



### **Introspective and Analysis - 2018 New Zealand Cruise**

In its simplest form, CCA's 2018 Cruise to New Zealand's Hauraki Gulf took about 18 months to produce, saw approximately 135 members and guests participating aboard 28 boats (chartered and owned, sail and power), generated revenues of about \$93,000 (at \$650 per person X 143 registered) and expenses of about \$83,000, producing profit of nearly \$10,000. Withdrawals were minimal, and were almost exclusively health related. No one seemed offended at the cost of the Cruise, with a nonrefundable \$150 paid upon registration followed by the \$500 balance which also became due and nonrefundable 3 months prior to the Cruise (the \$500 portion of the Cruise Fee was refundable up to 90 days prior to the Cruise). No "pay-as-you-go" provision was allowed (e.g., paying only for 3 out of 5 shore events based on scheduling conflicts, health issues, early withdrawals, or whim). Participation was capped at 135 heads, due mostly to capacity limitations at shore venues. And the availability of suitable charter boats also became a limitation, somewhat of a challenge. Finally, as Steve James suggested, the Host Committee was small (about a dozen of us who live close to each other – convenient), with the 2 leaders doing most of the heavy lifting. This kept administrative distractions to a minimum, and efficiencies maximized.

From the get-go, there was no reason to try to reinvent the light bulb. The experience of our predecessors captured thru direct contact, or via prior Cruise Books and the 2007 CCA Cruise Planning Guide was invaluable. In fact, the 1999 version of this Cruise, which was hosted by the San Francisco Station and was so well received, became a template for 2018. With nearly 20 years having passed, very few 1999 participants repeated this year, so the routing and shore events were all "fresh."

The planning and execution of this Cruise went smoothly for a variety of reasons. The Host Committee benefitted from the experience of veterans of the event-planning business. We had trusted and solid contacts in New Zealand. The weather cooperated. Air access to the cruising grounds, though distant, was excellent. Most importantly – CCA Members are seasoned sailors who tend to roll with the punches when glitches pop up.

So much for the positives. It wasn't all 'reaching thru life in warm zephyrs'. For example:

1. Venues – Once selected, is there a capable and consistent contact person?  
How do we communicate our level of expectation?  
How do we arrange payments?  
What do they provide (food, liquor, sound systems, entertainment)?

2. Vendors – Is a domestic (U.S.) merchandise source preferred, or a local?  
Does price disparity warrant sacrificing quality or delivery control?  
How are payments arranged?  
What are the freight considerations/costs?
3. Customs – What will the local customs authorities allow into their country?  
What are the likely fees for cruise goods imported by CCA?  
What happens if our materials are impounded? Duration?
4. Finances – Are cruise payments/receipts best handled at the Station or at the CCA national level?  
Who's in charge? What are the controls?  
Are credit cards, bank wire transfers, Pay Pal, etc. good options?  
Are exchange rates important?
5. Themes – Should a cruise have a theme? NZ was dedicated to the memory of Sir Peter Blake, a New Zealand icon and sailing hero, and a contribution from cruise revenues was made to his foundation.
6. Other - How often should the cruise hosts post CCA website cruise alerts?  
What is the best means of communicating with cruise participants during the cruise? VHF, email, text, cell phone, etc.?  
What's an adequate, not excessive, number of cruise shore calls?  
What is sufficient, not elaborate, itinerary information?  
How long is a desirable cruise? Cruise leg? No overnights?  
Charter arrangements? Mother-ships?

These are a few of the questions we asked ourselves during the planning process for the 2018 NZ Cruise. Here's how it turned out:

1. At the venues, we had varied experiences. Mostly, we had little difficulty in communicating our expectations. But in a couple of cases, "venue managers" terminated employment or were marginally competent, and were "cavalier" about contracts, payments, etc. Ultimately, payments were made via bank wire transfers and credit cards. We were always considering back-up plans.
- 2/3. We opted (for the most part) for domestic vendors for the welcome bags and their contents, as well as production of the Cruise Books. This gave us cost control, convenience, predictability, quality control, and ease of payment. On the other hand, we paid significant freight and customs fees.
4. All receipts (registration fees) were processed at the national level thru the CCA national website. Payments were made to vendors by Peter Chandler via credit card, bank wire transfer, Pay Pal, or by the Host Committee which then submitted receipts to Peter for reimbursement. This process warrants further attention – Station working capital? Exchange rates weren't important because "they are what they are," and we don't control them.

5. Themes are a “feel good” thing, but probably shouldn’t be a part of most CCA Cruises. New Zealand was an exception because Sir Peter Blake was iconic not only to the Kiwis, but to all seafarers for his commitment to the oceans of the world and to our sport. It was appropriate (and nice) to honor his memory.
6. Communication – Initial announcements were made on the CCA website a year-or-so in advance of the Cruise, and then followed by monthly updates and “teasers.” Subsequently, we developed an email blast list which targeted those who had registered for the Cruise. This worked well. Once in NZ, and due to the spotty cell phone and email coverage, most of our communications were via VHF and were initiated at 0830 each day with Larry’s call to the fleet.

What constitutes an acceptable cruise? That’s pretty subjective, and has a lot to do with the cruising area. For example, if the locale is rich in shore assets like restaurants, marinas, and sight-seeing options, an emphasis on shore calls is probably warranted. However, our Members like to sail and explore, so if the area is Spartan, many would prefer their time at sea, gunk-holing various coves they may encounter. The planning magic is in striking the elusive balance that satisfies their wanderlust, provides sufficient group functions, but doesn’t overcome them with excessive scheduled activities. Further, and to my way of thinking, Cruise Books should provide a framework for the cruise, but not attempt to answer every question which may arise. Where’s the adventure in that?

Topics which come up in connection with virtually every major cruise have to do with who arranges boat charters, and availability of mother-ships. Our suggestion is that the host committee make an effort to identify competent charter operators for the benefit of participants, then make referrals, but not take responsibility for arranging the specific charters. That can become a nightmare. Mother-ships can become another mine-field. First, and because they usually require a major front-end cash deposit which is “at risk,” they can destroy a cruise’s economics if not fully subscribed. Second, and because those who prefer this means of transportation are most likely to withdraw for a variety of reasons – mostly health, the management logistics are formidable. And third, bifurcating the cruisers has the potential to create “A” and “B” groups, thereby jeopardizing a gam’s social fabric. An alternative – a crewed charter.

In retrospect, this was a good cruise because:

1. The location – New Zealand – was accessible and enchanting (Thank you Commodore Willauer!);
2. The cruise plan was a proven winner from SAF’s 1999 adventure;
3. There was great experiential depth on the Host Committee;
  - A. Harriet is a professional international meeting planner and photographer, and highly skilled on a computer
  - B. Larry “The Great Communicator” Somers is a communications expert – skilled with computers, email, cell phones, texts, VHF
  - C. John Jourdane, our “weather guy,” lived in NZ for years, and had multiple Whitbreads under his belt – quite a resource

- D. Bacichs, Barnards, Barszs Lisa L., Whites – artistic, resourceful
4. The Cruisers (CCA Members & guests) were congenial and adaptable, thereby setting a very positive tone for the entire experience;
  5. The “locals” – most of whom were known to us – were helpful at all levels, especially Joanna Logan who was a jack-of-all-trades and able to interact with all types of NZ vendors and venues as needed;
  6. A “Bonus” – The start of a leg of the Volvo RTW Race (unexpected) added a dimension and “thrill” to the Cruise vibe;
  7. 2<sup>nd</sup> Bonus – The optional South Island tour arranged by Jim Morgan added a terrific opportunity to extend the Cruise for those so-inclined.

Finally, and with regard to the Cruise’s financial results mentioned in the first paragraph above, you will find attached hereto the “2018 NZ Cruise P&L” which reflects our outcome (in rounded US dollars). Since a healthy profit was realized by this event, we plan to recommend refunds to all Members and guests who paid in full prior to the Cruise. To those who were unable to attend (mostly due to health issues), the suggested amount is \$500 from the \$650 Cruise Registration Fee, with the balance split evenly among those who participated (probably \$35 per capita). This leaves a very nominal contribution to the “company coffers,” and seems fair to the 5%+/- of our membership who supported the Cruise. The final distribution of these funds will be at the Commodore’s discretion.

All cruises are different; i.e., there is no “one size fits all” element. Certainly, there are similar administrative aspects common to all cruises. But that’s where it ends. The rest is dependent upon location, weather, accessibility, resources (charter boats, venues, vendors, etc.), and availability of local knowledge via the host committee’s personal experiences and local contacts. Finally, organizer (host committee) creativity is a must.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter C. Palette  
Cruise Chairman

Attachment: 2018 NZ Cruise P&L