

**tidetech**



# 2026 Tidetech VDL-C Newsletter 2

**Welcome to the second  
Van Diemen's Land  
Circumnavigation Newsletter.  
Inside you'll find all sorts of  
useful information to help  
you prepare for your  
adventure, a story from a  
previous event, and tips to  
help keep you safe.**

THE ROYAL  
YACHT CLUB  
OF TASMANIA





## A Word From Our Sponsor

Tidetech has come on board as our naming-rights sponsor once again, and we're delighted that they have.

In case you're wondering who Tidetech is and what they do, here's a brief rundown supplied by their Managing Director Penny Haire. Penny is a past VDL-C participant and enthusiast. She writes:

"Tidetech information is obtained from data you can trust. Our scientists produce high resolution tidal models and select the best performing meteorological and oceanographic third party datasets from official and academic sources, in order to provide the most accurate data available for the marine industry in general, including the cruising and racing yachting fraternity."

### Why Tidetech?

"There are plenty of services that provide weather data, but Tidetech is different. It provides high quality tidal current data, unavailable elsewhere. 2026 VDL-C Cruise participants will be able to view the currents, waves, weather, sea temperature and more in Tidemap, a web viewer being specially built for VDL-C 2026."

Sincere thanks to Penny Haire and the team at Tidetech for supporting the 2026 VDL-C.

Tidetech is based in Hobart, and we encourage participants to explore what they have to offer.

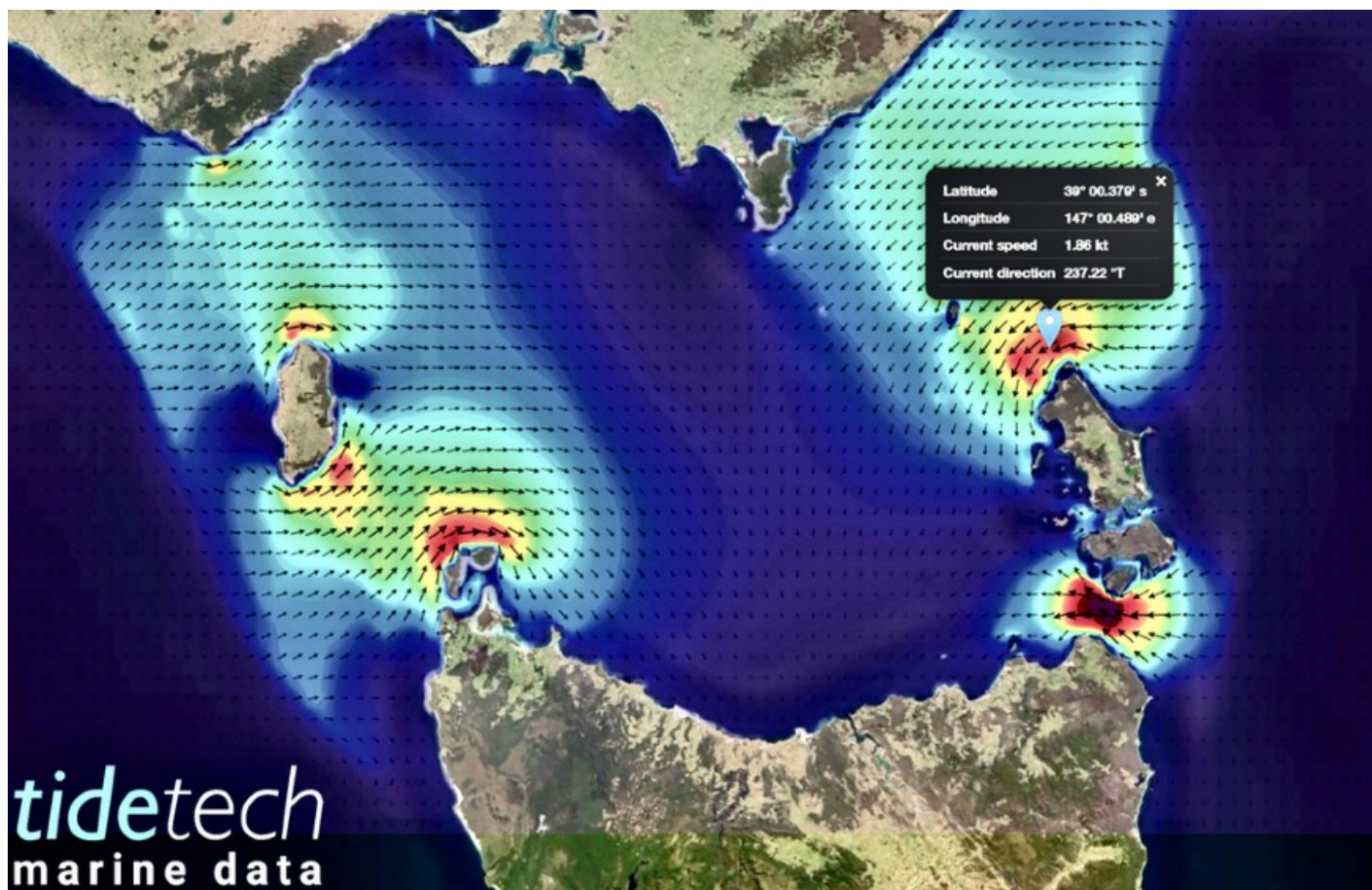
By doing so you'll be supporting the people who support us.

Go to <https://www.tidetech.org/> for more information.

### Made for Sailors

"At Tidetech, our roots are in sailing and we are passionate participants and fans of the sport. We know from experience that obtaining accurate weather data is only part of the story when it comes to your navigational strategy in making a passage or competing in a race. Currents matter too – they are often overlooked, but can make a huge difference to the time it takes to get there.

Tidetech is the leading supplier of oceanographic data to the elite yacht racing community, supplying competitors in the America's Cup, Volvo Ocean Race, Olympic Games, Sydney-Hobart, Hamilton Island Race Week, as well as the Fastnet and Newport-Bermuda races. That it can be integrated with leading tactical and navigation software has ensured widespread use amongst pro and amateur sailors worldwide.



Above: Tidal Flows in Bass Strait during a flood tide.





## VHF Radios

One of the mandatory requirements on the 2026 VDL-C is a DSC capable VHF transceiver that can broadcast at 25 watts.

This needs to be a proper base station unit. Your handheld VHF is great for shore parties or chatting to nearby vessels, but it won't cut it for grown-up communications if you need Tas Maritime Radio or the Radio Relay Vessel to hear you. Especially if you're in trouble.

Check that yours is working properly **well before** you depart so you've got time to rectify any issues. You'll find not having a reliable VHF, at best, inconvenient and, at worst, dangerous.

Issues that have caused grief in the past include:

- corroded or otherwise faulty antenna connections,
- faulty antennas,
- faulty microphones – it might have gotten wet or been otherwise mistreated. They really don't like being dropped or banged on anything hard.



### Time to get a new one?

- corrosion where the microphone connects with the main unit,
- an incompatible microphone. Just because the one you borrowed from a mate plugs into your main unit doesn't mean it's compatible. Its impedance rating could be different.

Finally, make sure your VHF is set to use 'International' frequencies. In your radio's settings this can be denoted as 'I' or 'INT' or sometimes 'AUS'.



Above: Some of the 2024 fleet anchored in Port Davey.





## Anchoring & Tackle

Anchoring is a knotty subject about which enough has been written to fill a library. See picture (right) for a literal interpretation of 'knotty.'

For some reason, opinions regarding technique and tackle are held passionately and differ wildly. It has been said that one way to get a fight going in the yacht club bar is to question someone's anchoring methods!

Something no one disputes is that Tasmanian anchorages are subject to sudden, swift and sometimes violent changes in the weather. Not for nothing is the region known as 'The Roaring Forties!'

**VDL-C participants should have at least two substantial and reliable anchors. The size specified for the type and weight of your boat by the builder is probably the hook you'd use for lunch on a moderate day and should be regarded as the bare minimum. Anchor warp should be all chain and at least 50 metres long.**

If you've not done a lot of anchoring before (and if you've spent your sailing time racing around the sticks, you may not have) read up on it and practice, so that your processes are second nature. Study anchorage guides from your armchair, and understand why the guide's author has made the recommendations they've made. How wind strength and direction, swell, roll and what's on the bottom should affect your decision where to drop the pick.



Something else very few old salts would dispute, especially those sailing short-handed, is the importance of keeping things simple. If it's simple, you're less likely to get it wrong, get hurt or break stuff when the shit hits the fan.

If 50 knots is howling through the anchorage, you don't want to be galumphing around a pitching foredeck with second anchors and weights if you can avoid it. It's much better to have the right anchor rigged in the first place, and enough chain so you can let more out.

**Below: Safely anchored on a beautiful evening, and ashore for a twilight barbecue.**





## Anchoring & Tackle Continued



**Above: A storm blows through Wineglass Bay during the 2014 VDL-C. Patternmaker comfortably withstands the elements and lies snugly at anchor.**

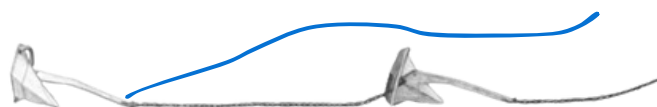
Speaking of the right anchor, it might be time to start using that crusty old CQR-style pick as a garden ornament. If there's any play in the hinge between shank and fluke, the pointy bit will have a much harder time catching and hanging on to the seabed. This is why modern anchors have the fluke and the shank as a single unit.

Anchor technology has well and truly moved on since the first CQR was born. The "Coastal Quick Release" anchor was invented in the early 1930s by a keen yachting (Sir Geoffrey Ingram Taylor) and became very popular with the British Admiralty during WW2. 60,000 were built to stop seaplanes, boats and even bridges from floating away.



Good gear and the skills to use it will get you through most anchoring crises. But note our use of the word 'most.' You should also have a reliable system for reinforcing the holding power of your usual anchor. A 'Plan B' as it were.

There are many potential Plan Bs, but one is to attach your second anchor with two to three metres of chain to the head of your first anchor. Then attach a line loosely from a shackle on the shank of the leading anchor (the extra one you just attached) to the chain just above the first anchor, so it's possible to retrieve the extra anchor when the first anchor arrives at the bow roller.



Expert opinion has it that this arrangement has greater holding power than the oft-discussed method of sliding the weight down the chain but, at this point dear reader, we are definitely at risk of starting a yacht club brawl.

The best advice we can give you is to thoroughly practice your chosen heavy-weather anchoring system so you know it works – and how to make it work – before you have to deploy it under battle conditions!

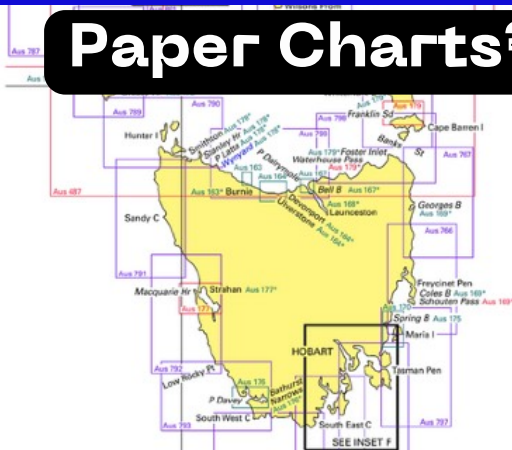


*"We are all apprentices in a craft where no one ever becomes a master."  
Ernest Hemingway*





## Paper Charts?



We all use electronic devices for navigation these days, and why not? They're accurate and, if the base map is up to date, piloting through tricky places is much easier and safer.

Issues that arose on the 2024 VDL-C with electronic navigation systems were rare, although one vessel lost all data as they were approaching Hell's Gate. It turned out to be an aerial fault, and the vessel managed the difficult entrance courtesy of the Navionics app on their iPhone. Fortunately the conditions were very calm!

There are all sorts of reasons electronic equipment can fail. Dodgy wiring, corrosion and flat batteries, are just some of them. Another is water. THE VDL-C traverses seas known for feisty weather. Your plotter might be waterproof, but what about your wiring? Your house batteries and electrical system?

You certainly need a fully waterproof hand held GPS plotter, ideally one that runs on normal alkaline batteries that you can changeover in a flash, as opposed to a rechargeable unit that you can't recharge instantly. Or at all if your electrics have died.

We also recommend that you carry paper charts. Paper doesn't need power, and will dry out a lot easier than electronics. You'll also need a stock of 2B pencils, a sharpener, an eraser, dividers and a parallel ruler, Breton Plotter or equivalent.

A list of charts available for the entire Australian region can be found here:

<http://www.hydro.gov.au/webapps/jsp/charts/chartlist.jsp>

Below are charts useful for Bass Strait and the Tasmanian Coast. An asterisk next to the chart number indicates a new edition has recently been published.

### 'Big-picture' charts for a perspective on the whole cruise are:

- 4644 (2010-09-24) Southern Ocean - Cape Otway to Cape Howe including Tasmania (Sadly, out of print)
- 487\* (2024-07-19) Bass Strait Edition 3

### The following AUS charts are important:

- 167\* (2024-08-16) Port Dalrymple incl. Bell Bay (Edition 3)
- 171 (2021-07-23) Hobart to Norfolk Bay (Edition 2)
- 173 (2021-07-23) D'Entrecasteaux Channel (Edition 2)
- 176 (2008-03-14) Port Davey, inc. Bathurst Harbour, Bathurst Narrows & Entrance to Bathurst Channel (Ed 2)
- 177 (2021-06-11) Approaches to Macquarie Harbour (Ed 2)
- 766 (2007-04-27) Mistaken Cape to Wardlaws Point
- 767 (2022-05-13) Wardlaws Point to Eddystone Point (Ed 2)
- 790\* (2024-08-02) Stokes Point to Rocky Cape (Edition 2)
- 791 (2004-11-12) West Point to Granville Harbour
- 792 (2008-07-18) Trial Harbour to Low Rocky Point
- 793 (2008-07-18) Low Rocky Point to South West Cape
- 794 (2008-08-01) South West Cape to South East Cape
- 796 (2008-08-29) Tasman Head to Cape Frederick Henry
- 798\* (2024-07-19) Eddystone Point to Stony Head (Ed 5)
- 799 (1996-06-14) Stony Head to Rocky Cape (Out Of Print)

### Additional charts for the Geelong fleet:

- 143 (2021-05-28) Port Phillip includes Patterson River, Blairgowrie, Mornington, Queenscliff, Sorrento (Edition 7)
- 144 (2014-06-20) The Rip (Edition 2)

### The following charts are recommended:

- 164 (2023-07-07) Approaches to Devonport inc. Ulverstone & Port of Devonport (Edition 4)
- 168 (2002-10-04) River Tamar: Long Reach to Launceston (Out Of Print)
- 179\* (2024-07-19) Plans in Tasmania (Sheet 1) inc. Franklin Sound, & Approaches to Grassy Harbour. (Edition 4)
- 795 (2008-08-29) South Cape to Storm Bay
- 797 (2008-06-06) Tasman Island to Mistaken Cape
- 800\* (2024-07-19) Furneaux Group (Edition 5)

### Additional recommended charts for the Geelong fleet:

- 789 (2003-05-16) King Island (Out Of Print)
- 802 (2020-08-21) Cape Liptrap to Kent Group. (Ed 2)



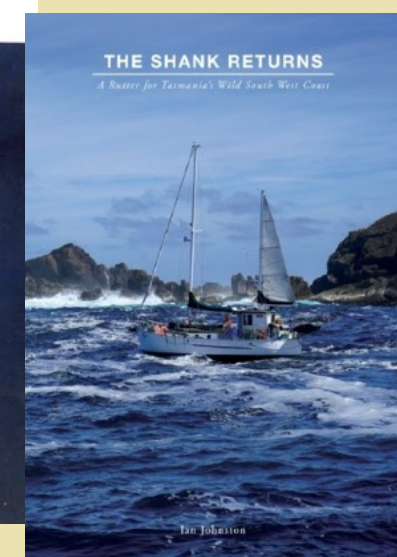
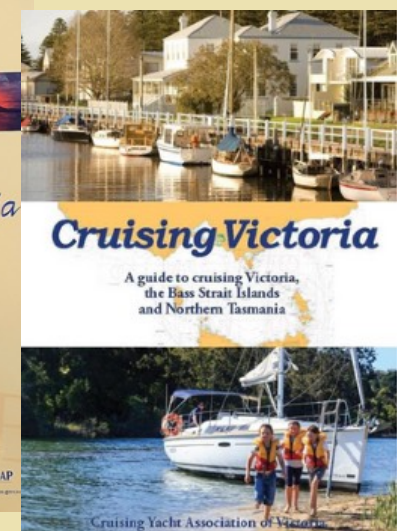
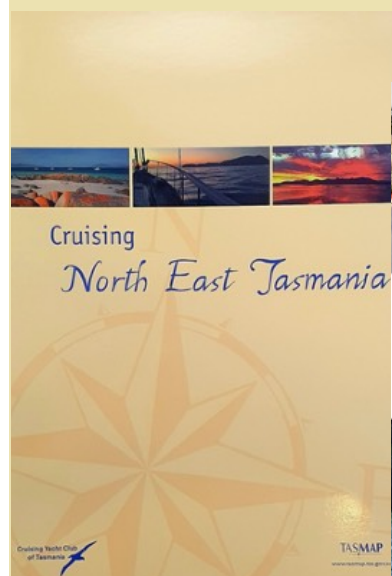
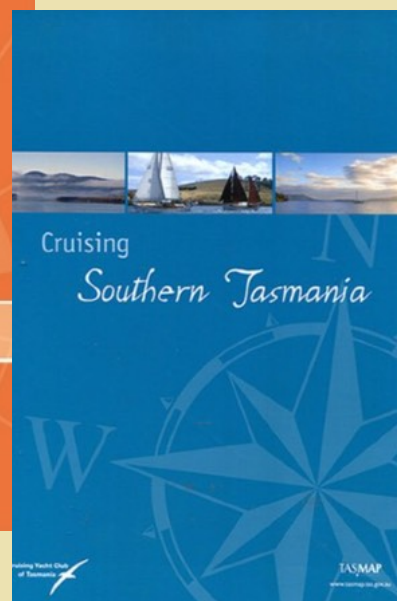
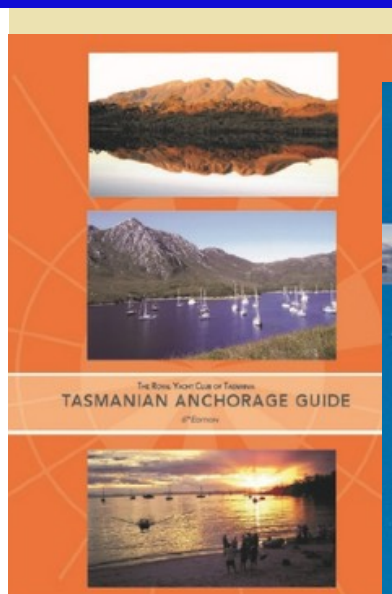


## Cruising Guides

Here is a list of Cruising and Anchoring Guides you'll find either helpful, or entertaining, or both! Please note that the books on this list are by no means everything available, but the ones we've used and can recommend from experience.

- **The Tasmanian Anchorage Guide** by Jeremy Firth. The latest version will be available for free to VDL-C participants at the beginning of the cruise. It was originally developed and updated by a serial VDL-C participant and is now widely recognised as being the definitive anchoring guide for yachties exploring Tasmania.
- **Cruising Southern Tasmania**, 5th Edition (February 2020) – from Wineglass Bay to Port Davey. Published by TASMAR in conjunction with the Cruising YC of Tasmania.
- **Cruising North East Tasmania**, a guide to anchorages and waterways from Wineglass Bay to Port Dalrymple, including the Furneaux, Kent, and Hogan Groups. Published by the Cruising YC of Tasmania (2017).
- **Cruising Victoria**, a guide to Victoria, the Bass Strait Islands and Northern Tasmania. Published by the Cruising Yacht Association of Victoria. Latest edition is 2014, but is currently being updated. Excellent and well researched.
- **MAST Boating Guides (Currently out of print):**  
South East Boating Guide.  
East Coast Boating Guide.  
Tamar River Guide.
- **Cruising Tasmania 2nd Edition** by John Brettingham-Moore. This guide has been around for many years but as at February 2025 is still available. It is still a very useful adjunct to more modern publications.
- **The Shank Returns: A Rutter\* for Tasmania's South West Coast** by Ian Johnston. This is the 3rd version of this magnificent pictorial commentary on the south and south-west coasts of Tasmania. Many of the interesting and beautiful nooks and crannies described and photographed by the author are anchorages in the most general sense of that word that can be visited only in the very best of weather and sea conditions.

\*A 'rutter', in case you were wondering, is a pilot book or seaman's guide carried by navigators in the middle ages, a precursor to the modern navigation chart.



## Fender Boards

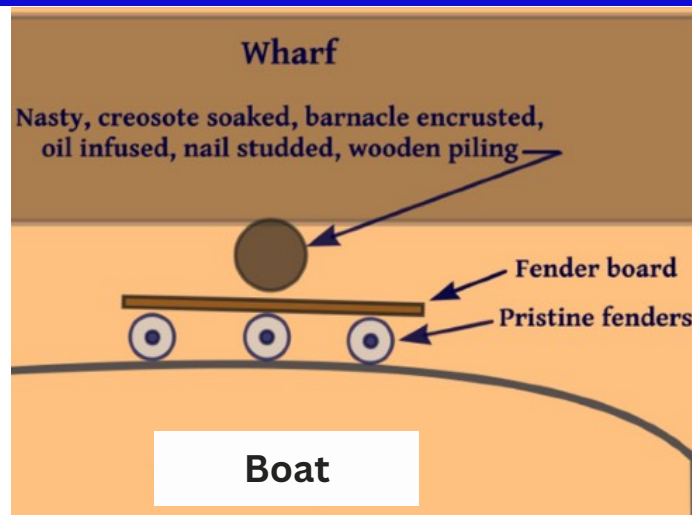
You won't need one very often, but when you do need one, you'll really need one.

In some ports, you may be moored to rough old piles or jetties where there can be some surge. For these occasions it is essential that each boat has an adequate fender board. This board is placed between your fenders and the jetty pile, and protects your hull in the event of surge or running tide.

When mooring, you should make sure that your fenders are hanging close together to avoid the risk of even the strongest fender board breaking in a surge.

The bigger and heavier the boat, the more substantial the fender board needs to be. A minimum recommended size for fender boards is 120mm x 40mm and two metres long. It'll need a hole at each end (and possibly in the middle) for lines to hang it from the rail. Oregon pine or seasoned eucalyptus are good woods to use.

It is far better to have a fender board as a part of the ship's inventory before embarking on the cruise. It's not always easy to find one at short notice!



**Above: Everyone does it differently, but we always carry lots of fenders, and put as many as we can between the boat and the fender board so that when the boat moves – as inevitably it will – it remains protected.**

**Below: How not to do it. Not enough fenders, and in the wrong place. One decent surge and that fender board could snap.**



## Pyrotechnic Requirements

From July 2023, Marine And Safety Tasmania (affectionately known as MAST) requires only the two parachute rocket flares, provided that the others have been replaced with an Electronic Visual Distress Signal (affectionately known as EVDS) device.

We draw your attention to the Safety Requirements for the 2026 VDL-C, available on the website. Section 6.17 reads as follows:

*"The following flares approved to AS2092 and within their expiry date and stored in a waterproof container shall be carried. As a minimum, flares carried shall be:*

- 2 x parachute rocket flares
- 2 x red hand flares
- 2 x orange smoke flares

*Note 1: the red hand and orange smoke flares can be replaced by an approved Electronic Visual Distress Signal (EVDS) device.*

Note 2: The above is the requirement of MAST. Australian Sailing requires 6 parachute flares, 4 red handheld flares, 2 white flares and 4 orange smoke flares for vessels racing in Categories 1 and this number and type are recommended for all vessels.

The full VDL-C Safety Requirements can be found here:

<https://ryct.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Safety-Requirements.pdf>





## National Parks Passes

Believe it or not, over a third of Tasmania's land mass and some of its waterways are designated National Parks. To enter any of them you need a permit.

These can be obtained at any Service Tasmania shop-front. Full details are available on the Parks Tasmania website:

<https://parks.tas.gov.au/explore-our-parks/know-before-you-go/park-passes-and-entry-fees>



## Sewage Discharge

We know it's tacky, but much of the VDL-C takes place in environmentally precious and sensitive places. Port Davey is a World Heritage Area, and about as special as it gets.

There's been an update in the rules that govern where (and, indeed what) we can pump out of our vessels and we would ask all participants to be aware of them and observe them.

This only applies to toilets with holding tanks that pump out. The rules for composting heads such as the "Air Head" (See picture, right) are different. Also remember that pump-out facilities are very few and far between in Tassie generally, and basically non-existent where we're going.

Firstly, you can dispose of urine anywhere from a boat of any size provided there's no faecal matter in it. Just be thoughtful of your fellow cruisers and remember what side of the mothership the dinghy's tied up to when you're at anchor.

The EPA stipulates boats with less than sixteen people on board can discharge untreated sewage in most waterways (read on for exceptions) provided that the discharge does not contain "visible floating solids" and that it does not cause "prolonged discolouration of the receiving waters." Sadly, they don't explain how one is to meet that last requirement without first discharging. A macerator might be a good start.

So, in summary, wee is ok anywhere, but floaters aren't and you can't make the water a yucky colour.

In some areas, you can't discharge anything untreated at all. These are:

- any inland waters,
- any marinas, designated mooring areas or canals,
- any marine resources protected areas established under the Living Marine Resources Act 1995,
- Any waters less than 5 metres deep,
- within 500 metres of any shellfish farm,
- the Tamar Estuary upstream of the Batman Bridge,
- the Derwent Estuary upstream of the Bowen Bridge,
- Payne Bay north of a line between Curtis Point and Woody Point,
- James Kelly Basin, south and west of a line between Garden Point and Larsen's Rocks,
- Bathurst Harbour and all bays and inlets within it, east of a line between Hammond Point and Forrester Point,
- Macquarie Harbour east of a line between Coal Head and Steadman Point,
- any other waters less than 1 nautical mile of any land including islands and
- within 120 metres of any person in the water.



For more information, including maps etc, visit <https://epa.tas.gov.au/environment/water/boat-sewage-management>





# Fishing In Tasmanian Waters

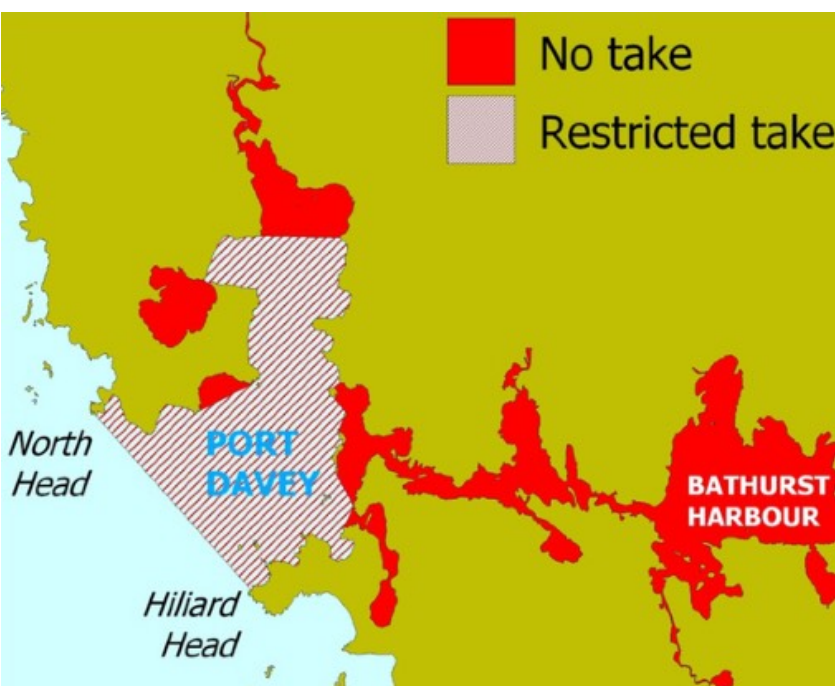
People do the VDL-C for different reasons. For some it's the fishing. For others, just being amongst the pristine environment found in the many coastal anchorages is enough. For many, it's the camaraderie and, perhaps, the opportunity to gain real life sailing skills in challenging conditions with fully experienced mariners nearby to help. For many, it's all of the above.

We've heard it a thousand times before, but the environment that plays such a huge part in our enjoyment of the VDL-C is very fragile. We will be anchoring in places set aside to enable wild fish stocks to replenish, or where invertebrates vital to the eco-system, that grow nowhere else in the world, thrive.

In a nutshell, there are plenty of places on the Tassie coast where you can fish, so please don't fish where it's not allowed. To get a copy of the 2024-2025 Recreational Sea Fishing Guide please go to this link:

<https://fishing.tas.gov.au/recreational-fishing/fishing-guides/recreational-sea-fishing-guide>

For those who are champing at the bit to wet a line in Port Davey, the no-take zones are clearly labelled in the map, shown below. This is taken from the 2024-2025 Recreational Sea Fishing Guide, which includes details on what "Restricted take" means.



Recreational Sea Fishing

GUIDE • 2024-25

1 November 2024 - 31 October 2025

Wild Fisheries Management Branch  
Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania

Tasmanian Government





## Diary Excerpt Of A Previous Circumnavigation

"It's now about 10.30pm, Friday 8th march 2013. We passed through Hell's Gate nearly three hours ago, and are now heading south east. We are about six miles out to sea.

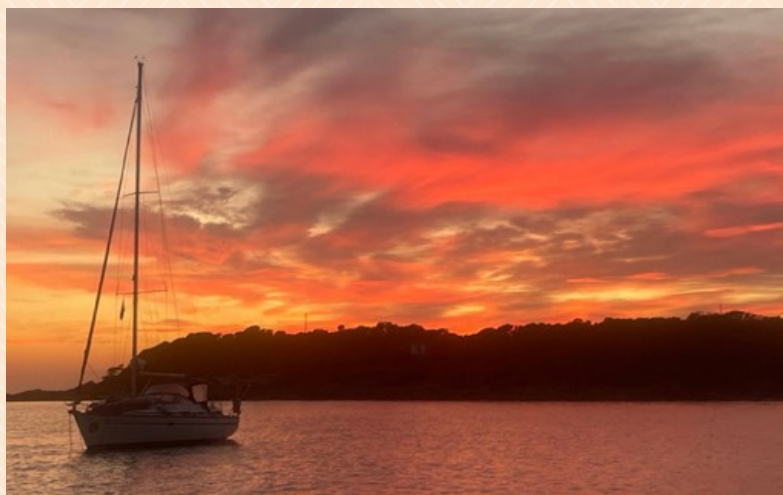
The amazing weather we've been having has been a blessing, but one slightly bad side to it is that calm conditions attract cray fishermen, who lay cray pots in lines, connected by rope. Sometimes the lines can be thirty metres long. These are only visible by small white buoys, which means they're not very visible during daylight, and are quite invisible at night.

Pipe Dream's propellor is reasonably well protected from marauding lines, but we're taking no chances. This is why we are so far out to sea.

It is virtually windless and still. We hoist a mainsail, not because we expect any lift from it, but because it stops the boat flopping about too much in the swell. The water here comes all the way from South America. In fact, if you were to head west from Hell's Gate and stay on the same longitude, you'd wash up on a town called Punta Del Garda.

Lee is fast asleep in the saloon berth. The engine ticks over at about 1300 revs. It is loud, but it tends to mask all the other noises yachts make – all the deck clunks and thumps that can be startling – so you sleep better with it running.

There are a few boats around us which gives everyone a little security. Spirit of Freya is behind us and to starboard, her lights reflecting off the calm Southern Ocean swell. Ahead of us are Matsuyker, Bundaberg and Fordplay. Their stern lights are just visible on the horizon, blinking like the night sky stars just above.



It's black dark. The highway on which we slowly travel rolls carelessly but invisibly. Beneath, the phosphorescent sparkles from endless schools of cuttlefish light up the water, and make our wake visible for hundreds of metres.

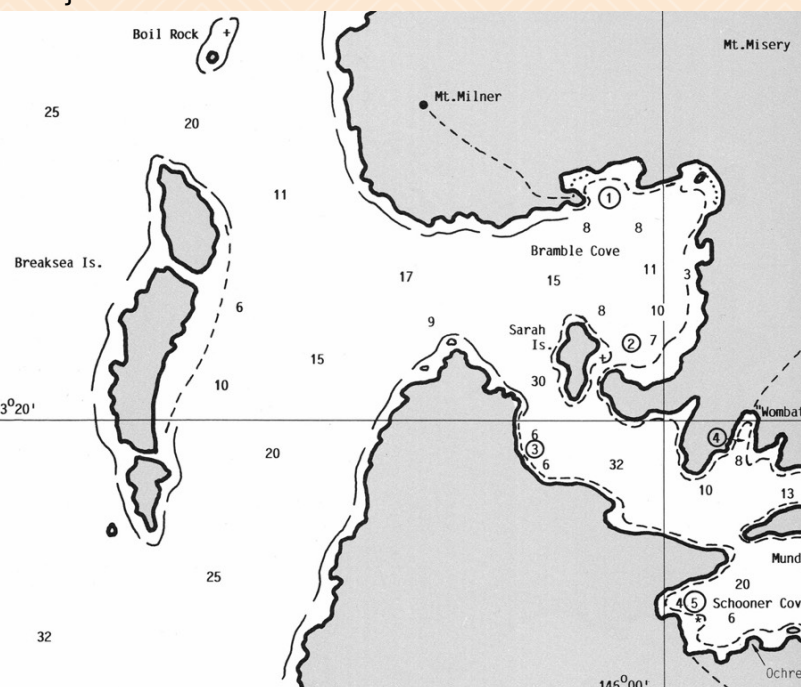
Because there is no moon, our only light comes from the stars and these strange creatures. And, of course, our fellow companions in their boats on the amazing Southern Ocean, heading south east on a bearing of 160 degrees magnetic, moving at about six knots bound for the wilderness wonderland of Port Davey.

It's Saturday 9th March and has been for only four hours. The stars are blanketed by thick cloud. Then the rain comes down, not in slashing sheets, but in a steady drenching. The breeze is still on the nose, but we're getting a little lift from the sail. Apart from the rain life is pretty comfortable. Lee sleeps between 9.30pm and 1.30am, after which I go down for three or so hours. Then Lee has another sleep, then me.

Eventually we're both in the cockpit. It's dawn. Not an especially inspiring one, not one that would use the full palette of Derwent pencils – only a few greys and a dirty pink – but dawn nonetheless. Even a drab dawn like this brings with it enlightenment, a sudden understanding of our immediate surroundings, the full explanation of the boat's movement during the night. It's like being let in on a secret that explains everything. Oh...that's what's been going on. I get it now.

Entering Port Davey by sea is relatively easy. At the very head are a couple of massive long, skinny rocks that shelter Bathurst Channel from the South American seas and prevailing westerlies. These are called appropriately, if somewhat unimaginatively, Breaksea Islands.

Left: map courtesy "Maritime Tasmania" by John Brettingham-Moore. See Page 7 for information about this most useful book.)





**Diary Excerpt Of A Previous Circumnavigation Continued**

The trick to opening the Pandora's Box that is Port Davey, is to understand that the Breaksea Islands blend into the rest of the terrain until the last minute. Until then, you feel as though you are sailing straight into a cliff. Only when you're a mile or so away do the Breakseas reveal themselves as islands that sit well forward of the forbidding Mt Milner and Turnbull Head on the mainland. At this point it becomes quite obvious by the naked eye where you have to go.

This is our fourth time here. Once was only overnight (2003 VDL-C), but we followed this disappointment up by spending nearly three weeks here in 2004. We visited again during VDL-C 2007 for a week, and will be here this time for a week. Still, the majesty of the place brings tears of wonder to my eyes. There truly is nowhere quite like it.

Port Davey was declared a marine reserve in 2005, and is a part of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage area. The only way you can get to it is by small boat, light aeroplane or on foot. Long may it stay that way.

It's 1.00pm. We motor up to Schooner Cove only a short way up Bathurst Channel and, after dropping sails, anchor. We bask in the cold silence and the grey green mountains that surround us. We feel both very small and very embraced.

Reality returns courtesy of an even colder easterly wind. Welcome to Southwest Tassie, with its alpine climate and its pretensions to unpredictability. Only a day ago we'd been roasting in Strahan, a rare achievement indeed.

Schooner Cove is a lovely place, but there are more interesting anchorages in which to spend our first night (and better places to be in a stiff easterly) so we raise the pick and head off further down the channel deep into Davey. About forty five minutes of gentle motoring, past bay after bay and mountain after mountain, feeling like a small insect exploring a pair of giant, gentle hands, we anchor up inside Clyde Cove. Soon Smart Choice anchors ahead of us. Then our mates, Jo and Graeme, on Spirit Of Freya park behind us. Finally, Genevieve arrives and anchors.

We eat, we have a drink, we bellow happy profanities across the water. And then, at about 8.00pm, we retire and sleep the sleep of the dead for twelve solid hours.'

**Stephen & Lee Renfree, 2013 VDL-C**







## 2026 Tidetech Van Diemen's Land Circumnavigation

### Committee:

Chairman - David Bowker

John Hall

Peter Lewis

Rob Greenwell

Bill Newman

Lee Renfree

Richard Scarr

Stephen Renfree

Fiona Tremaine



### Reference Group:

Jeremy Firth

Tony Cowley

David Meldrum

Grant Ford

David Weir

Michael Denney



Thanks to the office and marina staff at Royal Yacht Club Of Tasmania.

Thanks also to all participants of past VDL-C events whose photos appear in this newsletter.

