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# NEWSLETTER

## New Caledonia Trip

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My trip and the next big step in my cruising proficiency was a plan to sail to New Caledonia 2020 which due to covid was pushed back to 2023. I did a trip to Hobart and Tassie circumnavigation in 2022 to keep my skills up to date after a 2-year covid hibernation. Getting China Girl up to speed re safety equipment, radio checks, clean hull, rig check, engine service, repairs, outboard service, charts, repair sails, New Cal marine berth, insurance, customs, crew to name a few seems like a lot however what is required to keep her seaworthy and without these trips would get more and more difficult to keep her seaworthy with every passing year. So having got all the jobs done, all that was left was a large capacity alternator which should have been straight forward however proved problematic due to a manufacturing error. No problems due to having 4 crew so if needed hand steering still quite comfortable.

The date was set for crew to arrive Monday May 8th with them to figure out the provisioning and cooking for the trip, this coupled with fitting the alternator should be finished by Friday. Once finished, customs were notified however due to a Tasman low forming it was decided to leave the following Tuesday 16th which later deferred to Thursday the 18th. Lucky, I had planned 3 weeks to do this trip so with preparing for 5 days we spent another 5 days waiting for an East coast low to pass before heading off.



During the 8 days crossing it blew and blew and blew from leaving Newcastle to arriving Noumea, the wind started mid 20kts, occasionally got down to 10-20 then would rise to 25kts again. We had a gale warning mid trip and I considered changing the staysail to the storm jib but doing this in a rising 20kts wind I thought better of it. Next time I will start with the storm jib set up before. The watch system worked very well 3x 4hrs watches 6pm to 6am then 2x 6hrs shifts 6am to 6pm. We had steered 90% of the time doing 2x 45mins and 30mins stint to finish the shift. It was a lot of fun driving the boat for 8 days and watching inexperienced crew rise and excel to the challenge. Always fun getting to know new people from different walks of life and countries. Some of the many highlights were setting off after waiting 5 days for weather, sailing at night in pitch black, sunsets and especially sunrises, observing nature, watching the stars, seeing occasional ships pass, sailing for 8 days, sailing through a storm, catching a Mahe Mahe, comradery of shared adventure to name a few, gaining ocean crossing experience, sighting land and traveling and living on the ocean. Cruising for 3 days after arriving which was a real bonus.

