



Passages

s/y Nine of Cups

A Holiday Newsletter from Sea

Volume 12
Australia Holiday 2012 Edition



Letter from the crew....

We arrived in Australia in November 2011 and we're still in Australia. It's a big country, the natives are ultra-friendly and there's much to see and do.

We hung out in Sydney for the 2011 holidays. Our friends, Doug & Fay Grimm, joined us aboard Nine of Cups to celebrate the world's most lavish New Year's Eve firework display.



David & Marcie with the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge in the background

During the austral summer, we traveled down Australia's long east coast to Tasmania, across the Bass Strait and down Tassie's wild west coast to Port Davey and then up to the safety of a marina to give Cups a rest. Cups waited for us in a berth for several months while we returned to the USA for a bi-annual visit. The time in the States was hectic as usual, but it was great to see friends and family again. We drove nearly 20,000 on our American Odyssey crisscrossing the US. After nearly 13 years aboard, Nine of Cups is home though and we were glad to return to her.



Highlights of 2012:

- ★ *New Year's Eve in Sydney Harbour*
- ★ *Off the Beaten Path: Deal Island*
- ★ *Cuddly Koalas at Raymond Island*
- ★ *Tasmania's Wild West Coast*
- ★ *An American Odyssey*
- ★ *Return to Down Under*

Detailed stories follow

A Year Down Under

As we write this, Cups has been in Australia for over a year already. We've been here a total of eight months and plan to stay till September 2013 before heading across the Indian Ocean. At least that's the plan du jour.



Cups anchored in front the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Opera House

We continue to enjoy our life of sailing and travel. It's still fun and that's always been the criteria for determining whether to go on or not. We've seen and done things we could never have even imagined. Our memories are full of outstanding experiences and wonderful people.

With the help of our niece, Gentry, we've begun a new blog site, an on-line photo-journal which documents not only our travels, but our day-to-day life aboard Cups in a much easier, more dynamic format than just a website. So visit us and our new blog site regularly at www.justalittlefurther.com.



Circumnavigating Tasmania



Our route around Tasmania in red

We talked about heading to Tasmania ... and talked and talked. It was in the Roaring 40's again, cold and wild. With our penchant for "going around things" like South America and New Zealand, for instance, it seemed only logical if we were to head to Tasmania, we'd go around it. And thus in February, we headed south to the island the Aussie's affectionately refer to as "Tassie".

Just the name conjures up wild Tasmanian devils (and they do indeed exist) and untamed wilderness. We began the trip at Tasmania's most northern national park at Deal Island (see article later in this newsletter) in the middle of the Bass Strait then continued around the northwest corner seeking shelter from south winds at Green Point and Sandy Cape. Macquarie Harbour was our first actual landfall on the island where we entered through Hell's Gates, visited the quaint fishing town of Strahan, motored 18 miles up the Gordon River as well as exploring the remains of convict settlement on Sarah Island.



Lighthouse at Hell's Gate
Macquarie Harbour Entrance

We continued down the coast to Port Davey, a World Heritage Site. This area in the remote southwest corner of Tasmania is accessible only by boat and small plane. The rugged coastline's scenery is unspoiled with rugged peaks, wild rivers and unique wildlife and plants.



Cups at anchor Clytie Cove-Mt. Rugby in the background

We rounded South West and South East Capes in light winds and headed up Tassie's east coast, stopping in pleasant little anchorages along the way. Our favorite little town was Cygnet, first explored by the Frenchman, Bruni D'Entrecasteaux. He named it Port des Cygnes, Port of Swans because of the huge black swan population that inhabit the area.

We ended up in Kettering, Tasmania in March, just south of Hobart, where we left Cups in the Oyster Cove Marina for the winter season while we headed back to the US.



The locals take the town's name seriously. They dress up their boats like black swans!

Up the Gordon River



A tiger snake peeks out at us at the Lower Gordon Hut

One thing about Tasmania, actually Australia in general, there are lots of snakes, mostly all poisonous. While visiting a kayaker at a camp hut up the Gordon River, he mentioned several “caretakers” were in residence. His buddies ended up being tiger snakes, fourth most venomous snake in the world. We saw a total of four in the area...more than enough.



Tied to an historic old wharf up the Gordon River

A local seaplane uses this stretch of the Gordon for take-offs and landings which added a bit of excitement to the day. We were able to dinghy up the river for quite a distance and enjoyed the peace and serenity of the area (except when the seaplane made an appearance).



A huge orange and purple starfish in Cygnet Bay

Kuddly Koalas



Koalas rule on Raymond Island

New critters are a way of life here. Though we were familiar with koalas and had heard of Tasmanian devils and wallabies, animals like bandicoots, echidnas and potoroos had never been part of our vocabulary. At Raymond Island in Victoria, we saw hundreds of koalas in the wild. They live in the local neighborhoods in the eucalyptus trees, munching away, pretty oblivious to the people around them.

Walking with Wallabies



Marcie poses outside the Deal Island Museum with a friend

The Bass Strait, which separates Tasmania from Australia, surrounds several island groups including the Kent Group's Deal Island, Tasmania's most northern national park. We were told that there were wallabies on Deal Island, but we never imagined just how many wallabies there are. They were everywhere. Some a bit timid, but in general, they just ignored us as we wandered around the island. The volunteer caretakers on the island gave us the key to the Deal Island Lighthouse, gave us a hiking map of the island and extended us great hospitality. It was a magic place and once again, accessible only by boat.

Awesome Aussie Animals



Why did the echidna cross the road?

On our way back from Launceston on a daylong road trip, we spotted an odd animal crossing the road. It was an echidna, kind of a cross between a porcupine and an anteater. We stopped to watch him and alert oncoming traffic of his traverse. He made it to the other side of the road okay, but sought refuge underneath our car! For nearly 30 minutes, we waited for him to burrow deeply under us enough to move the car without risk of hurting him.



Tasmanian Devil at Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary

The Tasmanian Devil is on the endangered list. Found only in Tassie, it suffers from loss of habitat as well as a cancerous disease that has spread rapidly through the devil population. Our chances of seeing one in the wild were limited, so instead we visited Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary about 30 minutes northwest of Hobart. We saw not only devils, but also wombats, potoroos and quolls, all injured animals recovering here.

Crew still writing

Among our non-sailing activities, writing still rates high as one way of recording our experiences and travels and also feeding the cruising kitty. The crew managed to publish several how-to and destination articles in 2012 and hopes to continue the trend in 2013.



Blue-tongued lizards at Bonorong



Spotted quolls at Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary

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Email us: nineofcups1@yahoo.com

Visit our our website: www.nineofcups.com

See our new daily blog for stories, comments and position updates at: www.justalittlefurther.com

American Odyssey 2012

We called our trip home American Odyssey 2012. We had an incredible trip back and forth across the USA. One thing about being away, when we come home, we fall in love with America all over again. What an awesome country we have. We visited 30 National Park venues and traveled to or through 30 states plus Ontario, Canada and Washington, DC. Check out the website for lots of photos and information about our trip at www.nineofcups.com, here's a sampling of what we saw.



Badlands NP – Mountain goat



Yosemite National Park – El Capitan

Toting up the Miles

Since we spent several months back in the States this year, we didn't do as much sailing as usual. Of course, we did do about 20,000 statute miles while in the States. That counts for something!

Total Nautical Miles Sailed 2012: **1,976 nm**
(November 2011-Nov 2012)

Total Nautical Miles since 2000: **70, 223 nm**

Give me a home where the buffalo roam...



Yellowstone National Park



Galax, Virginia – Old Time Fiddler's Competition

Off the Wall



Skeleton Man Walking Skeleton Dinosaur
Interstate 90 – Murdo, SD

We couldn't resist going out of our way to see the odd and unusual. We saw the largest ball of twine, the largest jackalope, the largest tarantula, the largest olive, the largest work boot, the Spam Museum and the Jolly Green Giant museum and much more. Wow!

Back Home to Cups



Haul-out in Kettering, Tasmania

We returned to Tasmania in mid-September. It was time. We were lonesome for Cups and she looked despondent and neglected after a winter alone and abandoned. She perked right up when we hauled her and spruced her up with cleaning, waxing, polishing and a new bottom paint job. She's rearing to go in 2013.



It's springtime in Tasmania

With the opposite seasons down under, we'll be enjoying two springs and two summers this year.



What's in store for 2013?

It's hard for us to plan too far ahead. Weather, wind, seasons, boat repairs and the whim of the crew all play a part in how far we get in a season. The plan at the moment is to work our way slowly up the east coast of Tasmania to complete a circumnavigation of this island state. There's still lots to see here in Tassie that we haven't seen before.

Once summer arrives in January, we plan to head to some more of the Bass Strait islands and then make our way along the South Australia coast, across the Great Australian Bight and then turn the corner to head north up Australia's west coast. We're hoping to position ourselves by late August for a trip across the Indian Ocean to Africa. Check out our daily blog to see what's happening with us.

In the meantime, we wish you health, wealth and love ... and the time to enjoy them all.

Merry Christmas and
Happy 2013
from Down Under!

Marcie and David

