

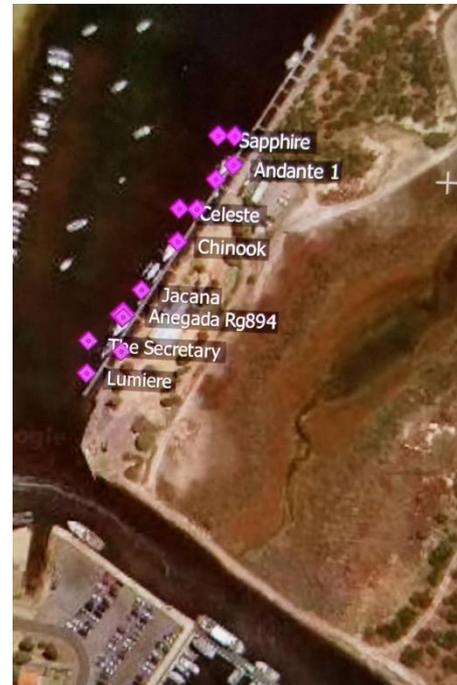
Bass Strait Cruise 2022:

A fantastic week as we Cruised in Company on the Labour Day Cruise to Bass Strait. While the plan was to cruise along the coast and anchor at Refuge Cove, Neptune had other thoughts. So, with strong Easterlies being forecasted for Tuesday we moved to Plan B, and explored Westernport, where we enjoyed excellent weather.

Our 9 Bass Strait boats joined with the “Around the Bay” group departing SYC on Saturday to QCYC making a total of 22 boats arriving in Queenscliff Saturday afternoon and creating a lot of SYC “pink” from Marine Traffic AIS images along the Wharf.



There were some dolphin sightings on the way too.



We had a nice evening socialising with the larger Rec Boating group, and we confirmed our plans for the next day. Before we knew it ... it was time to get some rest for the start of our Bass Strait experience the next morning.

Day 1 (13 March) Cleeland Bight:

After a great night enjoying QCYC the Bass Strait group departed at 08:30 to hit slack tide at 09:49 The boats cruising to Bass Strait were (Chinook, Hitchhiker, Kiela, Lumiere, Sapphire, The Secretary, Vervacious and White Onyx). Seven of the boats set sail for Cleeland Bight (San Remo) with White Onyx leaving the group shortly after exiting the heads and making way for Tassie.

We had good sailing winds for the morning, but then the winds switched completely around and fell off about mid-day, when it was motor sailing after that.





Just before the Western Channel entrance to Western Port, Keila's prop and rudders fouled with a floating mass of kelp and with high vibrations. Hugh notified us that they were going into Western Port. Fortunately, after some fancy manoeuvring and poking the twin rudders with a boat hook they were finally able to shake it off and were able to continue to Cleeland Bight. **Best Catch award goes to Kiela!**

The fleet rounded Cape Woolamai and arrived at Cleeland Bight and were all safely anchored by 18:00.

We also met up with Astoria and Alliance who had abandoned their own plans for Refuge

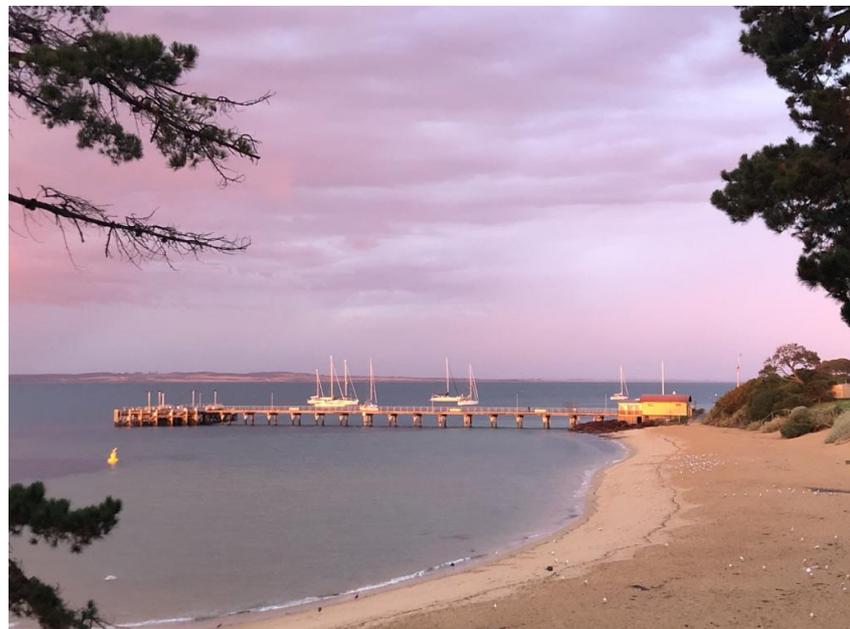
Cove and opted to Cruise in Company with us into Western Port.

Day 2 & 3 (14 & 15 March) Cowes:

We awakened after a roly night at anchor and prepared to make the 25 Nm trip to Cowes in Western Port. We all wanted to see Cleeland Bight as it would be a good stop over point breaking up future trips to Refuge Cove. Next time, would anchor North of Black Reef pile, closer to the entrance, which is supposed to be less tidal. But there was not enough room for the 9 boats this trip.

We wanted to avoid the forecasted 25+ Knot Easterlies in Bass Strait expected next day, so we decided to back track and anchor in Cowes.

With favourable conditions in Bass Strait most of us took the opportunity to cruise closer to the shoreline and to



enter the Western Channel by navigating between Seal Rock and the Nobbies. We had plenty of water under us and it was nice to get a closer up view of the shoreline. We anchored just East of the main jetty out of the way of the ferries.

There was some adventure in getting good holding with several of the boats having to re-anchor more than once. We all spent a restless night on anchor watch and setting drift alarms. Fortunately, no mishaps occurred, although Astoria decided it was too shallow and moved further out about 04:30.

We awoke to rain and with more in the forecast, the group decided to stay at Cowes and to meet up for a group dinner as yesterdays did not go as planned due to the earlier anchoring drama.

Kiela, departed in early morning making way for QCYC and planned to re-join the group on Friday.

Nobody wanted to do any real exploring on their boats either, as we had finally got good holding! So, it was a day of seeing Cowes and checking out the shops and eateries and generally just relaxing. Dawn and Garry found a great BBQ Rotunda near the beach West of the Jetty with very clean facilities, so the plan was set for sundowners and a group BBQ. There was plenty of meat and a few vegetables. We had a great sunset and a view of the boats too.



Best BBQ award to Alliance!

Day 4 (16 March) North Arm and Stock Yard Point:

We awoke to a slightly overcast day with flat seas, and as we looked North from our anchorage at Cowes, a Submarine was spotted manoeuvring in the Main Channel. We suspect it was on its way to participate in gunnery practice near the coast off Flinders.

George Shaw (The Secretary) had contacted the Navy to see if we could access the Maritime Museum by using their waterway in the Northern arm, but with the Naval Gunnery practice underway they said we could only access by land ... and since we only had boats, that would have to wait for another time. So, our plans were to do a sight-seeing tour



up and back the North Arm as far as the Hasting's channel before anchoring at Rhyll. Alliance had to depart, and they weighed anchor returning direct to SYC.

The rest of us enjoyed a well narrated tour on VHF 77 about some of the history and sights from Dawn Cleaver (Sapphire) as we motored by Sandy Point (good spot for a picnic lunch anchorage), past the Navy Channel to Cerebrus, and Crib Point on to Hastings. As we made the turn there was a nice breeze, so we set sails for a leisurely sail back down the arm. We had to make room for a large tanker as he blew his horn signalling his Port turn before heading to Crib Point.



We safely crossed the channel and headed towards Tankerton and then rounded the cardinal marker at Tortoise Head point.

The Secretary decided to explore up the Middle Spit channel before re-joining with us at anchor. But not before having another excellent lunch served up by Robyn.

Best Boat Food award goes to The Secretary!



Vervacious had opted to have a leisurely morning and they joined the fleet as we made our turn towards the eastern Channel. As we got closer to our planned anchorage at Rhyll, there was some concern about there being enough room to anchor 7 boats, so we made our way instead to Stock Yard Point off French Island about 4 Nm further up the East Channel, across from Corinella. We must have been



together for a while now because there was some discussion about someone on Astoria using all the hot water, of course this was hotly denied! Despite the charted depths being a bit off and Chinook having to reverse out in a hurry we all found great holding in what turned out to be the best anchorage of the trip, flat water and no other traffic ... ahhh the serenity!

Day 5 (17 March) Point Leo



We awoke to another great sunrise and a forecast of light winds to push us along the Eastern Arm towards our planned anchorage near Balnarring Beach. Sapphire left early to explore the shoreline and would check out an anchorage for us. We were all careful to make sure we went well South of the Middle bank which is notoriously shallow before we crossed the West Channel to head towards Pt Leo beach.

We were all anchored by about 2:30 and with the water being clear we could see the anchors grab sand setting in for excellent holding. With a sunny day and warm weather out came the paddle boards, dinghies and some swimming. Lumiere seemed to have something for every occasion, snorkelling, diving, paddling, dinghies etc.

The Most Toys award goes to Lumiere!



We had Sundowner's on the beach before heading back to the boats for dinner on-board and began packing up the boats for the leg back to QCYC in the morning.

We enjoyed another spectacular sunset and mostly flat anchoring except when the tides were running at peak, as there was some rolling due to the SW winds putting the boats a bit beam on to the current.



We had a little drama as Vervacious' dinghy lost their prop shear pin on a low tide rock pool returning from the Sundowners. Bob was setting a record pace on the oars and turning down offers of help.

The Golden Prop award goes to Vervacious!

Day 6 (18 March) Heading to QCYC

Awoke to another beautiful sunrise and calm seas. The forecast was for SE winds about 10-15 Knots with 1m swells in Bass Strait, perfect conditions for the sail to QCYC. We left at staggered times according to each boat's planned sailing speed to arrive for 15:38 slack tide. The dolphins were active today as Chinook was weighing anchor a pod of 8-10 dolphins swam by giving them the once over, and Sapphire reported spotting a large pod of about 100 dolphins making their way West in Bass Strait.

The Best Dolphin Spotter award goes to Sapphire!



The conditions were pretty much as predicted when most of us left between 07:30 and 10:00. But nobody said anything about Cannon fire, certainly not on VHF 16 (remember that Gunnery Range Practice session). As we went past the West Head of Flinders there were many loud shots heard by the boats ... we may have been targets, but thankfully nothing came across our bows!



Well, the 10 knots predicted wind became 15-20 Knots and there was 1-2m wave chop as we were getting towards Cape Schanck. Everybody was reefing sails as we were sailing between 7 and 10 knots rather than the 6-7 knots planned. We did not want to be waiting 2 hours outside the Rip for slack water. We did our last Radio

check at noon, with some commenting they were sailing too fast to fish, and others were just enjoying the conditions. But all were trying to slow the boats down enough, not our normal concern.

Most VHF Radio calls for the week goes to Chinook!

The Secretary, was the first boat to get to the Rip, after being the last one to depart our anchorage! George said the Rip conditions looked good with a flood tide and following Winds, so he contacted Lonsdale VTS to check on traffic. There were 2 incoming ships, one at 14:00 (CSK Longevity) and one at 14:30 (GSL ChristelElisobeth) and that we could follow them in. Coincidentally, the GSL ChistelElisobeth, was the boat that delivered Chris and Anne Hunting's boat, Amalfi 3, to Australia a couple of years ago.

As we were circling West of the Rip and South of Pt Lonsdale, Astoria radioed that they could not start their engine. It was good sailing conditions, so their plan was to sail into Port Phillip Bay and trouble shoot more once there.



Fortunately, they were able to finally get their engine going after jumping the engine battery and the fleet sailed safely through the Rip about 14:45 mostly doing 6-8 knots in what was a very enjoyable return sail back to the bay!

The Energizer Bunny Battery award goes to Astoria!

We were safely tied up at QCYC about 16:00 and had a group social in the members bar and a quick debrief about what turned out to be a very enjoyable 6-day Cruise in Company to Western Port. People were glad to have “land” showers again and a big kitchen too. Another fantastic group dinner was served up with more good times being had by all.



Day 7 (19 March) Port Phillip Bay

With the cruise being “officially” over after having sailed about 200 Nm, our flotilla began to go in different directions. Astoria, Kiela and the Secretary returned to SYC, and Lumiere opted to anchor out for one more night near Canadian Bay. Chinook, Hitchhiker, Sapphire and Vervacious chose to stay one more night at QCYC.

Since the group’s fishing luck was not great during the cruise, we wisely bought some Seafood from the Queenscliff fishmonger and enjoyed a tasty BBQ of Fish along with roasted vegetables and salads. We enjoyed one more group dinner and another terrific sunset. *The Undaunted award goes to Hitchhiker!* For having both the most squid fishing hours, and the most battery recharges in the week.



Day 8 (20 March) Home to SYC

We all departed from QCYC by 11:00 and looked forward to some tide pushing us along the Channel. Hitchhiker had left earlier to get home for mid-day. The forecast was for light winds out of the SW building to 10-15 Knots by 17:00. We motor sailed up the Western Channel, and once out of the channel with Vervacious and Sapphire sailing wing on wing and Chinook with their Code Zero flying we all had a leisurely sail at 3-4 knots in light winds from the SSW, which made for a very pleasant lunch. After a couple hours of that we all put our engines back on to get to SYC ahead of the typical late afternoon sea breezes.

However, Neptune had other plans and about 15:00 the winds picked up out of the South at 20 Knots with gusts at 25+ Knots. Vervacious was almost at SYC and got their sails down and were able to safely dock in some windy conditions. Sapphire who was further out from SYC headed up and dropped their sails too and motored until the winds passed over. Chinook was more North of the system so kept the Code Zero up and had some fast sailing as the winds came through. About the time we were all approaching SYC breakwater Lumiere showed up from Mornington.

We were all safely back in our pens by 16:00. Just in time to tidy the boat up a bit and enjoy an SYC Sunday Roast Dinner.

To sum up the trip: while there were a few minor dramas, it was mostly lots of dolphins, great views, beautiful sunsets, great weather, nice anchorages, some fun sailing on mostly flat water and lots of great food and camaraderie with other like-minded sailors Cruising in Company for about 200 Nm overall.

Can't wait until next year ... Refuge Cove anyone?

Bass Strait Cruise, where we went:

