



# Making waves

## Landlubber Paul Rush loves life on the ocean waves

**S**AILING through Queensland's magnificent Whitsunday Islands opens up a whole new world of salt-laden adventure and sea-borne fun.

On a recent cruise our hostess, Trish, introduces her stylish white lady, a stunning new Belize 43 catamaran, snuggled up in her berth in Abel Point marina on the Central Queensland coast. "This is an Oz Adventure Sailing catamaran called Getaway. She came all the way from France and she loves to sail." The sleek catamaran's twin hulls glisten in their pristine whiteness. The plush saloon and roomy cockpit look very inviting. She can accommodate four couples in private en-suite cabins on a fully catered three-day sail and dive adventure around the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. We will visit some of the untouched, uninhabited Whitsunday islands.

Boat skipper Peter welcomes us aboard with a jovial request to call him 'Captain Pete' and informs us that we've got crazy



Oz Adventures has some stylish, user friendly sailing vessels.

weather ahead. "We'll get to go sailing, we'll wear sunscreen and possibly raincoats - so we're ticking all the adventure boxes eh!" Sea conditions on the open water crossing to Hook Island Passage are euphemistically described as 'lumpy'. The fresh nor'easter is gusting 20 knots, so I soon find myself in an action-packed world of white-capped waves, straining sails and flying spray.

Trish takes a turn on the wheel and announces that 'I can make this baby fly at 11 knots!' We respond to the 'all hands on deck' call and haul on the sheets as the mainsail shudders under tension and the lively cat rears up like a rampant stallion. I revel in the exhilaration of the sizzling speed, salty tang of the sea, fresh breeze

in my face and water dripping off my nose. Sharing this exhilarating, rockin', rollin', slidin' ride across the bay with me are two couples from Zurich, Switzerland. Michael and Evelyn went to the same primary school in Berne. Many years later they met by chance and romance blossomed. Yan and Elisha grew up in Swiss mountain hamlets and share an interest in cross-country skiing. Justin and Rebecca from Brisbane chose this three-day sailing adventure as an experience of the ultimate holiday freedom. Our little group has some basic knowledge of sailing so skipper Pete is not plagued with too many of the usual inane questions like: How high above sea level are we?, does the water go all round the island?





and what stops the islands from moving? Tongue Bay is our first anchorage where Trish whisks us ashore in the inflatable dingy and we follow a well-worn forest track to a lookout point above Whitehaven Beach. Dazzling white silica sands stretch seven kilometres along Australia's most photographed beach. The swirling sands of Hill Inlet have created a magnificent fusion of vivid colours – cream, white, aquamarine and blue, while the Coral Sea glistens in many dreamy shades of turquoise. Nosing into Mocona Inlet we find a sheltered anchorage and enjoy a fine meal dining al fresco under a blanket of needle-sharp stars. Later I retire to my cabin, which boasts a queen-size bed, a compact en-suite, skylight hatch and a side window for ventilation.

The only sound in the night is a gentle lapping of water against the twin hulls. The almost imperceptible motion of the boat soon induces sleep. I dream about that other world that beckons

beneath the milky green opalescence of the rippling sea. I will visit that world tomorrow.

In the morning I hear the clink of utensils and the rustling of paper in the galley above my head. The taste buds respond immediately. Trish is preparing a hearty English breakfast for the novice seafarers. This is sailing and dining in style with first class service.

Later we cruise into Pitstop Bay on Border Island for our first scuba dive and snorkel. Our hostess reinvents herself as 'Hardcore Trish' – the dive master, spelling out the dive instructions, including a prohibition of riding turtles and stingrays.

The coral reefs are a kaleidoscope of colour and the fish show no sign of fear. Multi-hued parrot fish graze contentedly while bright orange clownfish dart in and out of waving anemones. Maori wrasse, fusiliers and harlequin tusk-fish nose around in a dreamy feeding ritual. A turtle swims lazily by

and a shovel-nosed stingray glides over the seabed on some long-range stealth bombing mission. Nearby Nara Inlet is our anchorage for the second night of the cruise.

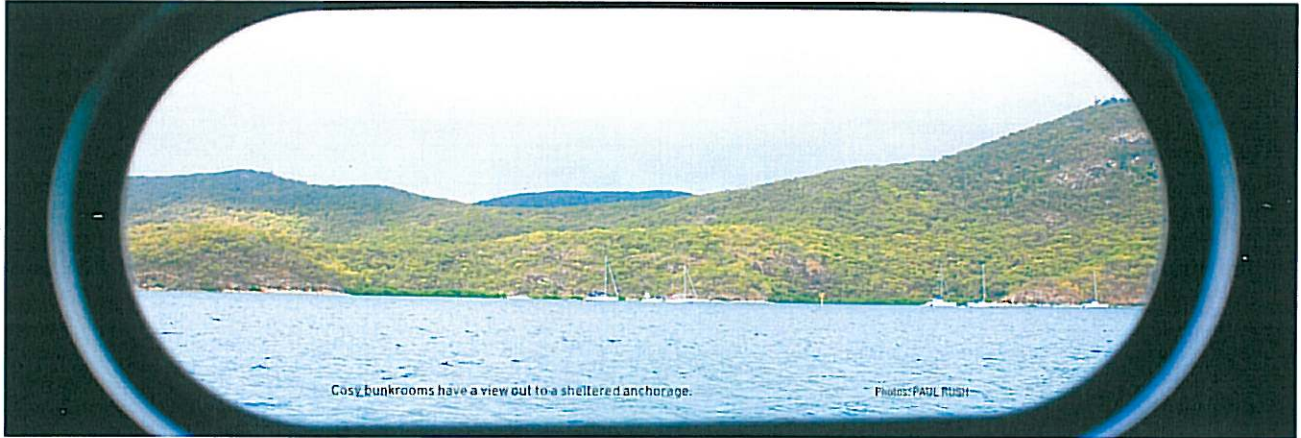
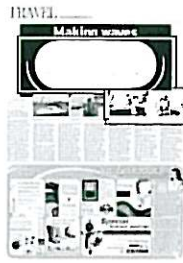
On the lazy sail back to base we witness several 'work-ups' of dense schools of baitfish. Tuna, sharks and stingrays are marauding through the schools in a feeding frenzy, while gulls and terns are skimming over the surface, beside themselves with excitement.

Our little group of sailors are contented and full of smiles as we slide into Getaway's berth. It has been a great holiday experience with a perfect balance of adventure, relaxation, fine dining and stimulating conversation. Skipper Pete and hostess Trish have done the hard yards and made the trip an enjoyable experience. The memories of those bluer than blue skies, whiter than white beaches and amazing aquamarine seas will never fade.



Kiwi skipper Pete knows Whitsunday's top sailing spots.





Hostess Trish creates gourmet meals in the compact galley.



Honeymooning under sail is as good as it gets.