



[Home](#)
[Diaries](#)
[About Cool Continent](#)
[Circus Penguin](#)
[Contact Us](#)

Penguin Pete's Diary

[Peter's home page](#)

[Notify me when Peter updates his diary](#)

[Peter's latest diary entry](#)

[Previous Diary Entries](#)

[Previous](#) [Next](#)

10/1/01 - Bechervaise Island

The old year has ended, and the new begun. We got into station for the new years celebrations. A BBQ and a spa, then lots of loud music at the bar. It's now 2001. Depending on how you write dates, today is also the first palindromic date we've had in quite some time.

We also got into station last Saturday for dinner and a wash, but the ice was very soft, and broke under us a few times on the way over, and even more so on the way back. The station leader has now closed the sea ice for any travel. It is deteriorating very rapidly, so I don't think it will be a long confinement here before the boats are usable. I've startled you now.. about the sea ice breaking. Let me explain. At this time of year the sea ice is usually in two layers. The top layer is what was breaking on (or under) us. There is then a layer of mush/water, then usually under this is another layer of much thicker ice. If this layer isn't there (test with an ice axe or ski pole), then don't go there! Places to watch out for are tide cracks when they widen. There is no second layer underneath.

I've had a few people ask me about the panorama of the Beche huts, so I've included a few pics and will attempt to show you how we live.



This is the Bechervaise Island field camp. It is pretty much on the North West end of the island. Close, but not too close to the penguins, and close to the water. Also sheltered a bit from the wind.



The office is the orange fibreglass hut on high stilts in the centre. There are a few desks and benches in here. We have a radio phone link to Mawson station, and a radio data link as well. Both are solar powered, and can leave us a bit low on comms when the sun doesn't shine.



The living quarters are in the same style hut, called a Googy. This one has 3 beds and a few benches for the kitchen.



There are four of us on the island this year, and as I was the last to arrive, I got the overflow

accommodation. The tradies built me a proper bed here though, so I'm probably better off than the others.



Then there is the toilet... down to the sea for number ones, then up to the thunder box for number twos, where a wooden seat, flour drums, and plastic bags do the job.



We really rough it here, what with the microwave, bread maker, stereo, gas stove, gas heaters, computers, phone, email etc., but all this needs power. We try to run from 12V batteries for most of the time, and keep these charged from a combination of solar and wind power. There are a few things that need 240v, and there are times when there is no wind and very little sun, so we have a 5kW generator to fill in.



There is no fresh or running water on Bechervaise, so we have to rely on water we brought over earlier in the season. Fresh water for drinking and cooking (obviously), sea water for washing up and cleaning things, and no water for bathing. Actually, that's not quite true, we have a drum of about 200l set aside in case we get stuck here for a really long time and need a bit of a freshen up. We tried bathing last year. It took most of the day to heat enough water to wash 3 people. We will see how we go this year.

We have no fridge, and the daytime temperature regularly gets to 0 deg or more, so only have meat when we go into station. We usually bring a little back with us, but it will only keep for a few days. We eat lots of pasta, beans and rice etc., and lots of tinned fish. We managed to snaffle some decent fresh fruit and

veggies from station, so we are eating quite well at the moment. We loosely take it in turns to do the cooking, changing water drums, emptying the grey water, bagging the toilet, washing up etc., and don't fight too much. Actually, not at all! I hope that has answered some of your questions about life for the island folk. Last pic is the view from my bedroom door. Bye



PS. Mother and Baby are fine. His name is Philip (one l, apparently that's how the Greeks spelled it) Douglas, and there are no new photos yet (sorry).

[© 2000 to 2001 Cool Continent](#)