



CHOICES FLOORING VAN DIEMEN'S LAND CIRCUMNAVIGATION CRUISE



Newsletter No. 1

29th May 2020

Welcome to Choices Flooring VDL-C 2021!

The Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania in association with the Royal Geelong Yacht Club welcomes you to the *Choices Flooring Van Diemen's Land Circumnavigation Cruise (VDL-C)*, the 15th time this cruise has been staged.

This is the first of several newsletters that will be sent to all participants prior to the 2021 cruise. They are worth reading carefully because they contain much information that will help you to comply with safety requirements and to give you other information useful in planning your participation in the cruise. This should help to make your cruise both unforgettable and a safe experience, cruising in some of Australia's most spectacular cruising waters. Some past participants have enjoyed themselves so much that they have returned for another go, often several times. Registrations for this next cruise are steadily arriving at the RYCT and already more than 52 registrations have been received.

Most documents, including these newsletters, containing essential information are available on the cruise website: www.ryct.org.au/vdlc2021/.

Choices Flooring VDL-C 2021 and the Coronavirus Pandemic:

The advent of the coronavirus pandemic has changed lives and plans in ways that could not have been anticipated, and *Choices Flooring VDL-C 2021* is no exception. At this stage, the Organizing Committee has resolved to take an optimistic view of the future of the cruise and to continue with planning activities and pre-cruise processes, assuming existing impediments to the cruise taking place will no longer apply by the time we are due to set sail.

By February 2021, there is little doubt some form of social distancing will still be required; what travel restrictions and limitations there will be by then is anyone's guess. Details will depend on the progress (or lack of it) of the epidemic and the continuing success in limiting its effects in Tasmania, Australia and the rest of the world.

Prospective participants are reminded of the first two paragraphs of the the Cruise Safety Requirements:

All those taking part in Choices Flooring VDL-C 2021 do so at their own risk and responsibility. Neither the Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania nor the Royal Geelong Yacht Club is responsible for the seaworthiness of a vessel whose entry is accepted, nor for the sufficiency or adequacy of its equipment or the competence of its crew.

No member or members of the Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania nor the Royal Geelong Yacht Club, nor any other party involved with the organisation of this event, shall accept responsibility for, or be liable for, any accident, injury, damage or personal loss (material or otherwise) to any vessel, participant, or third party, before, during or after Choices Flooring VDL-C 2021.

... which means in this context, that providing a boat satisfies the various pre-cruise requirements (and continues to do so), the Organizing Committee makes no recommendation as to whether or not a boat or its crew should join, or continue to participate in, *Choices Flooring VDL-C 2021*. **This decision remains the sole responsibility of the owner or skipper.**

The Registration Queue:

There is a limit on the fleet size of 45 boats, only five of which may be sailing catamarans. This is because of the difficulty in accommodating such a large number of boats in anchorages, ports, marinas and at functions around the Tasmanian coast. In the lead-up to most recent cruises, the number of provisionally accepted registrations has considerably exceeded this limit. However, participants with an initial queue number greater than 45 should not be disheartened. Boats drop out for all kinds of reasons. Historically, nobody who really wanted to come has ever been left behind.

The registration process is structured such that prospective participants are encouraged to register early, and be provisionally accepted on payment of the \$175 deposit. It is also structured to enable a boat to withdraw from the cruise without penalty until the 1st November 2020. After that, withdrawal becomes increasingly expensive as time passes. The full *Refund Policy* is available on the website.

This policy is also designed to encourage boats that decide not to join *Choices Flooring VDL-C 2021* to withdraw sooner rather than later, thus enabling those waiting in the queue to have certainty of acceptance as soon as possible so they can complete their preparations in good time.

Safety Requirements: Frequently Asked Questions:

Most of the pre-cruise requirements are recommendations designed to make the cruise as enjoyable and, most importantly, as safe as possible. These requirements have been guided by *Marine & Safety Tasmania (MaST) Regulations* and the *Australia Sailing 'Blue Book' Special Regulations (Part1)*.

Each participating vessel is required to sign a declaration that the specified safety and other requirements have been met, and to re-affirm this every time there is a crew-change during the cruise.

In general, the *Safety Requirements* are not negotiable, and exemptions to them are rarely entertained. Participation on the cruise depends on them being satisfied and remaining so throughout the cruise.

Conforming to the requirements is largely self-managed. The VDL-C Organizing Committee is not resourced to police the many and varied recommendations and requirements. **However, if a vessel is found not to conform during the cruise, they may be requested to leave the fleet.**

Below is discussion of some of these requirements, about which questions have been raised by prospective and actual cruise participants:

- **Radio Communication**

In times of emergency, it can be essential that broadcast communication between any boat and all other boats in the fleet be possible, no matter the location and distance between them. It is particularly important that communication remain possible at all times with the Radio Relay vessel and with Cruise Commodores' vessels (there are two of them, one for the fleet leaving from Hobart, and the other for the Geelong fleet).

The only feasible means for this 'party line' communication is for each boat to be equipped with a working SSB/HF radio.

To participate in *Choices Flooring VDL-C 2021*, every boat must demonstrate the effectiveness of their HF radio by talking with a designated station more than 100 nautical miles away on the cruise frequency of 4483 kHz with a strength and clarity of at least 2 (on a scale of 1 to 5), or preferably much better. This demonstration must occur no earlier than 1st October 2020 and no later than 8th February 2021, the day before the fleet is scheduled to leave Hobart. Details of how this can be achieved will be given in a subsequent Newsletter. A new requirement for this cruise is this demonstration must be conducted with the boat's AIS turned on.

HF radio installation and fault-finding is something of a 'black art' and participants are strongly advised to organize this demonstration as far in advance as is practicable. Expert technical advice becomes increasingly difficult to obtain in the summer holiday season.

Although obviously useful in its own right, please note a satellite phone is not an acceptable substitute for an effective HF radio.

There is a very effective ship-to-shore VHF marine radio network run by **Tas. Maritime Radio** (www.tasmaritime.com.au). This is a voluntary organisation largely supported by annual membership subscription, but with considerable government financial assistance with procurement of communications and other equipment. Coverage of the Tasmanian coast is almost complete, unfortunately with a few significant 'black spots'. Participants are encouraged to join; at an annual fee of \$35.00 it is money well spent.

- **Insurance Certificate of Currency**

Such a certificate should show the participating boat has current insurance for at least the duration of the cruise. The policy must include insurance against third party liability of at least \$20,000,000.

A copy of this certificate must be lodged with the RYCT by the 8th February 2021.

- **No Pets On Board**

Many of the anchorages are within the boundary of a national park where it is illegal to have animals of any kind on board, this includes birds, reptiles and anything else that breathes air. Parks and Wildlife rangers can inspect a vessel at any time when it is located in a national park, and impose fines or enforce expulsion from the park.

- **A Minimum of Two Experienced Crew On Board**

At no stage during passages made during *Choices Flooring VDL-C 2021* shall there be less than two experienced crew on board each participating vessel. The required experience is specified in the **Safety Requirements** (Section 3.2):

Within a crew, at least two adults shall:

- *have completed an overnight passage of at least 100M and be capable of helming and operating their vessel in all conditions (although not mandatory, an offshore skipper's certificate is prima facie evidence of this);*
- *be proficient in coastal navigation (although not mandatory, a certificate of proficiency in coastal navigation is prima facie evidence of this);*
- *be proficient in the use of both the vessel's VHF radio and HF radio (at least one crewmember shall have a Marine Radio Operator's Certificate of Proficiency or equivalent);*
- *be proficient in first aid; and,*
- *know where to locate and be able to use all safety equipment specified above in section 2.*

A significant part of this cruise will be in off-shore waters exposed to the full force of Southern Ocean westerlies, and in the often treacherous waters of Bass Strait. In recent years, weather forecasts have become more accurate but they are never 100% reliable. Please note the caveat that the Bureau of Meteorology attaches to all its marine forecasts:

Wind and wave forecasts are averages. Wind gusts can be 40 per cent stronger than the forecast, and stronger still in squalls and thunderstorms. Maximum waves can be twice the forecast height.

This can and does happen on the W and S coast of Tasmania and in Bass Strait. VDL-C participants must be prepared for, and have necessary experience on board, to deal with such an eventuality.

- **Bilge Pumps**

It has been said that the most effective bilge pump is a frightened person with a bucket. The second most effective (and safest) way is to have at least one efficient manual bilge pump available in all conditions. Practically, this means there must be one on deck. Electric pumps connected to a battery won't work if the battery is in an already flooded compartment.

Hence section 2.3 (Fixed Equipment) which states that:

A vessel shall have at least two bilge pumps, including one manual pump operable with all cockpit seats, hatches and companionways closed. Bilge pump handles shall be secured to prevent accidental loss.

- **Emergency Steering**

In section 2.4 (Fixed Equipment) this requirement reads:

For vessels not normally equipped with a sturdy tiller fitted directly to the rudder stock, an emergency tiller capable of being fitted quickly to the rudder stock shall be carried.

An electromechanical autopilot is not an acceptable alternative because it relies on an external source of power – hydraulic, electric, or a combination of both. It can fail due to loss of engine or electrical power, failure in the electronic components, hydraulic failure, or because mechanical linkage to the rudder stock or quadrant fails or otherwise becomes disconnected. Quadrants have been known to collapse or more commonly to detach from the rudder stock.

Many cruising vessels have an aft cabin layout that makes it difficult to fit an above-deck emergency tiller. Although not ideal, a tiller that can be operated from below deck is acceptable.

- **AIS**

Attention is drawn to a requirement, new for the 2021 cruise, that each boat must be equipped with (at least) a Class B Automatic Identification System transponder, and that it be switched on at all times when making a passage.

Cruise Documentation:

Much of the pre-cruise information is available online as PDFs on the *Choices Flooring VDL-C 2021* website (www.ryct.org.au/vdlc2021/). This includes:

- The **Notice of Cruise**, an **Expression of Interest** form, the **Cruise Plan, Route Map**, the **Refund Policy** and **Safety Requirements**;

- a **Provisional Entry List** of boats accepted for participation. Entries with a registration queue number greater than 45 form a waiting list of boats that can join the fleet if and when boats already accepted withdraw their entries;

- a PDF of each **Cruise Newsletter** will be sent to the contact email address given on the EOI form. They will also be available on the VDL-C 2021 website.

Two other documents will be issued with other pre-cruise material (including pre-ordered polo shirts, bow stickers, brag flags, etc.) at the pre-departure briefings in Hobart and Geelong.

- **Choices Flooring VDL-C Cruise Manual**

This is a compendium of information for the exclusive use of *Choices Flooring VDL-C 2021* participants. A first edition will be available by mid-December 2020 to enable boats joining the cruise from further afield to have access to information contained in it while *en route* to join the VDL-C fleet. Some, but by no means all, of the information contained in it will have already appeared in these Newsletters.

Between the first and final editions of the *Cruise Manual*, there will be minor updates, appropriately annotated as such; the aim is to ensure the final edition is as up-to-date as possible prior to the VDL-C fleet's departure from Hobart. There is a PORT INFORMATION section containing up-to-date information as to what can be found, and where, in each port along the way.

- **Tasmanian Anchorage Guide**

This popular cruising guide was originally developed for the VDL-C cruises and is now a 'must have' for visiting cruising boats. The latest printing of the 5th Edition (with minor updates and amendments) will be issued to all participants, the cost of which is included in the entry fee.

Transport, Fuel and Provisioning:

The following table is a summary only – more detailed and updated information will be given in the PORT INFORMATION section of the Choices Flooring VDL-C 2021 Cruise Manual.

	FOOD	FUEL	WATER	MEDICAL	ELECTRICAL	MECHANICAL	CHANDLERY	LAUNDRY	SHIP-WRIGHT	SLIP/T-LIFT
Hobart	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Triabunna	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		
George Town	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Beauty Point	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓		✓
Launceston	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Devonport	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Stanley	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓		
Strahan	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓		
Dover	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Cygnet	✓		✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
Kettering	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

Some facilities are also available at **Coles Bay** on the W side of Freycinet Peninsula. **St Helens** is a possibility but is not recommended - access is over a dangerous bar (with a sunken fishing boat on it) then via a channel full of shifting sandbanks. It should only be attempted in settled conditions, in daylight, and with local knowledge. **Wynyard** on the NW coast is also a possibility, although the entrance to the Inglis River is only negotiable at high tide and is not for the faint-hearted in easterly weather. **Stanley** is a tourist-oriented town with a supermarket but not much else. In **D'Entrecasteaux Channel**, there are various places other than **Dover** and **Cygnet** – particularly **Kettering**.

In **Hobart**, both petrol and diesel fuel at the RYCT fuel dock is available 24 hours/day, 7 days a week using a credit/debit card via an unattended machine - no cash sales.

Reliable dockside refuelling options along the way are quite scarce. **Triabunna** and **Strahan** have credit card-operated bowsers adjacent to a wharf. **Dover** has a similar facility with a long hose but access has to be arranged with an authorised operator of the bowser with payment in cash on the spot.

Port Dalrymple at the mouth of the Tamar River is the only location where formal arrangements will be made for refuelling the VDL-C fleet. More or less convenient outlets are available at the other re-provisioning centres mentioned above, but they involve use of jerry cans and vehicular transport.

Public land transport is possible to all the above towns, with more or less convenient bus services.

Hobart, **Launceston**, **Devonport** and **Wynyard** (Burnie) are the primary airports for interstate travel to Tasmania. There is no scheduled air service to **Strahan**, although there is an airport suitable for small planes. Public transport (a bus) to **Strahan** from **Burnie** takes 4 hours and most of the day from **Launceston**. There is no direct bus service from **Hobart** to **Strahan**.

There are no roads to the Port Davey area on the SW coast. Only one company flies small planes from **Hobart** into the airstrip at **Melaleuca** in the SW corner of **Bathurst Harbour**. It caters for the bushwalking fraternity, tourists wanting something different and crew changes for visiting boats. Although there are no formal timetables, in summer months there are numerous flights each day. How numerous depends on demand and the weather. Booking can be done online via the Par Avion website www.paravion.com.au or ©03 6248 5390.

Crew Change Possibilities:

With your own transport arrangements, it is possible to rendezvous at almost any of the coastal towns, including:

Port Arthur, Triabunna, Coles Bay, Bicheno and possibly St Helens (not recommended);

Beauty Point, Launceston, Devonport, Wynyard, Stanley;

Strahan, Melaleuca (by light plane), Cygnet, Dover, Kettering.

Except for **Melaleuca**, there are public bus services to all these places, but it can be more or less arduous and time-consuming to use them. For example, to get from **Hobart** to **Strahan** by bus takes two changes and a whole day or more. **Beauty Point** at the mouth of the Tamar and **Strahan** on the central west coast divide the cruise approximately into thirds in time, if not distance. These have been popular places to change crew.

Beauty Point is relatively close to **Launceston Airport** but **Strahan** is quite inaccessible by public transport. When the VDL-C fleet is in the Tamar River or **Macquarie Harbour** *ad hoc* car-sharing arrangements to and from **Hobart** usually emerge, often facilitated by cruise officials (with no promises or formal commitment).

Berthing Arrangements:

In Hobart, VDL-C participants who want a berth before or after the cruise, should negotiate necessary booking arrangements (including fees) with the RYCT Office ☎03 6223 4599, email: ryct@ryct.org.au. The first 3 months of any calendar year are among the busiest, with many visiting boats, so it would be wise to make berthing arrangements sooner rather than later.

The RYCT has an excellent slipway. Participants in *Choices Flooring VDL-C 2021* can avail themselves of this facility at RYCT members' rates. These are quite cheap by mainland metropolitan standards. Arrangements should be made well ahead with the RYCT bosuns ☎0419 885 420. Slipways in other places visited by the cruise are really only for emergencies. In Beauty Point and Devonport there are slips run by the Port Dalrymple YC and the Mersey YC respectively. The Tasmanian Port Authority (TasPorts) runs commercial slipways at Lady Barron (Flinders Island), Currie (King Is.) and Strahan.

The Tamar YC marina at Beauty Point is always very crowded, but the TYC bends over backwards to ensure the VDL-C fleet is accommodated. There is a modest per diem fee (\$20 in 2019) but bookings, including payment arrangements must be made in advance.

Because of a severe flood in 2016 and continuing high demand from club members, there are only very limited berthing facilities at the Mersey YC marina at East Devonport. Berthing is also limited at Wynyard and in the Stanley fishing harbour. Only the NE end of the town wharf at Strahan is available for public berthing alongside. Berths inside the fishing dock are all privately leased although it is sometimes possible to negotiate with leaseholders to moor alongside another boat. Care must be taken not to interfere with the local fishing fleet or tour vessels.

Onshore Events and Happenings:

In the somewhat vain hope of keeping a VDL-C fleet together, various onshore events are scheduled in the *Cruise Plan* (available on the VDL-C 2021 website). When, and indeed if, they happen in the time and at the place specified is very much weather dependent. For *Choices Flooring VDL-C 2021*, an added constraint may well be social distancing and other legally enforceable COVID-19 requirements extant in February and March 2021.

Ad hoc beach barbecues are *de rigeur* on the cruise. A VDL-C cruise travels with a set of portable gas-fired barbecues distributed among 'volunteer' boats. In previous cruises, more formal functions have been staged in Beauty Point and in Strahan. The form these may take this time has not yet been confirmed.

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