



## A guide to Sailing to and cruising in Australia

**PLEASE NOTE:**

All the **BLUE UNDERLINED TEXT** in this document are links where you can find more information about the various subjects we discuss. If you have the print version of this document you can download the electronic version here [www.downunderrally.com/sailing-to-australia](http://www.downunderrally.com/sailing-to-australia)

### About Australia

The first thing to know about Australia is that it is a big country, in-fact it is about the same size as continental USA.



If you include all of the islands, Australia’s coastline stretches over 30,000nm. By far the most popular area for cruising yachts is the area of the east coast from Sydney in the South to Cairns in the north which is without doubt one of the worlds best cruising grounds.



## Cruising in Australia

From a cruiser's perspective apart from the fact that it is warm, the best part about cruising the east coast of Australia is that you can say goodbye to overnight passages for a while!

The east coast between Sydney and Cairns provides the opportunity to sail by day and stopover each night, at various marinas, yacht clubs and sheltered secure anchorages.

Whilst cruising in these locations you are almost guaranteed to meet some local cruisers who will be only too happy to share their experiences and pass-on tips or local knowledge. In fact as very few Australians sail beyond the waters of Australia they are likely to be in awe of the fact that you have sailed halfway around the world and will want to hear your stories of the places you have been and the adventures had along the way.

Most of all, be prepared to be surprised by how much there is to see and do "down under," so much so that many of our rally participants decide to stay for an extra season which is no problem as visiting yachts can remain in Australia for up to 3 years without having to be imported.

I am sure you have probably heard people saying how wonderful the cruising grounds of the Great Barrier Reef are?

Well they are right, and spending a few months (or even years) cruising the islands and sheltered waters of Great Barrier Reef and coastal Queensland is, or at least should be on most everyone's "bucket list."

[Noonsite](#) opens the Australia info page with this statement:

*"In spite of the large number of yachts in Australia, the number of Australian yachts cruising overseas is surprisingly small and the only explanation for this is that Australia possesses such beautiful and varied cruising grounds that they do not need to go and look for variety elsewhere. From the wind-swept coasts of Victoria and Tasmania to the picturesque harbours of New South Wales, the tropical islands and Great Barrier Reef of Queensland to the huge shallow bays of the Northern Territory, Australia has it all"*

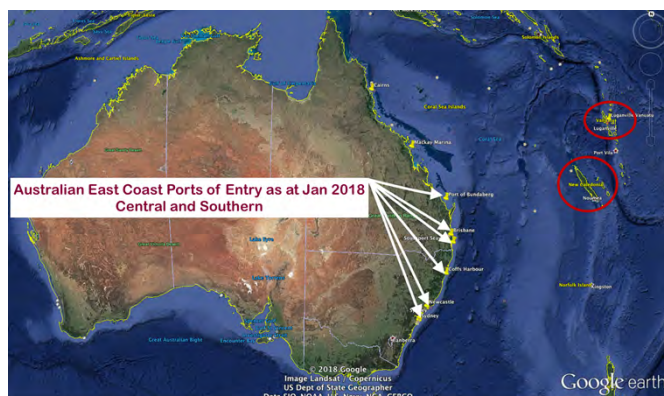
Below is an extract from the blog of a USA flagged yacht that recently visited Australia

*"Queensland has got to be one of the best places in the world to cruise. Highlights include:*

- *Spectacular scenery that is still quite untrammelled. Queensland is bigger than California yet there are only about 5 million residents, most around Brisbane. Huge segments of the coastline are roadless.*
- *English-speaking civilization. If anything Australia is a little too comfortable for an American. Any imaginable boat repair can be handled and 110v items are easily available via airfreight.*
- *Weather is mostly benign and easily forecast.*
- *You can spend as much or as little time in marinas as you like.*
- *Nearly all of the Queensland coast can be day sailed from harbour to harbour.*
- *Anchorages tend to be good holding sand or mud.*
- *The Great Barrier Reef"*

## The passage to Australia

Australia is a huge target with [many ports of entry](#) so if the forecast does not live up to expectations one can simply change direction and choose a port of entry that offers a more comfortable point of sail. [www.homeaffairs.gov.au/trav/ente/avia/maritime/ports-of-entry](http://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/trav/ente/avia/maritime/ports-of-entry)



When we look at the latitude of Bundaberg in Queensland for example it stands to reason that one is much less likely to encounter weather as severe as what can be expected when sailing in considerably higher latitudes.

In our experience and that of majority who have made the passage from New Caledonia or Vanuatu to Australia, it is typically a reach or a run especially if a port in South East Queensland is chosen such as the Port of Bundaberg.

Bundaberg has long been a favorite with westbound yachts as it is the closest port of entry into Australia from New Caledonia and the passage is typically quite benign.



Bundaberg Port Marina- 2016 Down Under "Go West" Rally

The passage to the more southern ports in New South Wales, such as Coffs Harbour, Newcastle and Sydney can be more of a challenge as there is the possibility of encountering a weather event know as [Southerly Buster](#) as one approach's the New South Wales coast. [www.media.bom.gov.au/social/blog/18/the-big-bust-southerly-busters-explained](http://www.media.bom.gov.au/social/blog/18/the-big-bust-southerly-busters-explained)

These weather events are hard to predict and are to be avoided, as they are capable of producing gale-force winds and steep rough seas. By setting a course for a more northern port they can be avoided.

## Climate in Australia

Apart from the probability of having a less challenging passage and the lure of the east coast cruising grounds another advantage, as we see it, it is much warmer in Australia. After all, most of us are in pursuit of the endless summer are we not? Below are the typical average temperatures in southeast Queensland and Central - Northern New South Wales:

SE Queensland (Bundaberg to Gold Coast)

- Air temperature average is around 26.°C (78.8°F)
- Average water temperature is around 25°C (77.3°F)

Central to Northern New South Wales (Sydney to Tweed Heads)

- Air temperature average is around 24°C (75.2°F)
- Average water temperature is around 23°C (73.4°F)

## Clearing Into Australia

I expect that those who are reading this are saying, sounds good but what about all those horror stories that are circulating about Australian Customs and biosecurity?

Sadly most people do not often share their good experiences and when they do it seems that the account of a good experience is not what makes for an interesting topic of conversation. The facts are, there are far more accounts of good experiences being had than bad, the accounts of the good are just not as easy to find.

The Down Under Rally works closely with the Australian Border Force (aka customs) and the Department of Agriculture and Water Recourses (aka quarantine). We provide our rally participants with up to date and comprehensive information that is written in plain English to ensure you know what to expect and how to prepare for your arrival and thus avoid any bad experiences.

On the [Down Under Rally](#) website you can [read testimonials](#) from past ["Go West Rally"](#) participants saying how pleasantly surprised they were by the reception they received from the officials and the process of clearing in. In fact many have said that they found the process of clearing into Australia no more difficult or demanding than any other country they had visited. If you like you can [email us](#) and we will put you in touch with some of our past rally participants so you can ask them yourself.

## Trades and professional services.

Marine related trades and services professionals are abundant in Australia, ensuring a healthy competition exists within the industry. This abundance of supply also helps to ensure that in most instances users of these services do not find themselves in the position of having to wait for extended periods of time to have repairs & maintenance carried out.

There are many choices when it comes to finding marinas, shipyards all of which are serviced by a variety of providers of marine related products and services. The Down Under Rally understands the needs of visiting yachts and has formed strategic partnerships with key providers of marine related trades and services; many of who offer discounted services to our rally participants. Visit the [Services Directory](#) page of the Down Under Rally website to see some of the products & services and offers from our rally partners.

## Cyclone Season in the SW Pacific

People who have crossed the Pacific often say that the best was saved until the last. Fiji, Vanuatu & New Caledonia are destinations in themselves and deserve much more than a fleeting visit as you make your way west.

Unfortunately however, especially in recent times many yachts that have stayed in these countries have not fared well in cyclone season making it a risky proposition to consider staying in one of these locations beyond November.

This means that for most the choices are to head to the south and make the passage to New Zealand or continue west for Australia.

### Australia or New Zealand for then SW Pacific cyclone season?

In the past many cruising yachts have chosen to go to New Zealand for cyclone season rather than Australia.

In recent years, thanks in part to the efforts of the Down Under Rally, more and more international cruisers are choosing to sail to Australia and then fly to New Zealand for a visit.

Please don't misunderstand, The Down Under Rally has nothing against New Zealand. We have made the passage to Opuia and spent a season cruising and touring the country. In fact we believe that visiting and touring New Zealand is also a must do, however, the Tasman Sea has a reputation of being one of the nastiest bodies of water on the planet and you don't have to sail there.

Over the years the Tasman Sea has claimed many yachts and the lives of many a seasoned sailor Google: "[Sailing in the Tasman sea](#)"

Looking at the latitude of Opuia in New Zealand it is not difficult to understand why those who voyage from the SW Pacific Islands to Opuia can and often do encounter some very uncomfortable and challenging conditions.

In fact, it can be such a difficult passage that on page 5 of the [South Pacific Guide](#) written by Jim Corenman it says:

*"So just how do you get to New Zealand without getting pasted?  
Good question, and the short answer is that you can't. A worthy goal is to try to avoid getting pasted more than once"*

The next thing to consider is that if you do choose to go to New Zealand you will once again have to face the Tasman in order to return to the islands.

If a visit to New Zealand is on your bucket list then consider sailing to Australia spending a couple of months in Australia and then flying to New Zealand. Flights to New Zealand from Australia are very economical and it is a good opportunity to renew your Australian visa as well.

## Suggested itinerary Fiji to Australia

### September - October

As cruisers ourselves we understand that cruisers plans are “written in the sand at low tide”. With that in mind here is a plan that you might like to consider:

- Plan to spend at least a month in Fiji and stay until late September. The legendary [Musket Cove Regatta Week](#) takes place usually from about the 15<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> September. Regatta week is a fun filled week of sailing and social events and is on the bucket list of many a cruiser.
- After regatta week sail east to New Caledonia via Vanuatu and spend a couple of days exploring [the island of Tanna](#) . This will allow you to get a taste of Vanuatu and the experience the [Mount Yasur Volcano](#).By now it will likely be early October.
- Join the ["Loyalty Islands Rally"](#) and get to cruise the New Caledonia Loyalty Islands / East Coast & the Southern Lagoon without having to first sail all the way to Noumea to clear in. Normally you cannot stop anywhere in New Caledonia without first having cleared into the country and the only official clearance port is Noumea on the western side of the country. This often means that many yachts do not get to visit one of the most pristine cruising destinations that the pacific has to offer, the Loyalty Islands which are on the eastern side of New Caledonia. By joining the Down Under Rally- "Loyalty Islands Rally" you will be able to cruise the Loyalty Islands and the southern New Caledonia Lagoon, including Ile de Pins before continuing on to Noumea.
- Attend the [Down Under "Go West" Rally](#) rendezvous/briefing in Noumea in mid October and depart New Caledonia soon after to arrive in Australia around the 1<sup>st</sup> November

### November - April

- **Early November**
- Join us for the Down Under Rally [Welcome Week](#) in Bundaberg

The purpose of Welcome Week is to provide those who join the Go West Rally with a fun and informative week of events.

In addition to a couple of parties and several fun and entertaining social events that take place during Welcome Week the Down Under Rally also provides free information sessions on the following subjects:

- Aussie 101 Presentation: Surviving & Thriving Down Under.
- VHF Channels & Weather Down Under Presentation
- East Coast Cruising Presentation - Bundaberg to Gold Coast
- East Coast Cruising Presentation- Gold Coast to Sydney
- East Coast Cruising Presentation- Bundaberg to Cairns and beyond
- East Coast Cruising Presentation- Sydney to Tasmania
- Land Cruising Down Under Presentation.

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## Mid November – January

- For those looking to dry store their vessel and return home Bundaberg is the perfect location and one of the most economical especially if you are a Go West Rally participant as participants are entitled to special offers and discounts.
- If cruising is on your agenda then heading south to Sydney will provide you with some opportunities to tick a few more of those bucket list items such as watching the start of the [Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race](#) and of course the world famous [Sydney Harbour New Years Eve Fireworks](#) and the spectacular [Australia Day](#) events and fireworks.

## February – March options:

1. Take your time and sail the north along the NSW coast visiting the many anchorages along the to SE Queensland.
2. Leave the boat in one of the many marinas in NSW, the Gold Coast or Brisbane, make that visa run to New Zealand and spend a couple of weeks touring the north and south islands.
3. If you are in no hurry you could continue sailing south to [Tasmania](#) and experience a cruising ground to rival the most scenic the work has to offer.

## After Cyclone Season

There is another myth that once you are in Australia you cannot go back east. This is simply untrue. For several years now we, and many others have made the voyage east from Australia to New Caledonia and then onwards to Vanuatu and or Fiji. It is just a matter of understanding when to go, what weather patterns to look for and being patient. The same is true for the passage from New Zealand. The difference again is that if you go east from Australia you will be voyaging in much lower latitude's and the passage distance is shorter.

The choices for after Cyclone Season are:

1. Spend a relaxing few months [Cruising the Queensland Coast](#) and exploring the hundred's of island and atolls The Great Barrier Reef [The Great Barrier Reef](#) one of the seven wonders of the natural world and the [74 Islands of the Whitsunday Group](#) before returning south for the following cyclone season.
2. Sail east to [New Caledonia](#) and spend a relaxed season cruising and exploring New Caledonia and the [Vanuatu Group](#) of islands before heading back to Australia via the seldom visited [Chesterfield Reefs](#) for a second season or alternatively if you have had enough of civilization for a while you could sail north to the [Marshall Islands](#) for the following cyclone season.
3. If you wish to continue your onward voyage sail north along the Queensland coast to Cairns and sample some of [The Great Barrier Reef](#) islands and mainland anchorages and ports along the way before depart from Cairns in July to SE Asia with the [Multihull Solutions Sail2Indonesia Rally](#)

## About the Down Under Rally

The Down Under "Go West" Rally is a destination rally and open to all vessels departing from ports in the SW Pacific with Australia being their destination.

Participants are free to depart for Australia from New Caledonia, Vanuatu or any other port in the SW Pacific.

### The Down Under Rally is all about choice!

- You choose how much you are involved in the rally, do everything, do some of it, do none of it, sail in company or sail alone it is up to you.
- You choose from where you depart.
- You choose your port of entry.

### Down Under Go West Rally Options

- **Option 1 - The Go West "Bundy Rally"**

This rally is for vessels that choose Bundaberg as their Australian Port of entry.

If you join the "Bundy Rally" the fee for your initial Pratique & Timber inspection of your vessel (biosecurity inspection) on arrival in Bundaberg is included in the rally entry fee and as such the cost to you for this inspection if you join the Bundy Rally will be zero!

You will be also be invited to attend parties with live music, indigenous Australian dance show, Australian east coast cruising seminars and many other events during the rally Welcome Week in Bundaberg. Plus you will receive discounts and deals on marina fees, antifouling, haul outs, dry storage and much more from our rally partner businesses that will save you \$\$\$\$\$\$

[Click Here for more information about the "Bundy Rally"](#)

- **Option 2 - The Go West "All Ports Rally".**

This rally is for vessels that choose any of the ports below as their Australian port of entry: Mackay, Brisbane, Southport, Coffs Harbour & Newcastle.

Those who do not want to arrive in Bundaberg can join the "All Ports Rally" as still get the benefit of all the support and information we provide in regard to how prepare for your arrival in Australia to ensure your arrival is hassle free. In addition you will receive discounts and deals on marina fees, antifouling, haul outs, dry storage and much more from our rally partner businesses that will save you \$\$\$\$\$\$

[Click Here for more information about the "All Ports Rally"](#)



## Fees to enter Australia.

The Australian Border Force, also known as customs, do not charge a fee for inspecting and providing clearance into Australia for recreational vessel under 25m LOA during normal working hours.

The Australian government department of Agriculture & Water Resources, also known as Biosecurity do however charge a fee for service. As of January 2016 the fees charged by the biosecurity increased by about 17.5% in comparison to fees that were charged for the same service prior to January 2016.

In 2017 The Down Under Rally paid the initial biosecurity pratique & timber inspection for 36 vessels all of which were well prepared and under 25m LOA.

The average cost per vessel per for the pratique & initial timber inspection in 2017 was \$448.00 AUD. See this website [www.agriculture.gov.au/fees](http://www.agriculture.gov.au/fees) for a summary and breakdown of the fees.

*Please note: Overtime charges apply for clearance outside normal working hours and these fees are not included in the rally entry fee.*

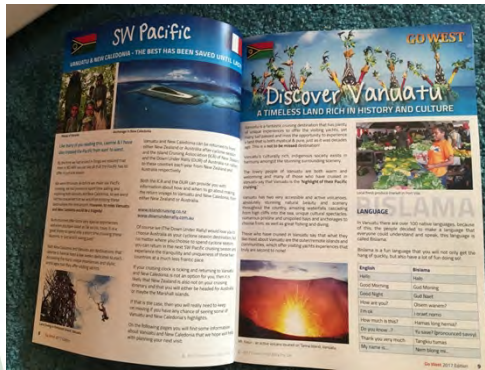
## Some good reasons to join the Down Under Rally?

1. **Local Knowledge.** We are Australians, and we actively cruise in Australia. We know what you need to know and if we don't, we know how to find out! We also work closely with rally participants & the Australian Border Control & Biosecurity to ensure that that all involved are fully aware of what is required before you arrive and what to expect upon arrival.
2. **Over 100 international vessels have joined the rally and arrived in Australia in the past 3 years.** Here is what Mike & Leanne of s.v Ooroo who were 2017 Go West Rally participants had this to say: *"If you are heading to Australia you would be mad not to join the Go West Rally as the discounts and deals they offer more that cover the rally entry fee which means all the other information they provide is free. Everything was really well organised and whole lot of fun as well "*. To see what other Go West Rally participants have said about the rally & Australia [click here](#)
3. **Save \$\$\$\$ with the "Rally Great Deals" from our rally partners.** The Down Under Rally has over 40 trusted rally partners businesses who offer our all rally participants discounts and deals on everything from Antifoul to Zincs including discounted marinas fees and hardstand fees.
4. **FREE to attend Welcome Week Events.** Those who choose to join the Go West "Bundy Rally" are invited to attend the Down Under Rally Welcome Week. All Welcome Week events are FREE TO ATTEND and include parties, live entertainment, Australian East Coast cruising seminars and much more. For more "Welcome Week" info [click here](#)

Each year The Down Under Rally publishes and prints the:

## Go West Magazine

The Go West Magazine is a cruisers guide to Australia & planning for a “*Summer Down Under*”



The Go West Magazine is full of information about not just Australia but also features articles and information about destinations along the way such as Vanuatu and New Caledonia. **Best of all it is FREE!**

Copies of the 2018 Go West Magazine will be available in yacht clubs, marinas and other venues know to be frequented by westbound yachts so keep an eye out for it!

You can also [CLICK HERE](#) to download the electronic version via our website.

**For more information about sailing to and cruising in Vanuatu, New Caledonia or Australia** please visit the Down Under Rally website [www.downunderrally.com](http://www.downunderrally.com) and explore the various pages within the site.

**To submit an obligation free expression of interest in joining the 2018 Down Under “Go West” Rally** please go to [www.downunderrally.com/register-interest-gowest](http://www.downunderrally.com/register-interest-gowest)

**If you would like to ask us any questions please do not hesitate to email us:**  
[downunderrally@gmail.com](mailto:downunderrally@gmail.com)

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