

A Family Visit

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Image: Bull kelp in a tide pool off Collingwood Point.

We had our first family members visit our new home this week! What a wonderful and crazy week it was. We were both happy and exhausted when it was over, but I think the family mostly approves of our eccentric way of life.

Ken's sister and brother-in-law (J and K for short) have been planning to visit us for some time now. However, it really hasn't been until fairly recently that we were organized enough on site to

actually have visitors stay over for a week. Like Ken, J grew up on a lighthouse on the Central Coast, and is somewhat familiar with the OTG environment that we are now living in. K, on the other hand, is more of a city fellow, with some experiences from a not so remote cottage on Vancouver Island. Both of them have been living and working in Vancouver for many years now. We weren't too sure how they would like our new life style.

Our first challenge was to pick up J and K from Kelsey Bay. We have had over a month of rainless weather, and while it has not been as hot and sunny as it was last year, the northwest gales have been blowing strongly. Due to the strong tide rips between Port Neville and Kelsey Bay, which almost always flow to the north, a northwest wind, which blows towards the south, creates sharp, chaotic waves. Any northwest wind over 20 knots becomes very challenging. Even at 20 knots, I have seen 10? waves during a crossing. Johnstone Strait in northwest gales is not a fun place to navigate with a small boat.

Fortunately for all of us, it had rained a couple of days prior to the day we needed to pick of J and K. This accomplished several things. Firstly, our well filled up with clear liquid gold – we had water for our guests! Secondly, the rain temporarily calmed the winds down, so the condition of the Strait had “improved” somewhat. I say somewhat as we still had waves over our heads in a few places during the crossing. However, the *Draiocht* handled it well. We are very glad that we got a little bit bigger, heavier boat than the commonly used Hurstons. The *Draiocht* hardly even wagged her stern in the big following seas – I guess that's why they call her a Surfer.

We grabbed a massive load of groceries in Campbell River. I wanted to make sure we had lots of options, as it is always hard to predict the appetites and tastes of different people. Then we headed back to Kelsey Bay to await the arrival of J and K. We were to meet them early the following morning and make the crossing back to Port Neville before breakfast while the winds were still as calm as they were going to get. However, different people interpret early in different ways. For Ken, early means 4 a.m. For J and K, it clearly meant something else. We settled on 7 a.m., and they arrived at 7:30 a.m. Already the seas were beginning to pick up, so they definitely got a little taste (and feel) of Johnstone Strait seas as they broke over the cabin. In the end, we snuck behind York Island to get out of the seas, and came up the east side of Johnstone Strait to Port Neville Inlet.

Once the excitement of getting here was over, things settled down, and I think we all had a lot of fun. Five days was way too short. We got in a bit of hiking, fishing (unfortunately no fish were killed to spice up this story), beach combing, visiting with neighbours, and long evenings of catching up over good food (and a wee bit of alcohol). I was glad that J and K could see how happy we were here. I doubt that either of them would ever want to live this remotely OTG, but I think they were both able to see the benefits that we enjoyed from living out here. And I think we will be seeing them back again sometime soon! After five days, we were sad to see them go. They could have stretched their vacation another day or two, but after the trip over, there were some serious concerns about getting back before the weather blew up worse. As it turned out, the

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return trip was beautiful. Not flat calm, but as close as Johnstone Strait gets to it during this time of year.