



LIVING THE DELIVERY LIFE

Cruising SHK Scallywag to Hong Kong

Whether as a regular crew member or just someone with a few sea miles under the belt looking to gain more experience, bringing a boat back home or across to the start of an interstate or international race is enticing. Spending countless hours at the helm, trimming sails or adapting to positions normally not undertaken during a race, the opportunities to learn and enhance skills on different types of boats, are immeasurable. Owners are always on the lookout for competent crew that can help out. It's a win-win.

And then there are those that do it for a living.

Offshore spoke to Simone Hill and Larry Jamieson about the operational aspects of deliveries after their recent return delivery of the 100' SHK Scallywag to Hong Kong following the 2021 Rolex Sydney Hobart.

Definitely not a bad way to spend a few weeks in the office ...



SIMONE HILL

Why do it?

As the owner of a small business specialising in arranging crew travelling to international and Australian yacht regattas and rallies, the past two years certainly presented me a challenge as



Heading ashore in Palau

sailing events were cancelled worldwide. When the opportunity arose to join some recent yacht deliveries I jumped at the chance for a new adventure.

Since June 2021, I have had the privilege of visiting ten countries, many of them more than once, taken over 40 PCR tests, spent plenty of time in quarantine and airline lounges, rolled out my yoga mat in some pretty exotic places and swum laps in swimming pools of all shapes and sizes. I have covered 20,000 nautical miles and it has been absolutely amazing. There have been many highlights and a lot of learning along the way.

During my travels, I also used the time to complete my Certificate II in Maritime Operations (Coxswain) studies and keep my First Aid and Safety at Sea qualifications up to date.

So, what is involved? What is delivery life really like?

You need to be very open minded and flexible in your outlook to enjoy deliveries. Things don't run to a schedule and there is a lot of 'creative problem solving' required. You are building relationships with yacht owners, crew and trusted suppliers around the world. Managing expectations for these people is important and takes time as they are entrusting you with one of their most valuable assets.

My role as the Logistics Manager for each trip begins with research on the destinations we will be collecting the yacht from and those we plan to stop at along the way, with regards to entry requirements, visas (Crew or Seafarer), COVID testing and vaccination rules. These are constantly being amended by various authorities so it's a moving feast of regulations to keep up to date.

When we have new crew joining us, I collate all the paperwork required and manage the passports for Border Force, Customs, Immigration, and port

control. We need authority letters from owners, copies of registration, entry and exit papers and yacht insurance.

I look after the flight, accommodation, vehicle and marina bookings as we move through various countries. Meticulous record-keeping tracking all expenses is an ongoing task.

Once we arrive on the yacht, we conduct a full inspection and ensure it is ready to undertake the passage ahead. This includes safety gear, engine servicing and spare parts, test sail, calculating fuel and water consumption and requirements, first aid needs and navigation charts. It is important not to have a fixed date in mind for departure - we can only leave when every aspect of the yacht is ready. I have several checklists to work through that are refined each time we leave. Labelling the location of all the important items on the yacht and learning the various systems like water-maker and generator are key.

Provisioning is important and I use a spreadsheet so estimate amounts for each item based on time to next port. We eat a mix of fresh and canned food depending on the esky/fridge/freezer on the boat and what methods of cooking we have - on the racing yachts this is often super basic - a butane cooker on the floor. It's important not to rely on only one source of power - if there is an issue with an inverter, microwaves and induction cooktops quickly become useless. Modern yachts need a good understanding of electrics/power to keep everything running.

Once we have cleared out and are on the water, we move into watches and settle into life at sea. Watches run 24 hours a day - either three hours on/three hours off if we are two-handed or two hours on/four hours off if fully crewed. Decisions are discussed and made as a team. Keeping a vigilant lookout is important - many vessels don't use



Approaching Papua New Guinea

AIS and fishing nets are a constant through Asia. Fishing platforms, oil rigs, squid boats, and reefs are other distractions.

I enjoy the navigation, radio contact and take responsibility for our courtesy and quarantine flags along the way.

It's important to self-manage your sleep, water, meals to keep yourself in great condition. Using the time off for reading, podcasts and learning is great – we generally don't have internet when offshore. Mental fitness is just as key as physical.

Taking in nature and wildlife is beautiful – until you have seen stars 360 degrees around you down to the waterline you haven't lived! Jumping overboard as we crossed the equator, watching dolphins swimming in phosphorescence, seeing huge whale sharks, meeting new people, understanding maritime history and learning about different cultures have all been unrivalled experiences for me.

I take a lot of photos and make notes in my phone when travelling and enjoy sharing my trips with family and friends when I'm back in range. I plan to stick with the delivery life for as long as I enjoy it.

Simone Hill is the owner of My Crew Travel, specialising in co-ordinating the logistics for race yachts travelling to regattas and rallies. More recently she has added yacht deliveries to this list. Her experience as an event and project manager have proven invaluable.

LARRY JAMIESON

Why do it?

The owner of Scallywag 100, Seng Huan Lee (SH to his mates), has long time family, business and friendships both in Australia and Hong Kong. He loves Australia, went to University here and in fact lived in an apartment overlooking Rushcutters Bay while studying. That naturally led to an interest in sailing which in turn leads to an interest in the Sydney Hobart race. Like the rest of us Hobart tragics, he's been hooked! Who wouldn't want their boat on Sydney Harbour during summer?

After Hobart, both cruising and racing yacht owners traditionally start to head north for the winter. Most are heading north to Coffs Harbour, the Gold Coast and on to Hamilton Island. In our case we have a yacht owner who is looking at the bigger picture - we simply head further north. The China Sea Race from Hong Kong to the Philippines beckons over the Easter weekend - a true ocean race starting in one of the world's great cities taking the fleet across the South China Sea.

There is a fantastic racing circuit in Asia now which takes us from Hong Kong to the Philippines or Vietnam (in alternate years), then onto Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. It's a great way to escape the Southern Hemisphere winter and meet like-minded people in new places, who speak new languages and eat new foods, have similar interests and businesses. For me personally, after twenty-five years of local ocean racing which was beginning to become a tad 'same again', it's offered something new and interesting.

There is a version of Hamilton Island Race Week in Hong Kong (China Coast Regatta), in Thailand (Kings Cup and Ko Samui regattas), in the Philippines (Boracay regatta - my favourite) and in Malaysia (Raja Muda regatta). So, the yacht owner says "let's go" and they hire someone like me to get the boat there.

How do you go about it?

First do the mathematics. To sail from Sydney to Hong Kong is more than 4,600 nautical miles. If you have a boat that can motor or sail at an average of 8 knots all day every day, you will spend 24 days straight at sea. Many modern boats can easily do that now; you don't have to be a super maxi. We've done it in 20. But why would you want to? It should not be a race. I don't get paid to go cruising but the brief from most owners is usually to be safe, don't break stuff and get the job done. That's no problem if you are smart. I usually budget a month to get from Sydney up to Asia. That gives us time to stop over for a couple of days in various places and rest, refuel and reprovision.

This last trip was a slow one because of mechanical problems and a cyclone in the Coral Sea. We stopped three times. Sydney to Hamilton Island.



Scallywag 100 in Hobart

Stop two days. Hamilton Island to Rabaul in PNG. Stop a few days and make repairs. Rabaul to Malakal Harbour in Palau in the north Pacific. Stop two days to refuel and then on to Subic Bay in the Philippines. Each of those legs was over 1,000nm and meant five or six days at sea. Not too bad. Breaking the trip up into digestible legs makes it a lot more do-able. This is especially so when I am sailing a race boat which consists of a carbon shell with minimal refrigeration (read none), fuel and water tanks.

Choosing the stopovers is important, especially in a boat with a draught of nearly seven metres. Do your research! Download the hi-res charts for the whole route. Make sure you have good satellite communications and weather info. Don't be arrogant – listen and learn. There is always something to learn from more experienced people. For example, a night spent at the Dinah Beach Club in Darwin talking to old cruisers will give you an insight into that area's eight metre tides. There are few marinas along the way and even fewer that we can get into with a 7m draught. Choose wisely!

When you are doing your research, you are looking for a safe and convenient mooring. Facilities that will allow you access to clean water and clean fuel (neither are normal), as well as provisions for a western diet. Repair and maintenance facilities will also be required. It all sounds very basic, but these are not things to be taken for granted once we depart Australia. Be prepared. Industry professionals always exude an air of all-knowing but few have any experience outside the norm. Especially of trips this long. Service the engine before your leave. I always sit the engine service guy down, look him in the eye and explain: this engine needs to go 24/7 for the next 30 days. Few get it. In a boat where all winches etc are powered hydraulically we need the engine. It powers winches, keel ram, instruments, lights, computers, communications, makes water and powers the inverter to cook things. On a month's trip it needs to run over 700 hours straight. After I give this sermon, a few mechanics get it. Not many. The smartest guy I met was a little Thai guy in Phuket. He came back



Delivery crew at the Scallywag's Bar in Subic Bay

with three bags labelled Service 1, Service 2, Service 3. I re-labelled them Batam, Lombok, Darwin. Each bag was filled with a spare oil filter, oil, primary and secondary fuel filters, impellor, fan belt, and so on. He even gave me the special little tool he'd made to extract the impellor. Champion! This is an example of the conversation you need to have with your mechanic. Similar conversations need to be had with sail makers, riggers and others.

After having done the trip a few times I have found which places work and which don't. There is still room for improvement. Travelling along either of the two major sea routes between Australia and Asia or across the Pacific, I'm proud to say that I have developed a network of friends and professionals along the way that offer safe havens for me. They will always make room in their marina, run interference with the authorities, source reliable tradesmen and provide a welcome smile. Without these contacts the job would be much harder and the journey far less enjoyable. Experience counts.

Sail outside your comfort zone and experience more of what our part of the world, the Asia Pacific, has to offer.

In a previous life, Larry Jamieson worked as an advertising agency media manager, Newspaper advertising manager and self-employed magazine publisher (including Offshore Yachting magazine in a previous incarnation). He traded in his pen for sunscreen and currently delivers yachts across oceans in between yachting regattas. ⚓