

Visiting sailors found paradise in the Lakes

American sailors, David and Marcie Lynn did not know the Gippsland Lakes existed until they stopped to visit the Eden Whale Museum.

The couple called into Eden on their journey down the coast heading to Tasmania aboard their yacht *Nine of Cups*, on the Australian leg of a circumnavigation of the world.

The Lynns were leaving the museum when they saw a leaflet with a mention of the Gippsland Lakes.

"We asked the museum attendant whether we could sail into the lakes, she didn't know. We were walking down the sidewalk and she came running after us waving a piece of paper with a contact number for Paynesville Coast Guard," Marcie said.

"We spoke to Jim Callahan from the coast guard, Jim told us to come on down and call when we were coming in. He said there would be no problem and if there were it would only be stuck on sand and they would come and help us off."

In past voyages, the couple has had many such serendipitous strokes of luck.

Marcie and David, with the coast guard's guidance, easily entered the Lakes and spent a happy, unplanned week anchored in Lake Victoria off Montague Point, Raymond Island.

The boat the pair calls home is a 1986 Liberty cutter-rigged sailing yacht. Marcie and David have lived aboard since 2000 and have nearly 70,000 nautical miles under the keel.

The Lynns ultimate aim is to sail around the world and they are well on the way toward completing the challenge.

During their time in East Gippsland they made new friends and enjoyed the company of the Raymond Island and Paynesville communities.

They viewed Paynesville's Australia Day celebration and were invited to an authentic Australia Day "Aussie" barbecue.

"The people here are so genuine, they are warm and friendly. We have been invited into homes on Raymond Island for coffee, and out to one woman's farm to see the kangaroos. We have seen the koalas on every visit to the Island and been teased with the local legend, of 'drop bears', and vicious koalas who leave you alone if you put a dab of Vegemite behind your ears.

"From here we are heading south-south-west to Deal Island. It is half way to Tasmania, part of the Kent Group National Park.

"When the Island locals realised where we were going, they told us they knew the caretakers at Deal Island, so now we already have built-in friends. We've been blessed with this stopover and the people of the Raymond Island community.

Most landlubbers are curious as to what it takes to leave land behind and put your trust in the wind and sails.

David said he had dreamed his entire life of, "Sailing off and seeing the world.

"We did not come from sailing families. We started taking sailing lessons in our forties, bought a boat and sailed away in our fifties".

The pair searched for 12 months for the right boat and knew immediately she was the one the minute they stepped aboard.

The yacht was renamed *Nine of Cups*, "We wanted to rename her to make her ours. I'd been given a tarot and a *Tarot for Dummies* manual.

"The Nine of Cups is a wishing card and whenever I'd lay the cards out to practise on David, her drew this card.

"It is an optimistic card, about dreams being realised, and dreams coming true and to David the boat was the realisation of a long-held dream."

Along with raising three children, Marcie's background is in marketing in the medical field.

"We were both workaholics. Friends took bets on how long we would be able to sustain being 24/7 with one person in a little space.

"You find your own spaces, in fact on a long passage we miss each other, because one person has to be on watch and one mapping all the time, and in the evenings it is three hour watches."

Marcie explained there was always plenty to keep them busy and in any down time, they read or write or develop various skills/hobbies. Marcie keeps their website and a blog going

and writes on travel, and David writes 'How Tos'.

"In the 12 years we've been sailing we have seen many amazing things. Been around Cape Horn, seen Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, had inland travels to see Inca ruins at Macu Picu.

"We stopped at Pitcairn Island. The first person we met was Brenda Christian a direct descendent of Fletcher Christian, who lead the mutiny on the Bounty."

Marcie's advice to anyone who wants to achieve a dream like theirs is, 'just do it'.

"If you are 40 or 50, just do it, because next year, you will still be 40 or 50. This can be a part-time lifestyle it's a wonderful way of life."

David is from an engineering background; he is slightly more measured and advises.

"Take it one step at a time. After we learnt to sail we did a lot of coast-hopping around the US, our first big trip was to Trinidad we could not believe in when we made it," he said.

"We took it in stages, David suggested we go through the Panama Canal, I was a bit apprehensive but it was great and then he said, if we take a left we're in Ecuador.

"Then we met people who said visit us in Peru or Chile, it's OK to do it that way," Marcie said.

"We made a lot of mistakes, we are still learning, each new country has different challenges."

David had to learn how every system on the boat works, the engine, the plumbing the electricals, and all the rigging and sailing gear. Over the years he has replaced and repaired every system on the boat.

The Lynns said their lifestyle requires you to be innovative, independent and self-sufficient.

"Some people do what we are doing then decide they have had their adventure and have had enough. It's called 'swallowing the hook'.

"Most commonly one of the partners really love it, and the other doesn't, they may miss the grandkids etc.," Marcie said.

"We both have wanderlust, we have a short memory for the bad things. David likes the sailing, and I like the getting there."

With the coming of autumn, the cyclone and typhoon season, David and Marcie will leave *Nine of Cups* at harbour in Tassie and fly home to the states to criss-cross the country to see their children.

"In our old life we always flew from the east to west coast. Last time we were back we took our time. We used a van and 'land sailed', we actually reacquainted ourselves with our own country," she said.



Deep water sailors, Marcie and David Lynn aboard their cutter, *Nine of Cups* anchored in Lake Victoria last week. After mastering the traditional seafaring knotting craft of coach-whipping, David used 250 metres of line to cover the wheel. "I did it on a nine-day passage from French Polynesia to the Cook Islands," he said. K70-0414



Nine of Cups at anchor off Montague Point, Raymond Island, with Gippsland Lakes Yacht Club boats racing in the background. (PS)

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