



# MISSION POSSIBLE

## Take It Easy delivery from Gippsland to Tin Can Bay

After inviting their family to come over from France for a winter cruise on board Take It Easy, Chris Danger and Wade Bishop had a few small details to organise: getting the boat from the Gippsland Lakes in Victoria, to Tin Can Bay in Queensland. Chris relates the before, during and after of this delivery trip.

Moored at Tin Can Bay.  
*Photo Chris Danger*





**M**y sister and her husband were coming over from France for a three week holiday on board. The starting point for our time together was Tin Can Bay, an easy spot to reach from Brisbane airport, and the plan was to cruise the Great Sandy Straits and the southern part of the Great Barrier Reef, leaving the boat at Rosslyn Bay near Yeppoon afterwards.

We live in Victoria and moor *Take It Easy* in the Gippsland Lakes, so you guessed it, we had to get it up to Tin Can Bay! If you are working, as we

still are, it is always a juggle to find time for extended cruising, and to have the boat in the right place. So we needed to assemble a small crew willing to help us get the boat to the starting point for our cruise.

So how did we tackle the task and what was the delivery trip like?

## PREPARATION

**First step:** map out an itinerary. We are familiar with the Victorian and NSW coast line up to Port Macquarie, but we had not had the

opportunity to sail further north. We therefore gathered charts, studied possible anchorages to hide in if necessary, looked at distances, likely stopping points to replenish water and fuel. This was all part of getting ourselves organised.

We allowed three weeks for the 900nm voyage. Some yachties thought it was a tight timeframe, but others thought it would be ample. It was hard to know how long it would take. Would we get favourable winds all the way in the middle of winter?

Having scheduled the departure date – June 20 – and with a deadline of July 15 to get to Tin Can Bay or thereabouts, we moved on to the next part of the preparation: recruiting the crew.

Wade, as skipper, wanted a team of two, maximum three people with him (I could not get the time off). There is no shortage of people interested in lending a hand. The hard part though

**above:** The Crew: Merv, Wade and Bengie, Mike. Photo Chris Danger

**left:** Sailing along under main and jib. Photo Merv Edmunds

is finding people who are available, can afford to take time off work, and ideally who we know. The deal was that all food was provided. The only cost to crew members was their return home from Queensland.

We tried several of our friends and for a while things were looking promising: Wade's brother Murray, Chris Guthrie who is building his own catamaran, Peter Dunn, volunteer coastguard, were all keen, but each had to pull out as work commitments appeared. Then we turned our attention towards yachties: Mike Kotrba and Merv Edmunds gladly put their hand up for this 'trip of a lifetime'. Both are retired and therefore have more flexibility. They both have built their own boats, and have some coastal sailing experience.

So the crew was set a few weeks before D-day. Wade's requirements of his crew are not major: they have to be able to stand their two hour



watches day and night, and alert him to anything untoward.

In the fog past Bermangui. Photo Merv Edmunds

## THE DELIVERY

The team, including Bengie the ship's cat, left the Gippsland Lakes on June 20 after waiting for two days for the Lakes Entrance bar to be passable. It was a sunny but





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crisp day with light winds. No sooner were they out in the ocean that the spinnaker went up for the beginning of a long sled ride along the Victorian coast.

The guys were rugged up: thermals, multiple layers, wet weather gear, sea boots, gloves and beanies ... the secret to winter sailing comfortably. They gradually peeled off the layers as they progressed northward, finishing in shorts and T-shirts by the time they reached Queensland.

I, along with families and friends, were following them on Marine Traffic along their 900nm voyage. They stopped at Eden overnight, then Bermagui, waiting for the right wind conditions, but then a long stretch of two nights and three days saw them speed along past Wollongong, Sydney, Newcastle. It was amazing to watch their progress. Exhausted, they pulled in at Crowdy Head for a night at anchor and a well-earned rest. This had been the most demanding section of their trip.

With two hour watches and three people, you are two hours on, four hours off, so you do get some rest, even though for the skipper, sleep is a little more elusive.

Night watches can be hard, yet for Mike and Merv who had not done these before, they were one of the highlights. Mike describes it this way: “you are by yourself, looking at the dark night and even darker swell rolling in and you think I am it, I have the boat, I must keep a good watch.” And Merv adds that the nights can be quite daunting as the noise of the ocean is amplified. “In bigger seas you can hear the waves rushing in between the hulls under the bridge deck. Sometimes they slam and bang loudly and you wonder at what point this structure fails.”

Another highlight the whole team comments on is the wildlife: albatrosses in the south, pods of dolphins along the way playing at the bows, and the numerous humpback whales starting their migration from Antarctica. They were never very

close, but it was still exciting to see them breach, tail slap, frolic or travel along.

The guys also describe their days: “Time seems to slow down, yet it goes in a flash.” They would day dream, read, absorb their surroundings, watch the coastline and the sea creatures, take a nap. Wade points out “there is not a lot to do once you have checked the weather, set your course, set the sails and the autopilot. From then on, you just keep an eye on things and make small adjustments.” Wade would check the weather on the Bureau of Meteorology site twice a day. We use the Met Eye facility, which gives a precise, localised forecast of the region you are sailing in, rather than the main forecast that gives the worst scenario for an area up to 60 miles out to sea. So you can be confident of the wind direction and strength right where you are travelling, and you see four hourly forecasts.

FOR ANYONE WHO IS UNLUCKY ENOUGH TO BEND A RUDDER SHAFT, WE HAVE ONE PIECE OF ADVICE: DON’T TRY TO HAVE IT STRAIGHTENED, REPLACE IT – AND SAVE YOURSELF A THOUSAND DOLLARS!



Beyond Crowdy Head, the team made day hops: Crowdy Head to Byron Bay, Byron Bay to the Gold Coast Seaway, the Seaway to Yellow Patch (the ocean way) at the top of Moreton Island, Yellow Patch to Mooloolaba, Mooloolaba to the Wide Bay Bar, and finally through the bar to Tin Can Bay. An interesting point to note is that you can get updated waypoints for the Wide Bay Bar from the VMR at Tin Can Bay.

NOT EVERYTHING GOES TO PLAN

On most sailing trips, nothing ever runs perfectly to plan. And this delivery trip was no exception. Something happened that was not expected just past Crowdy Head: ‘the rudder incident’! A poor repair to a bent rudder shaft (we had hit a rock during an earlier cruise) gave way. The shaft snapped and the port rudder disappeared in the ocean! It took a while for Wade to understand why the autopilot was no longer keeping the correct course



opposite: Wade has just launched the spinnaker. Photo Merv Edmunds

above: Bar crossing at Lakes Entrance. Photo Chris Danger

left: New rudder under construction. Photo Wade Bishop

and the boat seemed to want to veer towards the rocky coastline ... until he dropped the sails, stopped the boat and jumped overboard to check underneath. “We have dropped a rudder; but it’s alright, we have got the other one – the joys of built-in redundancy on a catamaran!”

For anyone who is unlucky enough to bend a rudder shaft, we have one piece of advice: don’t try to have it straightened, replace it – and save yourself a thousand dollars!

The team was fortunate to be able to organise for a new rudder to be

built. Peter Snell, designer of the Easy Catamarans and builder of *Take It Easy*, and Grenville Eastwood, another Easy builder, came to the rescue. Grenville, based in Mooloolaba, made us a new rudder. It took about a week. So the boys enjoyed the delights of Mooloolaba while they waited for the new rudder to be ready, and they enjoyed visiting Grenville and Peter, and seeing other Easy catamarans under construction.

Despite this forced stop, they arrived in Tin Can Bay with a few days to spare, so the three weeks’ allowance





**above:** Anchored at Double Island Point.  
*Photo Wade Bishop*

**right:** Coastal views along NSW.  
*Photo Merv Edmunds*

for the delivery trip was comfortable. They sailed for 12 days, plus a five day stop-over in Mooloolaba.

## LOOKING BACK

For Wade this delivery trip was very rewarding, even with the misfortune of the rudder incident. “It is great to discover an area we had not sailed to before. And it is very satisfying to achieve what we set out to do. We worked well together, life on board was harmonious. It was useful to have two boat builders who are handy with running repairs and gear adjustments.”

For Mike it was particularly worthwhile to see how the very boat he is building handles. He loved the whole experience: the night watches, the wildlife, just being there. “You can read a lot of books about sailing, but there is nothing like being out in the ocean and getting the experience.”

For Merv too it was a special, reflective, meditative time even. “We all have a yearning for adventure; we want to experience something different, bigger than us. It is such a unique environment.”

Their advice to others interested in taking part in a delivery trip:

- “You get tired: it is physically demanding. You brace yourself constantly even on a catamaran,



without realising it. Broken sleep is another aspect that adds to the physical challenge. And you can get seasick, but you have to keep your watch.”

- “Don’t expect a ‘tourist’ time. You have a job to do. You won’t have time to check out a few spots.”
- “You learn a lot from the skipper about managing the boat, weather routing, navigation, sails trimming. We would sail with him again any time.”

And that is the sign of a successful delivery: mission accomplished, mishap overcome, a happy crew with many tales to tell, and above all a team effort that made our family cruise possible. Thank you Mike and Merv. Thank you also to Peter & Ann Snell, and Grenville Eastwood for getting us out of trouble.

Stay tuned for an article on our family cruising experience in a future issue.

**Take It Easy is a 38ft (11.6m) Easy catamaran, made of marine ply and epoxy. She was the first Easy of this size designed and built by Peter Snell who launched her in October 2003. Chris and Wade acquired her in April 2011 after it had two other owners and was looking a bit tired. They lavished a lot of TLC on their catamaran with a major overhaul to carry out repairs, update her colours and make her truly theirs. For more information and to follow Chris and Wade's adventures, go to [www.sv-takeiteasy.com](http://www.sv-takeiteasy.com)**