

Cats Across Bass Strait



To Flinders Island

Over the last couple of years, F&B Tassy editor Mike Fry has done a great job telling us all about Tasmanian boating - but between Tassy and the mainland, there's a virtual archipelago of beautiful windswept islands in the Bass Strait. And as the team at Inverloch Marine show here, with the right craft, these islands are quite accessible to fishermen, divers and their families from both sides of the Strait. Peter Bellingham has the story

- Monday 8th March, the Bass Strait weather gods are smiling - there is a slow moving high in the bight; the trip is on.

- Saturday 12th, leave home in Leongatha @ 05.00 heading to Port Welshpool.

- 06.00 First stop "Petrol Pete's" servo in Toora to fuel boat and buy breakfast. Bloody typical, get over the Foster hills and the wind is blowing a good 15-20 from the South east, the Quells go down with the egg and bacon sangas.

- 07.00 We meet the other boats at the Port Welshpool ramp; all up 2 x 2700 Noosa Cats, 1 x 24 Shark Cat and 1 x 23 Shark Cat. Can't work the wind out if it is dead still here in port.

- 08.00 Formalities over, we are all on the water and heading for the Welshpool entrance.

- Out through Five Ways and past the Singapore deep, the four cats purr past 30-40 boats anchored up waiting for the slack tide, gummies and snapper to come on. *See ya, boys!*

- Out into the strait and with the Prom at our backs the

first island we get to is Clifty. With a 1.5-2m even swell at our port quarter the cats love it, and we are cruising at around 24 knots. The clifty light house sits high above us as we cruise past (wouldn't be a bad gig on a day like today) and the Hogan group is in sight.

- Heading down the western side of Hogan Island which is the biggest of the group we are all just starting to appreciate our surroundings. Apart from the other 3 cats with us, the place is ours, not another boat in sight and either I'm going mad, or getting my sea legs, but the swell seems to be dropping off.

- 13.00 Deal Island can only be described as breathtaking, the sheer cliffs rising out of the water on the north western side, rusty colored granite against a blue sea that you would only expect to see in the tropics, is awesome. Pulling into the beach at the hut on Deal, it's time for lunch and a quick look around. We see our first boats for the trip - a couple of yachts anchored up below the Deal lighthouse in the opposite bay.

- 13.30 It's time to head off and we say hooroo to Laurie and his crew in the 23 cat who are going to camp on Deal for a couple of nights. The next stop is the northern end of

