

Lauren Szewczyk Australia to UK

From a hot Sydney morning, dressed to impress, a positive attitude and trying to shake off the nerves, the morning that had the opportunity to change my life. To rushing to the airport heading on my next adventure only to be stopped by that ever-important phone call from Richard letting me know that I'd been selected for the 2015 Award.

And then everything changed.

An adventure holiday in New Zealand - intensified by the news, and a smile that didn't leave my face. Then returning to Sydney, walking into University, handing in my course deferral papers and walking out unsure of what 2015 would bring me.

It would be impossible to fit every experience, memory and emotion into such a short report or summarise how grateful I am to the Australian & British society for providing me with such an individual and unique experience.

I had the pleasure of meeting the Barque tall ship Tenacious in Ponta Delgada in the Azores islands of Portugal. Tenacious stood out around the other ships within the marina and I was lucky enough to call her home for the next 4 weeks. As I walked onto the ship I was immediately greeted by the permanent crew, who introduced me to other staff crew as we walked around the ship. Once all the voyage crew had been officially signed on as active members of the ship we were given the opportunity to truly enjoy one of the best sunsets that the Azores had to offer, and for my first northern hemisphere sunset, the Azores did it well. As the crew slowly got to know each other I learnt the degree of differences each person had, the crew ranged from 16 to 80 years of age with a ranging degree of ability, mobility and disability. These differences were barely noticed because I had grown up in a diverse environment through school, work and family life.



After a few days of sitting at the marina we were finally setting off and heading towards the sailing that I had been waiting for. Within minutes of leaving the wharf at Ponta Delgada we were surrounded by 360° of water, beautiful crystal blue, icy cold water – which was flaunted by the pod of dolphins that were showing off their abilities and tricks of riding the wake.

Although sailing tall ships was not new to me, Tenacious was. From my experiences on the Young Endeavour, I was sharing learning experiences with a youth crew from the same area coming together just as lost as each other, growing and changing together. Tenacious pulled me into an environment where each person who walked onto the ship with different experiences, stories and knowledge of sailing. Most members on the ship had experiences on Lord Nelson and Tenacious previously and were all able to give me assistance and help wherever needed. From the moment we joined the ship, each watch group undertook watches twice a day, on the helm, setting sails and keeping watch over the ship. As we sailed the watch groups grew together in a small temporary family, and if it wasn't the watch groups and activities bringing the crew together, it was the highs and lows of sea sickness – looking after each other or simply being there for support. I never would have guessed that a ship full of strangers could feel so much like an unlikely family.

When we weren't on watch, crewmembers were free to explore the ship or take advantage of what she had to offer. If it wasn't the netting on the bowsprit or the main deck I would be atop the main mast whenever I had the chance. The main mast stood 45 meters above the deck and was easily my favorite place, the mast offered height, solidarity and an opportunity to see what the ocean had to offer. Even with the 12 straight days of Open Ocean sailing from the Azores into the



Scilli Islands, every day was different. The permanent crew gave us the opportunity to learn aspects of sailing and tricks to further our knowledge of a working ship. Within these 12 days I was taught how to splice rope, tie a wide variety of knots, navigate using a sextant and constellations. With constant questions and inquiries from all the watch members, the permanent crew was



always helpful and willing to teach something new, providing an open learning environment. Along with the learning experiences we had the pleasure marine biologists that had joined the ship during the Azores voyage who shared their vast knowledge and expertise of each marine animal we saw.

As the crew grew and learnt together, we became more comfortable around each other. We began to compare our lives, cultures and stories. From comparing sports to beers and constant debates about being Australian and having no love for Fosters beer – giving me the ultimate opportunity to build ties and make friends from all walks of life.

An experience aboard Tenacious, a practically indescribable time, that even with the vast English language would be impossible to do justice. Attached with a thank-you to every single person that made this possible, from the Australian & Britain Society to the crew and everyone aboard the Tenacious voyage.

Thank you

