes before the anchor was even dropped.

You meet boaties from all round the world, circumnavigating – some in vessels you wouldn't even contemplate but it works for them. Met many cruisers who's wives went along for the ride not really having any experience and cope reasonably well. In Vanuatu we met the first civilian who paid to go into space on as a cosmonaut with Russia. The US naturally were unhappy at this as he was in fact a NASA engineer. We found him hugely interesting but he found our stories equally as interesting considering we had no experience.

It's important to get off your own boat and try and get to know as many people as you can. The people you meet and stories they have to share put your own 'little' trip into perspective.

The islands of New Caledonia to us were the most beautiful of the

whole trip. Isle de Pines and the Loyalty Islands are well worth the effort to get to. Talcum powder fine white sand, turquoise waters and picture postcard views. All of which relatively untouched and with history going back to French colonisation.

Although itself a dirty harbour and marina Noumea has an wonderful vibrant feel of a mix of local kanaks and visiting french born. There's the latin quarter and the Chanel (Coco that is!) quarter, so to speak. The markets are what we'll miss the most with wonderful produce, people, coffee served out of soup bowls and of course the paninis. Such a great mix of culture. I'd be back there in a shot.

That's what the sailing 7 days is for, not just the islands, the fishing (limited), snorkelling (magic) it's the people and taking the time to see everything from another perspective (and having to learn a bit of french along the way).

Yes, things will go wrong on the trip, it's Murphy's Law. No matter how well prepared you are some piece of equipment or electronics will fail and it seems the boat is always pulled apart to fix the next thing that's gone wrong. But if you didn't have that then how would you enjoy the good times. It would be too perfect, you need the ordinary times to appreciate the other side. The captain however may disagree, particularly as he was the one fixing the autopilot, or the toilet, the sail – any number of things. But, that's what they say cruising is – going to exotic locations to fix your boat – and in reality that's what it can become but you wouldn't change it for the world (well ok, you can do without having to fix the loo).

checklist

What would we do differently. Well, the first mate would preferred not to have come home and stayed in New Cal. The captain would probably have liked to come back to familiar territory earlier. You do miss the things you're used to.

You really need a good supply list, not only of the obvious but of all the main mechanical things that could go wrong that you may need a spare for when you're at sea. Yes, on arrival you can pick things up but that won't help you when you're four days out of port.

Carry lots more fuel than you think's necessary and don't forget all the safety gear – hopefully you mightn't need it but if you don't have it no doubt you'll need it. We purchased a parachute anchor for the trip and used it to rescue a boat off the reef in the Whitsundays who put in a pan pan call. The bridle lines to the anchor became a tow line. Never thought we'd use it for that but better than the alternative I guess!

Do your research on where you're going – there's some fantastic CD's on travelling to the South Pacific showing you weather, entry ports, local customs all sorts of inside information.

Get on the internet, go to some of the sailing sites and get a feel for what it's going to be like at sea. You need to be prepared even more so than the boat.

Have an agreed sailing watch roster, ie. we had 2 hours on 2 hours off during the night. For us that time worked well, enough to get a little rest/sleep but not too long that while you're on watch you'll dose off. Everyone's different, be flexible.

On the trip over we had two family members brave enough to come. They had no experience whatsoever but for us it made an enormous difference having two extra people on board when it got messy. Good for the boredom, morale and was actually the best part of the trip having them as companions to share it all with.

We left with a total of three boats from Coffs Harbour to Noumea. One of which, Seaforth a monohull had done many offshore trips two/from New Zealand and were well experienced. They had access to a weather expert and were in regular contact with us. It makes an enormous difference traveling with other boats knowing if you're in uncomfortable situations then they're not too far away suffering it out as well.

Most importantly we've learnt – have a back up for your backup and then one more doesn't hurt! Both our autopilot and chartplotter

failed within weeks of each other in Noumea and had to be replaced (we had 2 weeks left on the warranty!).

Luckily, the local chandlery were able to provide us with a temporary replacement for our autopilot (don't know if they'd do that in Australia) but we had to rely upon our handheld GPS hooked up to the laptop and electronic CMAP charts. When it worked it was reasonable, a bit cumbersome and awkward but when it didn't and the computer thought the GPS was a mouse and lost the signal it was extremely frustrating. It got us through however, on return to Australia the laptop died. Mild panic realising what that would have meant for us if we were offshore. We sailed for about 6 weeks from Noumea to the islands of Vanuatu completely reliant upon the laptop and handheld GPS. In retrospect I would have another laptop as a spare.

All in all we travelled as far as Espiritos Santos in Vanuatu, didn't make the main volcano in Tanna after bashing into tradewinds for a day realised it wasn't going to happen. Having said that, we had some amazing night sails from Santos, clear skies, light breezes watching the plumes of the volcano and smelling the sulfuric acid in the air. It was magical. We experienced an earthquake that took place 30nm from where we were anchored – much movement and

shuddering of the boat, very bizarre – particularly when we had no idea what it was at the time!

The first mate would say if offshore cruising is something you aspire to then get out there and make it happen, you won't regret it. You learn an enormous amount about yourself and each other. Memories that so many people don't have the opportunity of doing. Yes, it can definitely be tough, everything's magnified on a boat – get off the boat when you can, that's the whole idea of sailing somewhere different.

The captain would say you're probably mad for wanting to do it! No, the captain enjoyed it, doesn't regret it but probably won't venture offshore again. Maybe if someone else was captain (well, someone other than the first mate at least!).

Our boats handle the seas, weather and all situations extremely well – it's how we handle it that determines how you get out of it.



isolation ward by alan lucas

isolation cruising tips prepared especially for Lightwave Owners by famous cruising Author Alan Lucas (Cruising the Coral Coast, Cruising the New South Wales Coast)



Alan & Patricia Lucas.

Their boat "SOLEARES"

wilderness

A surprising truth about remote areas is the number of services available where you least expect them. For example, aboriginal settlements usually have a general store or mini-mart, servo, post office with bank agency where a little of everything can be purchased or ordered in. There may also be an occasional fishing-fleet mother ship selling produce, water and fuel to recreational craft.

As well as these unexpected services, there is a multitude of communication systems available, sat-phone proving one of the most popular. As long as you can reach an outpost, delivery of vital items for ship and crew can be organised one way or another. Indeed, there are times when direct mail ordering can produce quicker results than physically shopping in your own hometown.

Before departing homeport, anticipate the need to mail-order supplies and equipment by listing relevant phone and fax numbers, email addresses and so on for everything imaginable aboard your little ship. Also, ask your GP about the most sensible antibiotics to carry aboard and seek the latest information on treating snakebite, stings and general first aid.

Should your vessel be disabled in any way, plan around self-reliance. Remember, history shows that most boats outlive their crews after abandonment. Take the tools, parts, sealants, glues and scraps of material most likely to save you and your ship. Maydays should be the last resort, not the first.

As to victualling, always seek fresh, non-chilled fruit and vegetables that last longer in ambient temperatures. If only cold-stored food is available, expect it to deteriorate within days unless stored in a refrigerator. The reality of modern food distribution systems is that

truly fresh, unchilled food will be rarely available once known and trusted sources are left astern. Refrigerating – not freezing, thus becomes the only way to hold fruit and vegies for any worthwhile length of time. Dedicated carnivores need a freezer and should beware of consuming meat that has for any reason refrozen after thawing.

The following hints refer only to truly garden-fresh foods.

Lettuce and cabbage do well with the outer leaves left on and wrapped in newspaper (kept damp if possible) whilst pumpkins, onions, potatoes, corn in its husk, beetroot and so on survive well slung in a net in a dark, well ventilated area. Carrots and celery are better for being dried and wrapped in aluminium foil.

Flour, rice, dried beans, lentils, and so on, are known weevil habitats: Bay leaves scattered throughout their containers discourages infestation, while lavender leaves reduce insect attack when layered into bulk-stored dried fruit. Nuts last a long time in their original packet or mixed into a common airtight container, but don't combine salted and unsalted nuts because the salt attracts moisture and prematurely softens all nuts. For the same reason, don't be tempted to pre-mix nuts with moist dried fruits. Invert oily foods, such as peanut butter and Tahini every week or two to keep the natural oils from settling. Cheese can be wrapped in a vinegar-dampened cloth.

Tinned food is available in many forms, but try varying common varieties with such products as the Sanitarium range of vegetarian foods, fruit in natural juice that need refrigeration only after opening, tuna in its many variations and so on.

A pleasant truth about wilderness cruising is that necessity brings out the creative artist in most people, with cooks producing culinary miracles from food they've rarely seen, let alone used before; lovers of crafts turning resins, glass, driftwood, timber scraps, rope, twine, wool, cotton and virtually every known material into works of art, and their common bond is the hope that they don't run out of material.

A trick is to add a few little luxuries to the food list and then stow them randomly throughout the boat. For example, that Mars Bar that you had sworn off back in port may one day be worth tearing the boat apart to find, a double-whammy activity that nearly always exposes little shipboard jobs that have needed doing for months and now cannot be ignored



eaglehearts & the marvellous kimberley's

Eaglehearts spent 3 weeks in the Kimberley's on her way home to WA in 2006. In our last cat Loose Ends we had previously spent 2 weeks in the Kimberley's on the way to Darwin with a Variety Club fundraiser in 2005 and another 2 weeks on the way south. We sold Loose Ends in Carnarvon while still 500nm from home and we then got smart & purchased Eaglehearts (Lightwave 10.5 No.001) and sailed her from Lightwave factory in Coomera to our home at Hillary's Yacht Club which is 15nm north of Fremantle. The journey up the east coast was nice, across the top from Cape York to Darwin very nice & a foretaste of things to come in the Kimberley's

The Kimberley's in northwestern WA are one of the world's last wilderness areas. Around 700nm from Darwin to Broome & they are visited by, probably, hundreds of cruising yachts each year. The scenery is spectacular with innumerable superb bays & islands & is already under threat from mining & tourism. So it is well worth making the effort now to visit this fantastic part of the world where one occasionally encounters other cruising boats.

Before heading off you will need the Fremantle Sailing Club's Cruising Guide, the Australian Tide CD & you should spend some time on the net (Google Earth, then enter Kimberley Cruising into your search engine). Together with the appropriate paper charts & a thorough check of your boat & its equipment – remember this is a remote area without marinas or boat yards.

We left from Darwin at the end of July heading straight across the Bonaparte Gulf to Koolama Bay. Lots of people go around the gulf but we had a good weather forecast (the gulf is nicknamed 'The Blown Apart Gulf') & decided to spend the extra time further down. Any visit to the Kimberley's is either lengthy or you have to make difficult choices about what to see & what to miss. Even with a lengthy stay you can't see all of the Kimberley's. We have met other boats that have been there for several seasons & still complained that there are parts that they either haven't seen or have spent too little time in. In Koolama Bay we crossed the bar with care & carefully motored 10nm up the King George River to the main waterfalls where we anchored for the night in this very special spot.

In the season, about May through September to dodge the cyclone season, winds are light so you do lots of motoring. Fuel is not readily available until you get to Dog Leg Creek, about 500nm from Darwin, so it is advisable to carry extra

fuel & to keep an eye on your usage. Night sailing is OK with care, but you don't get to see much in the dark!

We left the river & had a short sail to Butterfly Bay on the eastern side of Cape Londerry. The next day we rounded the cape, which has a bad reputation with tides and seas, but we have always stayed well offshore & had no problems. Modern chart plotters are fantastic units & with good internal charts, proper paper charts & good seamanship sailing these waters is relatively safe & pleasant. We found our chart plotter quite accurate & used it to navigate into many narrow passages & bays.

From Butterfly Bay we sailed around to Vansittart Bay via a very narrow passage at Middle Rock to anchor in Freshwater Bay – just another piece of paradise. We were weather bound for 3 days & took advantage of the stay to visit the nearby freshwater pools. Here we bathed, washed & filled our water tanks. There are a number of places where this can be done as shown in the FSC Cruising Guide. We also had the company of 3 other cruisers. The water around us was a beautiful clear blue, ideal for swimming – BUT we have a rule – no swimming north of Dampier – for the obvious reason that we feel reluctant to become crocodile food! (and even though you don't see them very often, they are everywhere)

From there to Parry Harbour – an absolutely huge area, but not one my favourite anchorages. All the anchorages that I have visited in the Kimberley's have been good holding & reasonably well sheltered – with one exception, which I shall cover later. One of the issues in the Kimberley's is tides – up to 10metres. Anchoring is fairly easy; you check the state of the tide (using the tide CD) & select your spot based on the required depth. Tidal streams are the other issue – your charts will show you direction & strength and the tide CD will enable you to work whether you will be on a flood or an ebb at that point in your travels. The tidal issue seemed to increase as we ventured further south. We in fact became very cautious as one after another we saw rather frightening rocks appear, as the tide retreated, on otherwise benign shores.

Our next stop was Krait Bay a delightful small, historic anchorage. But – beware we nearly tried to anchor in the next-door bay which is relatively small & shallow. We have found on our 3 trips that the weather forecasts are not very accurate and the next day we had a good example of the down side of that. We left with forecasts of wind from southern quarters and planned to anchor, with offshore winds, at

Augereau Island. Late afternoon, when it was too late to select a more suitable spot, the forecast changed by 180 degrees and we spent a fairly stressful night maintaining anchor watch etc on a lee shore which revealed bombies close to us as the tide receded. Back to forecasts – there is no VHF radio service in the Kimberley's, weather fax via HF is available (if you have the equipment) and you can get forecasts on HF, just check out times and frequencies on the bureau website. Weather is transmitted from un-manned stations & we were unable to contact Coast Radio or any other official station even though we tried on all frequencies and spoke to other boats. We have had rare contact with Coast Radio, but they cannot be relied upon. I had a sat phone last trip, but it was not a very good one and was not 100% reliable – next trip I will have a good quality sat phone installation with an antenna up the mast & hopefully that will be better. It is worth noting that the Coast Watch planes were regular sights and spoke to us by VHF, but one time when we had a suspicious sighting & tried to call them or 'any other radio station', the only response we had was from an airplane in the vicinity.



Like most places we visited the anchorage was very comfortable and well protected. Next morning we headed out through whirlpools aiming for a place called 'The Canal' between Koolan Island & the mainland. I had been there before & it is a very nice sail, something like the Narrows north of Gladstone, but with strong tides instead of shallows. Arriving at the correct tidal time is essential here and we simply ran too late and decided to anchor at the Kingfisher Islands. We carefully selected our anchorage allowing for the tide to fall, but around 8pm that night heard something scraping on our hull – it turned out we had anchored on top of a small tree! The next morning we were treated to the best sunrise ever as we sailed off to Yampi Sound.



Our next stop was Careening Cove where the British navigator Captain Philip King graffitied a boab tree nearly 200 years ago. We were joined there at night by a large cruise ship, fortunately anchored some distance from us, and were amazed that the passengers who pay large amounts of money for these cruises got to have a look see as their tender raced past the tree. From there we sailed to Samson Inlet – one of my favourite places – a large & superb picturesque inlet approached by a long narrow channel and protected 360 degrees.

Next was Raft Point and after a short dinghy trip & a long climb up a hill we saw some aboriginal paintings. There are a number of sites throughout the Kimberley's with these paintings and we certainly enjoyed the visit. Here we got a taste of tidal stream – on the approach I thought that I had made adequate allowance for the tide that was pushing us sideways. However we finished up motoring flat out at 45 degrees to our course & still came uncomfortably close to the rocks. So beware the tidal streams have a greater effect than one might imagine.

In Yampi Sound we fuelled up at Dog Leg Creek, an experience in itself. You must remember to radio ahead so that they can tell you when the tide is suitable for you to enter the creek & refuel. From Dog Leg Creek to its neighbour Silvergull Creek (you should also radio ahead for permission to anchor there) where you will enjoy a visit to Marion & Phil at the 'Squatters Arms'. They have been squatting there for many years & have a well established house & garden, watered by a genuine spring. You can also use the spring to fill your water tanks & bath in their 'tank', as the water is at a constant 32degrees and flows continuously at about 4000 litres per day.

After a few days, nowhere near enough, in Yampi Sound we anchored at Cape Leveque for the last run down to Broome. There are a few nice anchorages on the way down, but we only stopped at Beagle Bay to see the dugongs. Broome is the southern end of the Kimberley's & you can anchor at Gantheume Point as we did and found it quite satisfactory, or you can anchor round the corner (about another 15nm) in Roebuck Bay which is closer to the town.

Again I will say that the trip is well worth the effort, the scenery & anchorages & experiences are fantastic. With a Lightwave cat and modern instrumentation and a bit of planning it is also not too difficult. By the way the trip from Cape York to Darwin around the northern coast is an additional pleasure.



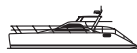
Take me there



LIGHTWAVE45'



LIGHTWAVE38'



LIGHTWAVE46'PC



LIGHTWAVE40'PC



LIGHTWAVE

YACHTS

T 07 5556 0030 F 07 5556 0040

E info@lightwaveyachts.com

www.lightwaveyachts.com