World is their oyster

MERYL NAIDOO

AFTER spending nearly two years circumnavigating the globe, two Sydney yachtsmen are happy to put their feet up in Hobart.

Alex Whitworth, 67, and Peter Crozier, 64, have spent the past week carrying out maintenance and minor repairs to their 10m yacht Berrimilla.

A veteran of 16 Sydney-Hobart races, including the tragic 1998 race which claimed six lives, Mr Whitworth said he was always happy to find himself in Hobart.

They will leave today for Sydney to end their second circumnavigation on Berrimilla.

Their first circumnavigation started in 2005 when they left Hobart after the Sydney-to-Hobart race.

The pair set off on a round-the-world voyage in April 2008 that included the fabled North-West Passage.

"We sailed up the Pacific to Alaska, through the North-West Passage across to Greenland, then left the boat in the UK for winter and picked it up again in May to make our way to Cape Town via Lisbon," Mr Whitworth said.

"You're out in the savage ocean and it can be quite scary. You're in survival mode the whole way in a small boat."

He said the Sydney-Hobart - Fastnet race — Sydney-Hobart circumnavigation via Cape Horn and the Great Capes — was a first and he doubted "anyone will be silly enough to do it again".

Their second circumnavigation boasts many firsts.

"First ever Australia to England voyage via the North-West Passage, first ever circumnavigation under sail via the North-West Passage, we think, and if we're right then the first boat to circumnavigate via both Cape Horn and the North-West Passage ... opposite ends of the Americas," Mr Whitworth said.

He said Berrimilla was the first Australian boat through the North-West Passage unassisted and in a single season and the only boat ever to sail from Australia to England for a Fastnet race and sail back again.

WORLD BEATERS: Yachties Peter Crozier and Alex Whitworth next to Berrimilla. They have spent time in Hobart before their next adventure. Picture: RAOUL KOCHANOWSKI