

When last-mile logistics means a 160 km sail across the Gulf

By Walter Glass



Sunset at Pa Beach, Great Barrier Island, means it's time to wander down to the legendary Currach Irish Pub

A tiny pub on Great Barrier Island has been named 'the best craft beer experience in the rest of the world' – but how do they manage to keep the ale flowing when they're situated on a remote Hauraki Gulf island?

With an average annual temperature several degrees warmer than Auckland, Great Barrier Island is a subtropical paradise – a bit like Slice of Heaven with a twist of Hotel California – you can check out anytime you like, but you never really leave. The island's incredibly dark nights are renowned. The lack of light pollution has resulted in the island being given the status of an International Dark Sky Sanctuary, and international tourists have shown an immediate interest. Sunrises over Medlands Beach are stunning, and as the intense heat of the day gives way to the evening warmth, you'll find people

watching the spectacular sunsets at Pa Beach in Tryphena Harbour, where the bay is bathed in soft yellow, orange and pastel pinks. As the sun departs, it signals that time when one might feel the urge to wander down the road to the local community gathering spot, the legendary Currach Irish Pub. Owned and operated for over 20 years by the effervescent and ever-smiling Máire Burns from Kerry, Ireland, and her cheerfully pensive Kiwi husband Phill Judd, the busy enterprise runs like a well-oiled machine and the service is exemplary. 'It won't be a problem' appears to be the unwritten motto. Accents in the bar are from all over the world. Patrons can enjoy fine local Waiheke and NZ craft beers, Guinness, NZ branded tap beers and wines, and fantastic food, and engage in a bit of local banter, perhaps take part in an 'open mic' singalong, or quietly ponder the day. If you are exceptionally



The Currach Irish Pub owner/operators Phill Judd and Máire Burns celebrate winning the Best Craft Beer Experience in the Rest of the World award

lucky, you might even be around for a pirates and pizza party – very rare, extremely colourful, and definitely worth the wait.

Unique operation

None of the Currach's success is down to chance, although few if any patrons will give a second thought to contemplating how this great experience comes together, nor how the 'last mile' logistics systems work to support this internationally suc-

cessful business on a remote outer Hauraki Gulf island.

The supply chain sector generally accepts last-mile logistics as the last leg of getting goods from a high-volume distribution centre to their final destination, usually in a commercial or humanitarian context. The last mile is also often the most costly leg, especially in response to humanitarian needs, and each example has its own twists that add to the challenge. The Currach's story is one of a very unique New Zealand logistics operation, with both commercial and significant humanitarian aspects.

It is important to Máire, Phill and the Currach staff that whatever is served is quality, and the experience is one that any patron will remember positively. They are also very keen to supply locally-made products, including craft beers.

In an effort to retain product quality, reduce supply costs and buy locally, the Currach controls its own logistics solution for its craft beers, as well as some other products, and is largely self-reliant in this area. This does come with a twist, however – a 160 km round trip under sail on the pub owners'

Loading the kegs of beer onto Te Aura at Matiatia on Waiheke Island, ready for the trip across the Hauraki Gulf

