

IRIS AND DOG STAR

by Iris Marshall



28 MAY 2018

LOG AT 1200 HRS

WEATHER: Overcast

WIND: SSE, 5 knots, gusting 11

SEA STATE: Moderate, becoming rough,
2-metre swell

GPS CO-ORDINATES: -35.235, 174.114

DISTANCE TO NOUMÉA: 900 nm

COURSE: 25 degrees

We had our passports stamped today. A customs officer came down to the marina. After that, we were allowed to leave. We fuelled up with 400 litres of diesel, checked our gear was properly stowed, put on life jackets – and were off! We're headed for Nouméa, the capital of New Caledonia, 900 **nautical miles** (nm) to the north. Getting there should take around seven days. Now I'm sitting in the cockpit, looking out at the vast ocean. What else is out there? I'm about to find out.

29 MAY 2018

LOG AT 1200 HRS

WEATHER: Spots of cloud, sunny

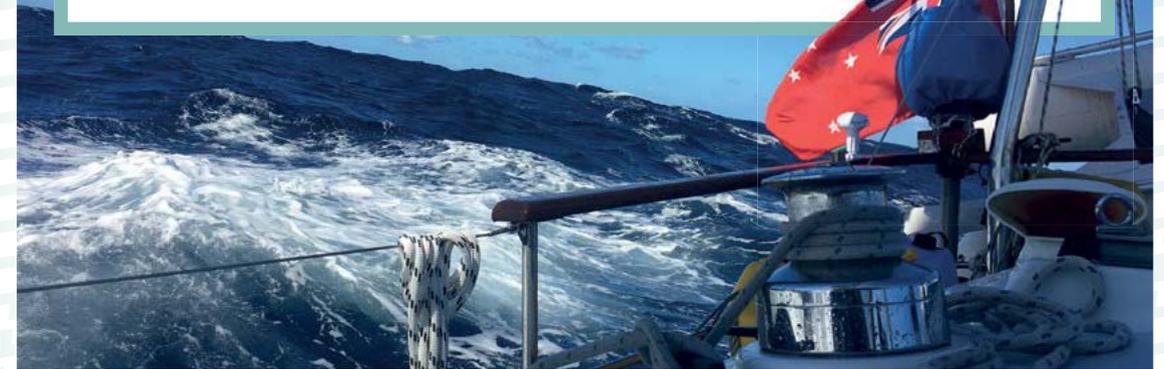
WIND: SW, 12 knots, gusting 17

SEA STATE: 4-metre swell

GPS CO-ORDINATES: -33.049, 173.114

DISTANCE TO NOUMÉA: 740 nm

COURSE: 15 degrees



The sea is a lot rougher today. Everyone's feeling sick. On the upside, we're seeing lots of albatrosses. One bird came in so close I saw how big it really was – the size of two bikes! Two large bikes. How crazy is that? We've also seen pods of dolphins. We stood at the bow, watching them dive under the boat.

I'm tired today. I hadn't expected it to be so noisy in the cabin. The wind's picked up now, but yesterday it was so light we had to use the engine. It rumbled all night. Then there's the noise of the water sloshing and slapping against the hull and the winches clicking when we change the sails. Plus the **autopilot** is right under my bed. It makes another kind of clicking sound, also annoying! How will I ever sleep?

We have lots of equipment onboard – not all of it noisy. The depth sounder tells us how deep the water is, and the wind gauge tells us the strength and direction of the wind. Our electronic chart plotter tells us where we are (using **GPS**), and we have paper charts in case the electronic plotter breaks. We have a life raft in case our boat sinks and an **EPIRB** to share our position with search and rescue. We also have a satellite phone, a **VHF radio**, and plain old life jackets!



30 MAY 2018

LOG AT 1200 HRS

WEATHER: *Mainly fine*

WIND: *SW, 10 knots, gusting 14*

SEA STATE: *3-metre swell easing,
sea slight*

GPS CO-ORDINATES: *-30.977, 172.326*

DISTANCE TO NOUMÉA: *609 nm*

COURSE: *355 degrees*

*We can't see land now. It's kind of scary. The adults are starting to get grumpy. They've had two nights on watch, which means broken sleep. The person on night watch needs to make sure we sail in the right direction, the sails are properly **trimmed**, and we don't crash into other boats – not that we've seen any since leaving Northland. I can stay up till eleven o'clock because my parents are too tired to nag. It's great!*

*A big swell came up last night. Dad threw up in the first-aid kit. Luckily he managed to tip the contents onto the floor first. Dad was the first. Now we're all throwing up. It's sort of a family-bonding experience. I vomited over the side of the cockpit when a big wave came up on our starboard (right) side. I almost fell overboard. We wear a life jacket and a **tether** the whole time, but there's still a risk.*

As I'm writing this, there's an amazing sunset over the wide, open sea.

31 MAY 2018

LOG AT 1200 HRS

WEATHER: Overcast

WIND: S, 11 knots, gusting 21

SEA STATE: 1-metre swell, sea slight

GPS CO-ORDINATES: -28.794, 171.546

DISTANCE TO NOUMÉA: 472 nm

COURSE: 330 degrees

Today we finally caught a fish – a huge mahi-mahi! The adults were hysterical with joy. It was an amazing yellow and green, but the colour faded as it died, which I felt sad about. But I'm not going to lie. The fish was delicious.

Everyone's feeling heaps better. The sun is shining, we saw dolphins again, and our bodies are getting used to the motion. Plus the **swell interval** is high, so there's much less movement. We sailed today without using the engine. We have two sails: the mainsail and the headsail. Sometimes, if it's super windy, we have to **reef** the sails. That way, Dog Star won't get overpowered by the wind and lean over. This is starting to feel like fun.



1 JUNE 2018

LOG AT 1200 HRS

WEATHER: Nasty

WIND: NW, 28 knots, gusting 40

SEA STATE: Very rough

GPS CO-ORDINATES: -27.185, 169.859

DISTANCE TO NOUMÉA: 340 nm

COURSE: 307 degrees

Last night, I was woken by the sound of sloshing water and shouting. I got up and found the adults frantically bailing water in the engine bay. Mum said it was just a small leak from a hose. She told me to go back to sleep. Seriously? I could see the look on my parents' faces. Was it bad enough for a **mayday**? Should I set off the EPIRB?

"It's OK, just a few sloshes of water," Dad said. "No drama."

I checked our course on the autopilot and tried not to worry because clearly it was a drama. Too much water could flood the engine, and we'd sink. When I next checked, my parents seemed much happier. The water had almost gone.

We're all tired after last night's excitement. The adults don't want to talk. They're just looking out to sea, trying not to regurgitate their dinner. We can see a big rain cloud headed our way.



2 JUNE 2018

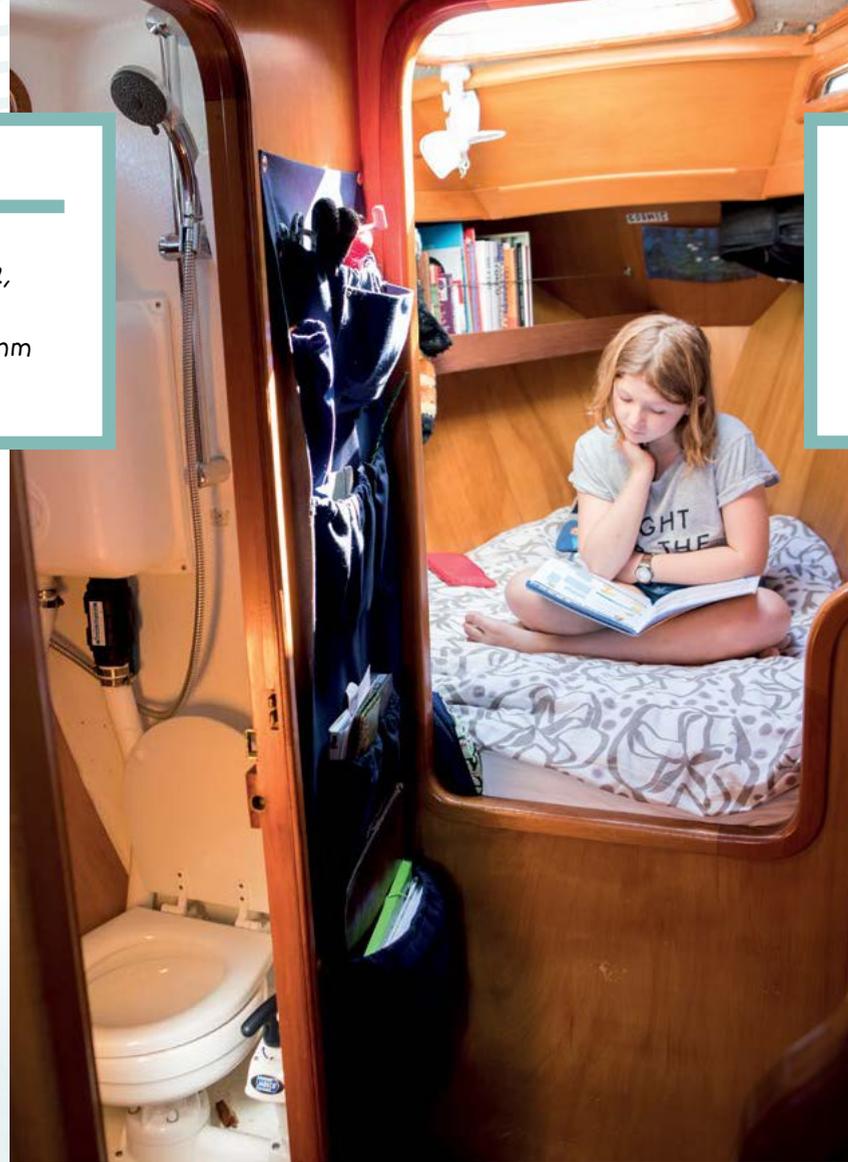
LOG AT 1200 HRS

WEATHER: Frequent squalls
WIND: W, 32 knots, gusting 42
SEA STATE: 3-metre swell, very rough

GPS CO-ORDINATES: -25.462, 168.849
DISTANCE TO NOUMÉA: 223 nm
COURSE: 333 degrees

It was really rough today. I had to brace myself each time a big wave came so I wouldn't crash to the floor. I have lots of bumps and cuts. No one dared go down the stairs; it was impossible to stay upright. Besides, we're all feeling too sick. We can't use the stove in the **galley** to make a cup of tea because we might spill boiling water. Everyone's worn out.

Still no other boats about. It's a bit scary being out here all alone.



3 JUNE 2018

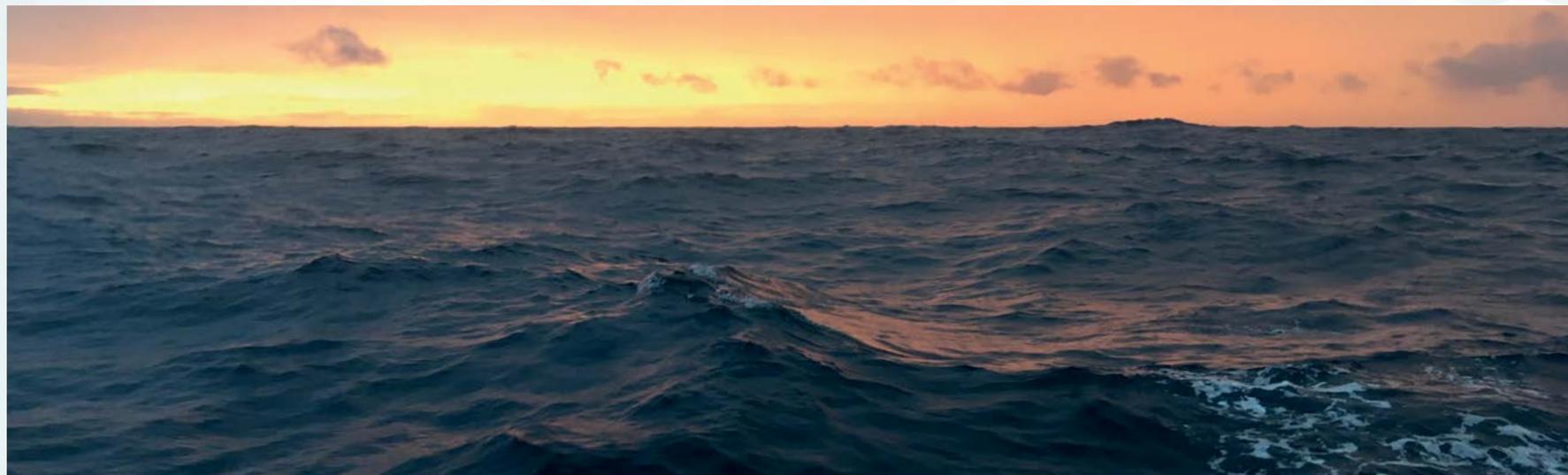
LOG AT 1200 HRS

WEATHER: Frequent squalls
WIND: WSW, 30 knots, gusting 40
SEA STATE: Rough

GPS CO-ORDINATES: -23.890, 167.887
DISTANCE TO NOUMÉA: 115 nm
COURSE: 271 degrees

Two-minute noodles and a banana for breakfast. It's still rough, and we still feel a bit spewy. I got better as the day went on and made toast for dinner. Then I stayed down in the cabin, reading and watching The Simpsons. I used earplugs so I didn't wake Dad. He's trying to catch up on sleep a metre away.

In case you're wondering, there's no space on a boat. My parents' bed, the shower, the toilet, the galley sink ... everything is right next to everything else. I don't have a door on my cabin, just a curtain, and my bed is a tiny triangle. If I'm feeling cramped, I sit outside on the deck, where the view goes on forever. I'm making the most of it. We should see land soon.



4 JUNE 2018

LOG AT 1200 HRS

WEATHER: Clearing

WIND: WSW, 25 knots, gusting 32

SEA STATE: Rough

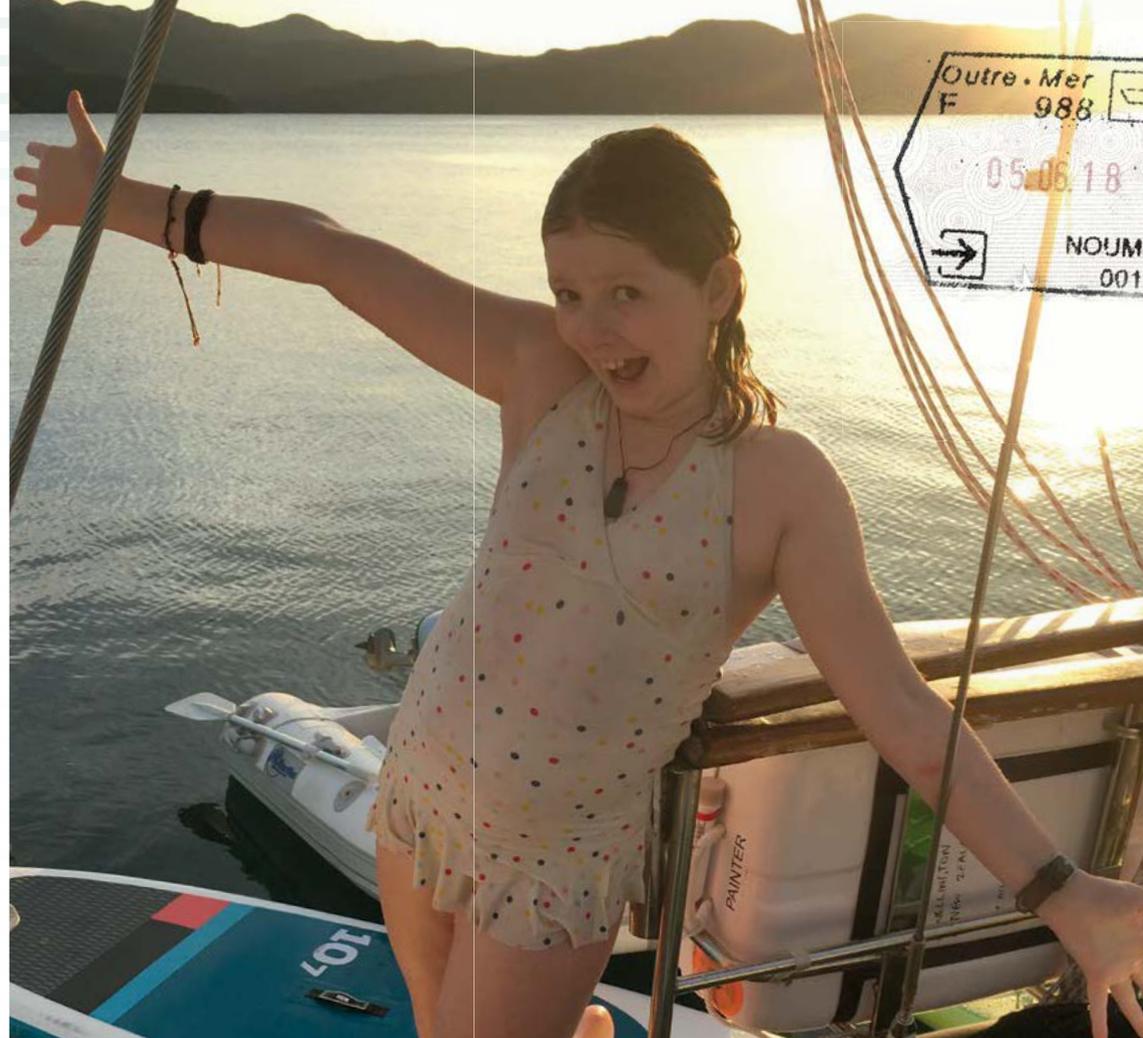
GPS CO-ORDINATES: -22.389, 166.180

DISTANCE TO NOUMÉA: 7 nm

COURSE: 278 degrees

We've arrived. It took a day to reach Nouméa after we first spotted land. We sailed up the coast feeling so excited. Solid ground! When we got to the marina, we used our radio to contact the New Caledonian officials. Then we put up our yellow flag. This signals we've come from another country and need clearance from customs, biosecurity, and immigration.

Mum found more water in the **bilge**. She says it's from the leak. We'll have to pull out all our gear and clean off the rust and grime. So much work - but she said we'd worry about that in the morning. Instead, we went out for pizza. So good after a week of toast, crackers, and fruit. We sat around in the warm air, surrounded by people and noise and unfamiliar smells. The change to being on land is extreme. It's like coming inside on a freezing night and having a hot bath. Tomorrow, after cleaning, we'll start to explore.



GLOSSARY

autopilot: an electronic steering system

bilge: the lowest part in a boat

EPIRB (electronic position indicating radio beacon): a device that shows rescuers where you are if you're in trouble or have abandoned a ship

galley: the kitchen on a boat

GPS (Global Positioning System): a satellite-based navigation system

mayday: a radio distress signal used by ships and aeroplanes

nautical mile: a unit for measuring distance at sea (1,852 metres)

reef: to make a sail smaller, usually because of strong wind

swell interval: the amount of time between waves

tether: a rope people use to keep themselves tied to a boat

trimmed: set just right for the wind

VHF (very high frequency) radio: a radio that people use to talk to one another



Iris and Dog Star

by Iris Marshall

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