

Ocean Roads' Kimberley Dreaming

Part One of Three Instalments, produced by Clint & Tracey Earnshaw

This is a story of an adventure by three families through one of the most remote, and certainly one of the oldest, and most rugged parts of the planet earth.

Three families, three trailerboats, thousands of miles on the road, hundreds of miles at sea, for what can surely be described as the adventure of a lifetime. Join us now, and in the months of November and December, as we explore the waters from west around to the south, from Wyndham WA in the north, to Broome WA in the nor' east. The story is recounted by the team leader, Clint Earnshaw, with pics from just about everyone.

For 10 years, I have been dreaming of going through the Kimberley in a trailerboat.

Four years ago, my mate Darryl Helms and I set a date – April 2008 – to go from Wyndham in the far north of Western Australia down to Broome on the North-west Coast. It involved a journey of some 1400 nautical miles, and we estimated it would take approximately 3 weeks. Initially we thought we would do the trip in 5 metre dinghies, but as time passed, I decided (as I am a boat builder) to build my own boat especially for the trip.

We settled on a boat of 7.5m centreline length, with twin 2004 model 140hp Suzukis, which had 500 hours on the clock when I bought them.

The boat carries 750 litres of fuel under deck, and 130 litres of water. It has a 60 litre built-in freezer, 2 x 75 watt solar panels, 2 burner metho cooker, deck wash, 2 berth cabin and hardtop.

It was loosely based on a 680SF Haines Hunter using a walkaround configuration, and a 21.5 degree deadrise.

I made it with a 5mm bottom and 4mm sides, and put it on a heavy duty tandem trailer with 4 tonne suspension and stainless brakes, etc.

Empty of fuel, but with all normal safety gear, it weighs 3.9 tonnes BMT, so you could say it is “overbuilt”.

We put in a Furuno GPS and sounder, and 27 MHz and VHF radios. All wiring was done using tinned wire. We achieved a top speed of 39.7 knots with 500 litres of fuel and one adult on board. With my family of 7 on board, 750 litres of fuel and full water, we can get it to 36.5 knots. Even loaded for the Kimberley trip with 1350 litres of fuel, 130 litres of water, 3 adults and 3 kids, plus full stores for 3 weeks, we still managed to get 28 knots – love my Suzuki's!

Getting Started

We drove from Lake Grace (south-east of Perth) to Wyndham (a distance of approx 4,300km) arriving in Kununurra on Sunday night the 30th March 2008, where some of the family, Peter and Anne Wrightson, plus Frank and Val Leary, were waiting for us.

They would be making the journey back from Wyndham down to Broome with the vehicles and boat trailers for us.

It's time now to introduce you to the other two boats that joined us on the trip.

“Phoenix” is owned by Ben Williams and was crewed by his son Sanjay, mate Mike Hoek, his son Jed, and



All three families came from the south of WA, and travelled several thousand miles north to Wyndham via Kununurra - that's the Kununurra Caravan Park below. All told more than 15 people made the trip in three boats from three families with assorted friends and rellos. And they will each remember the trip forever more.

