



## High Level Sailing

By George Dlouhy

A north-easterly wind pushes our boat gently towards the rising mountains and transparently blue sky is colouring the tops of small, smooth waves. Dense scrub is only reluctantly giving way to numerous streams and white boulders, which like a wild cavalcade, are falling down into transparent waters below. We are heading into a small opening, camouflaged by the richness of dark, green colour of steep hills guarding its entrance. This morning the bright sun is raising the temperature close to 20 degrees Celsius and it is sending its reflection from thousands of small mirror-like ripples spread on the water's surface round us. It is mid-summer; we are in the Tasmanian Southwest wilderness, sailing 300m above the sea level and on the waves of the pearl of Tasmanian lakes, Lake Pedder.

The morning, with its scenery and gentle atmosphere, wants probably to reward us for having spent a night filled with confused wind and showers, falling down on our trailable yacht Gypsy Dancer from the hills above. The small bay, which has hospitably sheltered us during this first night, waved us farewell with the wings and songs of dozens of birds. It was our first stop and a very safe anchoring place, surrounded by steep hills and just a mile away from the launching ramp at the Serpentine dam. Completely engulfed by high rising hillsides, we are motoring through the narrow channel towards the Bell Basin and are expecting the wind to come on us at any moment. The very vivid picture of the wind lashed lake, waves pushed to frothy white tops and rain pouring down, is still uncomfortably on our minds from yesterday. But nothing is happening so far. Bell Basin suddenly opens its calm waters and only long morning shadows cast by the mountains are reminding us of anything else but sunlit days. Another narrows and we are in the open. The intensity of our feelings is overwhelming...miles and miles of glimmering water surface, reflections of the far, bluish tinted mountains and clear, sparkling water behind our boat. The atmosphere is filled with expectation and an intense sensation of togetherness with our surroundings. Every moment is opening up new scenery; every mile is bringing us into a new world of immense beauty.

We are helped only by the motor and heading into the wind, the resulting pressure barely moves the piece of a magnetic tape attached to the mast. We pass a small island on our starboard side and decide to explore the first bay stretching far to the foot of a magnificent mountain. From a respectful distance we pass a gathering of sun-bleached flooded treetops, their thin branches vibrating against the sky in a solemn protest and reminder of the days passed by for ever. The bottom is drawing closer towards our boat and some hundred yards from the shore we let the anchor go and decide to have a lunch. There is no other boat in sight, no signs of any human activity, no sound. There is only nature in its prime splendour,



The planned short break extends into pleasant afternoon and arrested by Wilmot Bay's charm, we plan to spend the night there. The water surface is full of hatching insects, filling the air around us with soft, flapping wings, gently stroking our faces with their velvety touches. Our Dancer now looks like a decorated chocolate cake and our stowaway cat panics and hides inside the cabin. With the sunset come the trout. Their dorsal fins and sleek bodies are all around us, popping out of water, probably for a better feeding position or just for a sheer pleasure from their existence in this paradise. Their feeding lasts well into a night and ripples caused by their movement are multiplying the rising moon on the glistering surface into a hundred subdued lights. The spectacle of yesterday's sunset is hard to repeat and yet, the sunrise surprises us beyond our dreams. The rocks on the top of the mountain first turned dark red, then purple and finally they were brightly lit by the sun, still hidden to us beyond the opposite hill. On the shore, the chorus of the birds was filling the air with a harmonic staccato of their songs and a gentle breeze, seeming to come out of nowhere, was drying off the wings of last hatched moths. Out of the bay we're met with a light wind, which fills our jib and pushes our boat very slowly through the changing, spectacular scenery.



It is sailing in its slowest and most comfortable form, hardly giving us a reason to alter anything. There are many bays, islands, and sparkling creeks extending their welcome over a distance, many mountains to be closely explored and many tempting anchor-ages. We feel we are doing a great injustice to all that magnificence by spending only three days here. To leave behind this dream world and return to our usual everyday values tortures our minds for the rest of the last day and well beyond. Yet we do head for home, away from the tens of kilometres of water-ways, numerous islands and white beaches, away from spectacular sun-sets and promising sunrises. We're leaving behind Lake Pedder and the Tasmanian Southwest - what more need be said...