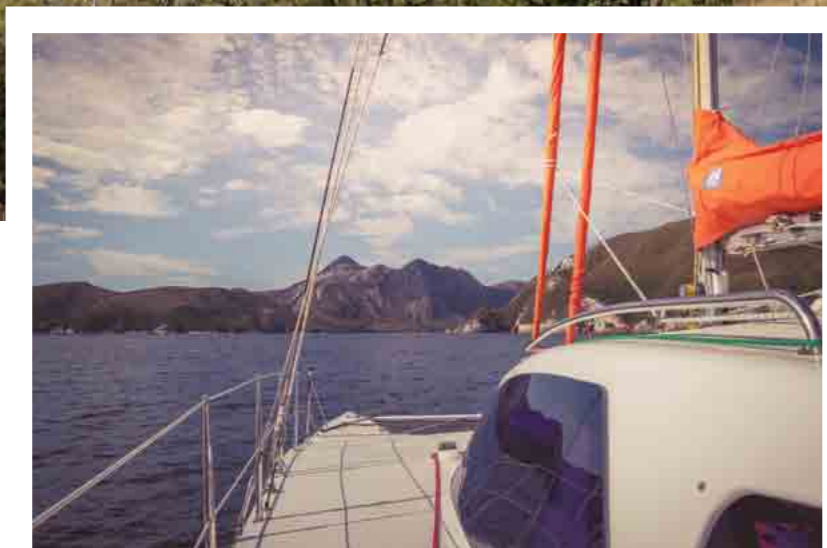
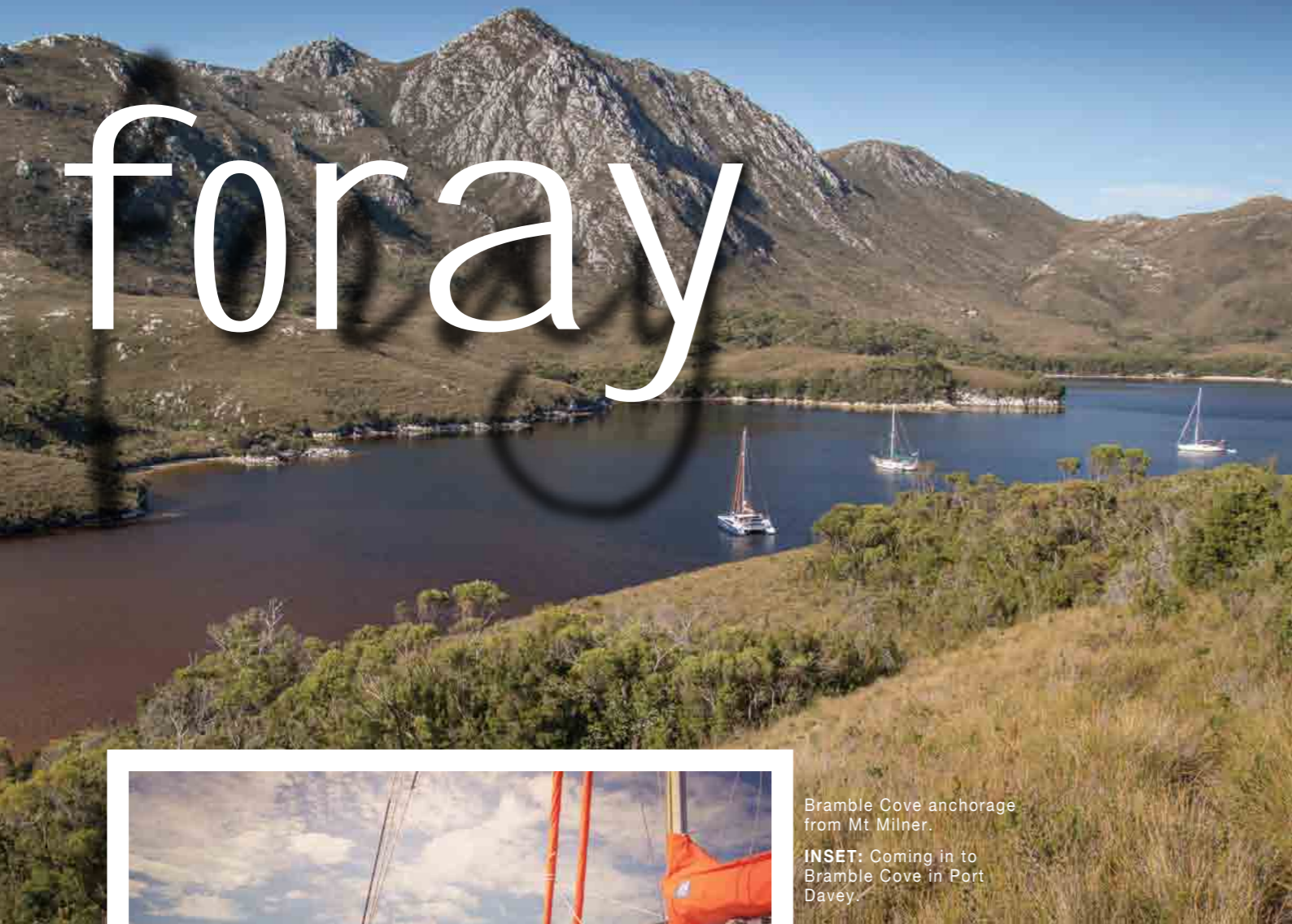


TASMANIAN WEST COAST

foray



Bramble Cove anchorage from Mt Milner.

INSET: Coming in to Bramble Cove in Port Davey.

PART 2 PORT DAVEY

For the second article of the Tasmanian West Coast Foray series, **CHRISTINE DANGER** takes us from Macquarie Harbour to Port Davey and explores the magnificent oceanic inlet of Port Davey-Bathurst Harbour.

Sailing the west coast really is sailing the wild side of Tasmania. And this is particularly the case as you exit out of Macquarie Harbour and sail the 90 miles south towards Port Davey. The coast changes, mountain ranges are much closer to the shores, and even in calm conditions the waves break spectacularly against rocky outcrops and reefs. This is an impressive coast to see in daylight!

GETTING THERE

As we have said before, we are not big on sailing all night and much prefer to look for safe anchorages along the way. Despite the ruggedness of the coast, there are still a few spots to stop at to break your journey.

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For this passage we knew of several overnight anchorage possibilities: a third of the way down, Hibbs Point offers shelter both on the Northern side, behind Hibbs Pyramid, and on the southern side off Bird Island. Two thirds of the way down is Elliott Bay, just past Low Rocky Point. We chose to hide behind Hibbs Pyramid and had a quiet night there, although, as with any west coast anchorage, there was a little bit of swell – very manageable on a catamaran. Plus it is an amazing feeling to be out there, daring not to rush.

The further south you go, the more wildlife there seems to be: pods of



dolphins, seals, seabirds in large numbers. But there are also more fishing boats, and you need to keep a keen eye out for cray pot lines which can wreak havoc if you run over them.

We had a wonderful sail all the way, in only 2m swell. Sunny, gentle, everything you imagine a west coast run not to be!

There are favoured arrival points in Port Davey: Bond Bay in the north, Bramble Cove just behind Breakwater Island in the centre, and Spain Bay in the South, all offering shelter in different conditions. We

TOP: The view towards Port Davey and the Southern Ocean from Mt Stoke.

ABOVE: The Bathurst Channel offers great anchorages in small coves.

elected to anchor at Bramble Cove, mainly because we wanted to climb a neighbouring hill that gives a great overview of Port Davey, the perfect introduction to this magnificent wilderness area.

A FEW THINGS ABOUT WILD PORT DAVEY

If you seek untamed, pristine, remote wilderness, this is the ultimate.

Where Macquarie Harbour is vast and rich in history, it is not as isolated and away from civilisation as Port Davey-Bathurst Harbour. With no settlement, no road for hundreds of kilometres, no access other than via sea or air, this oceanic inlet is a true wilderness.

More than anything, Port Davey is a place where the weather reigns supreme. Predominant winds from

the west and southwest have travelled a long way and pack serious punch. It rains 212 days of the year. So before sharing some information about favorite anchorages, let us tell you about a few important things.

If you want to shelter from gale force winds which swirl around the tall hills overlooking the waterways, rather than anchor in a bay with



TOP LEFT: Hibbs Pyramid, a third of the way down the West Coast to Port Davey, is a nice anchorage for the night.

TOP RIGHT: Casilda Cove anchorage – all yachts there anchor stern to shore.

ABOVE: *Take It Easy* in its cat's cradle, tied stern to shore.



TOP: Yachts anchored at Clayton's Corner in Bathurst Harbour.

ABOVE: A great view of the Bathurst Channel from Mt Beattie.

50-70m of chain out, spider web yourself into the shore. The trick is to drop the anchor close to the water's edge, then run lines to shore with the dinghy and tie the boat to tree trunks. With the anchor at the bow and the lines at the stern, once tucked in you are protected from ferocious gusts in your cat's cradle.

And apart from the wind, it gets very soggy and cold at any time of the year! We have been known to find ice on deck in the middle of summer. So don't forget warm gear – and that means warm clothes and waterproofs as well as warm bedding. Flannelette jammies can come in handy too!

And because the weather can be mean, you may well be weather bound for much longer than planned. So you should come to this isolated place with a well provisioned boat. Can you be autonomous for three weeks or more? Will you have enough food and sundries, can you collect rainwater to replenish your tanks?

Another potentially problematic aspect is the lack of internet or phone communication. Only Melaleuca Inlet offers this at the little aerodrome, but that is it. In every other anchorage you will enjoy internet detox, and have only patchy radio communication with TAS maritime. This affects your ability to get weather updates. So the only way to obtain forecasts is through a satellite system, an HF radio, or at



Moulters Inlet is beautiful but shallow, a good spot for multihulls.

least an HF receiver as we do, or rely on the goodness of people relaying messages – or make frequent trips to Melaleuca!

Finally, when you sail to such a remote region, you want to explore as much as you can. If you want to see the sensational panoramic views that are the hallmark of Port Davey, you have to climb those hills. So come prepared with walking boots, gaiters, waterproof shells, and walking poles for the steep climbs and slippery descents. There are not many made tracks. Most walks involve some scrambling up buttongrass morelands, tea tree forests, screes and rivulets, muddy wombat trails if you are lucky.

ANCHORAGES NOT TO BE MISSED

The two large water expanses of Port Davey and Bathurst Harbour are linked by the seven mile narrow Bathurst Channel. There are numerous anchorages in the two harbours and off the channel, with a mix of large bays and more intimate coves.

The Bathurst Channel is quite deep, over 30m in places, compared to the depth of 7-8m in the harbours. The coves coming off the channel are even shallower, 2-4m.

Here are a few of the anchorages we liked. This is by no means an exhaustive list and we have not seen everything there is to see in this extensive wilderness area. But we have chosen the ones listed here because they not only offer beautiful surroundings, but also allow you to enjoy some shore activities.

BRAMBLE COVE

This anchorage has actually got three separate little coves to choose

from depending on wind direction. It works for northerly, easterly and southerly breezes. You anchor in 2-4m over mud. There is a great walk up Mt Milner for superb views of Port Davey and the Southern Ocean. Bramble Cove is a great arrival or departure point also.

WOMBAT COVE

The water in the cove is deep right up to the shore – 2-4m. The bottom is mud. This is a narrow cove. You really need to lie stern to shore and tie yourself to trees. There are a couple of good walks from the head of the cove: one to Mt Stoke, the other if you are really energetic up to Mt Misery.

THERE ARE NUMEROUS ANCHORAGES IN THE TWO HARBOURS AND OFF THE CHANNEL, WITH A MIX OF LARGE BAYS AND MORE INTIMATE COVES

CASILDA COVE

Just inside the entrance to Horseshoe Inlet, currents have formed a deeper pool called Casilda Cove. This great anchorage requires you to tie stern to. Anchoring in the middle is not an option as there are submerged rocks, some of which are not marked on the charts. It is on our favorite list because from there you can kayak into the Horseshoe Inlet, or have a choice of two walks: one up Balmoral Hill, with outstanding views over the Bathurst Channel, and the other up Rattenbury Hill for excellent views over the Inlet and the Channel.

CLAYTON'S CORNER

This is a nice anchorage in all wind directions with satisfactory holding except when a gale or storm is blowing. You throw the pick in 2-4m of water, in soft mud. This is an interesting spot to come to. Firstly you have access to a small jetty and the Claytons' former home, now in the care of Parks and Wildlife. The Clayton family cray-fished and lived there between 1940 and 1976.

Secondly there are two good walks: one is an easy stroll up to 'TV Hill' behind the house, the other is the more demanding but very rewarding Mt Beattie climb, with great views of the Bathurst Channel, the Harbour and Melaleuca Inlet. Clayton's Corner is also a good departure point for Melaleuca Inlet.

MELALEUCA INLET

You cannot come to Port Davey without visiting Melaleuca Inlet. Why? Because this used to be the base for fabled alluvial tin miner and 'King of the Wilderness' Deny King. There is a small settlement which includes the King family home, a couple of bushwalkers' huts, a bird hide with a little museum, and a small aerodrome. There is a short walk through aboriginal country with interpretive signs and the South Coast walk passes through there to Cox Bight.

It is possible for shallow draft boats to negotiate the inlet, but there are only two options to moor alongside

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the banks against rubber pylons. The inlet is too narrow to anchor in it, and there is no access into the lagoon at the end. A good alternative to taking the big boat is to dinghy from Clayton's, right up to a pontoon in Melaleuca Creek.

We have escaped out of Port Davey and about to round Southwest Cape.

MOULTER'S INLET

This is a very pretty but shallow anchorage in 2m of water over mud. It has a tiny entrance like a secret passage into a hidden world, surrounded by tall hills. Nothing much to do here, other than kayak or just day dream.

There are many other beautiful anchorages to explore. You just need time. Allow at least two weeks, more if you can, or like us make return trips to revisit favorite spots and discover new jewels in this Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage area.

After over 15 years of holiday cruising, Chris and her partner Wade Bishop have retired and moved on board *Take It Easy*, their 11.6m Easy catamaran. They have finally become sea gypsies. You can follow their adventures on www.sv-takeiteasy.com