

My Leeuwin Voyage

My name is Shawn Evans and I was very honoured to get a full scholarship from the AMWS to complete a voyage on the Leeuwin II. This has been something I have wished for since my older brother was able to sail with the Leeuwin when he was my age. For all the stories my brother told me about life on the sea and everything I thought it would be nothing really prepares you for your first voyage. Without their generosity i wouldn't have been able to fulfil this dream.

The first thing I experienced being onboard on the Leeuwin II was how quiet and awkward the first days were. In my usual activities it's loud, boisterous and I'm with people I know and understand. However once you get past the first few days you develop a very strong bond with the people you are with because you are in such close quarters and you can't help but to get to know each other on a personal level.

The way the Leeuwin crew structure and organise everything helps you not get annoyed at little habits and the way that people do things that you are not used to yet. The responsibilities of controlling and working on the ship are quite daunting because you know that if you don't do them right , there could be serious consequences that will impact upon others, and on the ship itself. You develop a sense of pride when you are able to learn each task and complete it correctly.

At first when the crew is going through the things that you do it is hard to step up and have a go until you get to know everyone's abilities and personalities. Once you do it makes it easier to do things as a team and makes it alot more enjoyable towards the back half of the voyage as your defences go down and you let yourself experience it all and enjoy the moments. One of the most interesting things about being on the voyage is that the experiences are all new and really different to what you have been doing and that means everyone starts off at the same level and you get to experience it all for the first time together

Being one of the only people that did not get sea sick really tested my mental and physical strength. With only a couple of us able to move around I had to do way more than my share and had to take over extra duties when people were unable to go below deck. You don't get to say "no", you just have to step up and do it, regardless of how tired you are. All the jobs have to get done, its part of being on the ship.

My interest in psychology was also engaged because I was able to watch people and had the chance to look at how people functioned and worked together. We had to learn how to work with each other and get along and not annoy each other living in such close quarters.

It's also a huge achievement being able to say I'm one of the lucky few who have been able to sail and work on the Leeuwin. I am now more aware of the mental and physicals strengths that it would take to live a life at sea and I am happy to say I am still interested in Naval Physiologist as a career option.

I've climbed to the top of the main mast and read a message that only a few get to see. I've steered through a passage at Cape Naturalist and I've steered in the pitch black of night. I've scrubbed the deck and coiled ropes a million times. I was a Leeuwin Trainee!.

By Shawn Evans