

Stuart Allan's Cruise across the Pacific May-June 2013

Stuart undertook an amazing sailing experience in May-Jun 2013 sailing with 3 others from Papeete, Tahiti to Fiji over a distance of about 2,000 nautical miles.

They went from east to west tracking the prevailing tradewinds and typically doing 6.5-7 knots. They island hopped and their longest period without land was 5 days and 4 nights

They had modern electronics and navigation.

They used to wash themselves down the back of the boat with salt water and some kitchen detergent. They rinse themselves off with some fresh water.

Stuart now has his full sea legs and no longer gets sea sick.

May 2013 - Stuart Allan - I join the good ship Jac, her skipper Martin Linsley from Canberra, and Bill Cullen (from USA) in Papeete on 10 May to start our cruise across the Pacific. I will be with the guys for about a month, which gets us roughly to Fiji on current planning. Jac is a 42' Beneteau centre cockpit sail boat registered in Sydney. Martin purchased her in east coast USA. After cruising that coast he sailed thru the Caribbean, the Panama Canal, stopped over in the Galapagos Islands, and sailed her to her current location in Papeete, Tahiti. Quite an adventure! I'm sure this abbreviated description does not do Jac or Martin justice. Sailboats are subject to the vagaries of weather, wind, tides, sea state, etc, etc. so the sail plan can only be indicative.

Jac carries an AIS (Automatic Identification System) transponder which enables her location to be tracked on the web when within range of a shore station. However other vessels in Jac's vicinity should be able to 'see' Jac on their electronic charts. The system was originally designed to reduce the risk of collision at sea. For more info about AIS see <http://www.marinetraffic.com/ais/faq.aspx>. To track Jac via the web see <http://www.marinetraffic.com/ais/shipdetails.aspx?MMSI=503588500> then go to the relevant chart.

Dear all

As I write this we are about 30nm from Aitutaki in the Cook Islands after a 3 day/night passage. The south east tradewinds have given us another fast passage. We had the company of a German owned catamaran on the passage. On the way we stopped overnight at a beautiful atoll, Maupihaa.

Only seven people live there in idyllic isolation. They appear to survive on the copra trade and fishing. They were amazingly hospitable including inviting us to dine with them on a meal of land crabs; huge crabs of a bit less than a half a metre across . After the Cooks we are headed for Nuie via Beveridge Reef. That will be over 500nm so will be out of contact again for 3 to 5 days.

I'll try to send this when we get to Aitutaki.

Miss you all.
Stuart

Dear All,

This has been our longest leg of the trip so far...about 450nm from Aitutaki to Nuie. The sailing has been excellent, with generally SE to ESE winds from 15 to 25 kts day and night. Seas have been moderate with the occasional bumpy patch. Water temp has been around 32c for the whole trip so far and air temp not much different. We have been making between 5 and 6.5kts over the ground which is not bad for a 13m yacht.

The watch system of 3 hours on and 6 hours off works pretty well. A good breeze, a moonlit sea, and bright stars, the phosphorescence, the usual creaks and groans of the yacht passing through the sea makes my midnight to 3am watch a very pleasant if solitary experience.

Interestingly we have seen very few dolphins or other sea life. Maybe the 5000m ocean depth in these parts doesn't help. On the other hand Bill Cullen one of my two shipmates, caught a very nice Mahia Mahia on a lure (I think we call them Dolphin fish or Dorado) which gave us meals for three days. Bill is a very experienced racing and cruising yachtsman from Tampa, Florida and a great cook and good company. He makes my efforts look very amateurish.

A highlight of this leg was a stopover for a few hours at a very isolated Beveridge Reef, 450nm from Aitutaki and 140nm from Nuie. It is a horseshoe shaped reef with a white sandy lagoon. We anchored in the lagoon with about 6m under our keel and took the dinghy to the fringing reef for some snorkelling. The coral and fish life was prolific and nature's dazzling pallet continues to amaze. We speculated that the immense depth of the surrounding ocean makes the reef of the few places in the area where sea life can flourish. A man made contrast to the natural world was the wreck of a 12 to 13 m. steel fishing boat which had been driven onto the reef. We snorkelled around it. It wasn't as covered in as much growth as we might have expected so may be fairly recent, perhaps it has only been there a few years. We will try to find more on Google later. As Martin my skipper and owner of our yacht 'Jac' is inclined to say 'live life!'

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Hi all

So far we have seen Tahiti, Papetee, Moorea, and now Huinhine Each of them is part of the Society Island chain within French Polynesia. All have beautiful scenery, with mountains and vegetation extending into the clouds. I'm sure you will have seen the photos the travel people put in their brochures. Weather has been warm and sunny with gentle SE breezes

We have done one overnight passage so far, from Cooks Bay to Fare on Huinhine. I had a 3 hour watch from 9pm to midnight. The night sky at sea is just beautiful.

Tomorrow (Tues local time) we leave here for Bora Bora, about 80 NM away.

We have now arrived at the fabled island of Bora Bora after a fast daytime passage courtesy of the SE trades. Temperature around 27 to 30 C. Today we are going to explore the lagoon which surrounds the island. The lagoon is said to be one of the most beautiful in the world. It shades from turquoise to deep blue.

We commence our passage to the Cook Islands late this afternoon. That will take us about 4 to 5 days

Hope everyone well at your place.
Stuart

We are getting set to leave Neiafu, Vavau in Tonga today. We'll move to an overnight anchorage closer to our planned route down south along the Tongan island chain, We'll probably take 2 to 3 days to reach Nuku'lofa the Tongan capital which is located on the southern end of the chain. From there we set our course for Suva, Fiji which about a 405nm trip.

Yesterday we joined the Oyster Rally group on a bus trip to the only botanical gardens in Tonga. A garden which has been the life work/hobby of our guide, a retired Director of Agriculture in the Tongan Government. He is a very well educated native Tongan and widely travelled. He owns the garden and is extremely well informed about tropical plants. The tour of the gardens was followed by a dinner of suckling pig with all the trimmings and a performance of traditional dancing by high school kids. It became very evident how important tourism is this part of the world when the wife of the owner gave a speech from the heart which described how the proceeds of the day would benefit the local community.

Weather here has been pretty windy and raining but pleasantly warm. Water temperature seems stuck at about 32C as it has been all the way across the Pacific. The worst of the weather seems to have passed and conditions have moderated considerably.
Subject to email/wifi availability I'll try to update you from Nuku'alofa.

From this sailing life...

Stuart (2 June 2013)

Hi again

We are now at Pangai in the Ha'aipa Island group of Tonga. We had a very quiet 65nm passage here last night from Vavau under a beautiful canopy of stars and over a sea of sparkling phospherence. The snorkelling over coral reefs in Vavau was outstanding.

We leave from here for Fiji tonight. A bit of a change of plans. We had intended to go to Nuku'lofa, But to sort of keep to a timetable which includes me catching a flight from Fiji on 10 June we decided to leave from Tonga a bit earlier. But as you know sailboat progress and airline timetables don't always align. So we shall see!

Pangai is a very small settlement in a beautiful setting, a minimalist harbour and a few stores and government offices, including immigration and customs. But as usual we are constantly surprised by the people from all over the world we continue to meet in the Pacific. We were tying up the dinghy at the town dock when we met the owner of the local diving school...an Irish girl! We didn't hear her story but like all the others I'm sure it would be an interesting one. Weather here is now fine, clear and sunny.

Cheers, Stuart (4 June 2013)

Hi all

Got into Savusavu, Fiji late last night after a beautiful 4 days of downwind tropical sailing. Bill, our US shipmate, caught a very large Mahi Mahi fish on the way. He is a great cook too so we dined in splendour that night.

Have flight home booked for Monday 10 June as planned. Pacific Air flight gets into Sydney 4.30pm Mon.

For the first time on trip no wifi connection here so sending this from internet cafe. Everything closed on Sunday so no more email until Monday and after I will have left for local airport to get connecting flight to Nadi at 8.00am.
See you soon.

Cheers, Stuart (8 June)