



We started and ended the year in two world-renowned international cities on two different continents and oceans: Sydney, Australia on the west side of the Pacific Ocean and Cape Town, South Africa in the southeastern Atlantic Ocean. In between, we've covered more than 13,000 nautical miles and now are over halfway around the world.



Atop 1,397' Mt Stokes, Port Davey, Tasmania.

We rang in the New Year with the fabulous Sydney New Year's Eve fireworks display, then travelled south and circumnavigated Tasmania over January and February. The island is full of excellent view hikes and the scenery is incredible. Partway around, we stopped in [Hobart](#), the second-oldest city in Australia. We spent several days exploring this historic city and enjoying its pubs and restaurants. In Hobart, we also got a chance to tour the Australian icebreaker and supply ship [Aurora Australis](#). At [Port Arthur](#) on the east coast and [Sarah Island](#) on the west coast, we learned more about the island's harsh penal history at well-preserved indoor/outdoor museums. And we got a first-hand glimpse into the island's history of a different sort on the [West Coast Wilderness Railway](#), a restored 1899 steam railway that uses an unusual cog system to climb the 1:15 grade.



Dramatic Cape Pillar on Tasmania's east coast.

We made two trips to Melbourne, one by air from Hobart and one on *Dirona*, to take in two very different races. The first event was the [Moth World Championships](#), where we watched a field world-class Moth sailors, including many America's Cup crew, compete for the championship. And the second was for the [Melbourne Grand Prix](#). James had attended several Formula 1 races in Canada and the US, but this was Jennifer's first and we had a great time. We also spent two weeks moored in downtown [Melbourne](#), enjoying the city's beautiful riverfront, full of art and excellent restaurants.



Melbourne Grand Prix



Moth Worlds near Melbourne.

From Melbourne we made a 1,500 mile passage, with a pit-stop at the Gold Coast, back up the east coast of Australia to the Whitsundays. Then we continued cruising north from where we'd left off last year. We had a great stop in Townsville, where we dove the world-renowned wreck of the [SS Yongala](#) and also were invited to ride along on the tug [SL Herbert](#) as it assisted a ship into port. James even got some time at the helm.



James at the helm of the tug [SL Herbert](#).



[Berkeley River, Kimberley](#).

Continuing north from Townsville, we spent a couple of weeks exploring Cairns and doing more diving on the Great Barrier Reef. We then made a 750-mile, 4-day passage across Australia's northern coast to Darwin to begin the final leg of our [vast Australia tour](#) in the Kimberley region of Western Australia.



[Crocodile eating a fish, Kimberley](#).

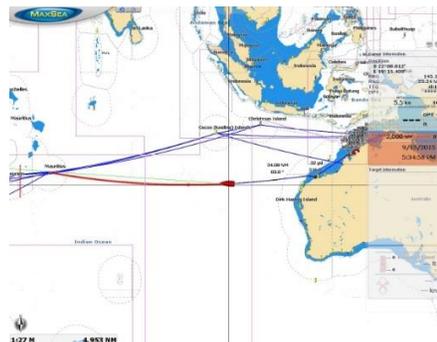
We'd heard from so many people how beautiful, raw and remote the Kimberley was, but still were amazed when we got there. The scenery was astonishing—like cruising in the Grand Canyon. Waterfalls abound here and the extreme 30-foot tidal range creates some exciting and unusual natural features. [Horizontal Falls](#) two narrow gorges about 300m apart that produce tidal waterfalls several meters high on large exchanges.

[Montgomery Reef](#) is covered at high tide, but as the tide falls the water inside pours out in increasingly active aspect of the Kimberley is the [crocodiles](#). feet long and weigh over 2,000 pounds, area definitely is a no-swim zone, and we off the swim platform in what we'd d'oeuvre" position.



[Mitchell River, Kimberley](#).

waterfalls. Perhaps the most exciting These beasts can grow close to 20 and occasionally far beyond. The were careful to keep our cat Spitfire dubbed the "crocodile hors-



[En route from Dampier to Rodrigues](#).

We returned to Darwin at the month while James flew to Seattle. Jennifer stayed on board with Spitfire and worked on getting the boat ready for the Indian Ocean crossing. In August, we made a 3,023-mile passage across the Indian Ocean from [Dampier](#) in Western Australia to [Rodrigues](#), Mauritius. This was our longest uninterrupted passage so far. And, having done it, we're now confident that distances over 3,000nm are within our range. We had a few rough nights, but generally the crossing was fairly enjoyable.

beginning of July and moored there for a



[Giant tortoise at Rodrigues](#).

We spent about ten days in laid-back and relaxed [Rodrigues](#). The island is mountainous and has some good view hikes. We also rented a scooter and toured pretty much every bay and road on the island, including a trip to the Francois Leguat Giant Tortoise and Cave Reserve. Giant tortoises, now extinct, once numbered in the hundreds of thousands on Rodrigues. The Reserve has been breeding Giant Aldabra and Radiata tortoises from Madagascar and now has several hundred on site.

From Rodrigues, we travelled to [Reunion](#), a French holding a few hundred miles east of Madagascar. Reunion is steep and mountainous, with incredible natural beauty. Three massive volcanic calderas are at the island center with



Le Maido viewpoint, Reunion.

amazing views from above and inside. The road system there is excellent, but the roads themselves are steep, winding and twisting. Just reaching the viewpoints by car was an adventure. Reunion also has an active volcano that is easily viewable on foot. And being a French holding, the food is excellent, with a steady supply of delicious French baguettes and croissants.



Le Volcan, Reunion.



Zebra at iMfolizi Game Reserve.



Cheetah cub chewing on James' fingers.

We completed our Indian Ocean crossing with a 1,382nm, 8-day run to [Richards Bay](#), South Africa. Richards Bay is an industrial town, but is close to some excellent game parks and wildlife reserves. While there we visited the [Endomeni Rehabilitation Project](#) and actually petted an adult Cheetah and



Hippos at iSimangaliso Wetland Park.

cub. At the [iMfolizi Game Reserve](#) we got close-up views of zebras, elephants, giraffes, buffalo, wildebeest, rhinos and many kinds of antelopes. And we spent ages watching the wonderful hippos at the [iSimangaliso Wetland Park](#).



James at the wheel of a Bell B40D.

We also did a couple of industry tours in Richards Bay, at [Bell Equipment](#) and [Richards Bay Minerals](#). At Bell Equipment, James got an opportunity to drive one of their six-wheel drive, articulating dump

trucks on the test track and found it remarkably easy to manage. We did notice the other drivers wisely gave him space on the track though.

From Richards Bay, we travelled to 900 miles to Cape Town and have spent the past four weeks here enjoying this cosmopolitan city. We're moored in the [V&A Waterfront](#), which has a fabulous selection of restaurants, shops and tourist venues.

We spent our first couple of days in Cape Town exploring the V&A Waterfront and enjoying some excellent meals. We hiked up iconic [Table Mountain](#), pictured at the top of this letter and right; did a sobering tour to [Robben Island](#), where Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners were imprisoned before the fall of apartheid; and have made two trips to the scenic [winelands](#) just outside Cape Town where we sampled some excellent local wines.



Dirona at the V&A Waterfront, Cape Town.

In late December we plan to make a 5,350nm passage to Barbados, with a pit stop at St. Helena for fuel. We'll spend some time in the Caribbean and likely will reach the US east coast sometime in the spring. If you are interested, you can always see where we are at mvdirona.com.



New Year's Eve fireworks display, Sydney Harbour.