

JAIMEN HUDSON

OWNER,
ESPERANCE ISLAND CRUISES

“You get to be with your family or friends, and you get an influx of holiday makers every year who are vibing on your beautiful home - it really creates a buzz.”



THE ESPERANCE (KEPA KURL) LOCAL GREW UP IN THE TOURISM BUSINESS, THE OCEAN AS HIS PLAYGROUND. AT 17, JAIMEN BECAME A QUADRIPLÉGIC. UNABLE TO PURSUE HIS EARLIER PASSIONS, JAIMEN DISCOVERED AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY. WHEN HE'S NOT TAKING TOURISTS OUT INTO HIS BEAUTIFUL BACKYARD, HE'S CAPTURING IT FOR THE WORLD TO SEE.

HOW DID YOU GET INTO YOUR JOB?

My parents started Esperance Diving Academy before I was born, so my earliest memories are of days out on the water. I got my dive licence when I was 10. I loved surfing, skateboarding, motorbike riding, anything outdoors.

Unfortunately, in July 2008, I went out motorbike riding with friends and broke my neck. Learning how to live with my disability was the biggest hurdle. After my injury I started back working in the shop, taking bookings, then doing the accounts and eventually became the business manager. I would give the credit to my parents; they taught me you have to work hard to get ahead.

You have to diversify in a remote place like Esperance to ensure you get through quieter periods like winter. We recently added 4WD tours and I also do aerial photography - we sell my prints here and I have an online store that sells them all around the world.

WHAT'S THE BEST PART OF YOUR JOB?

The biggest perk is getting to deal with happy customers who are in high spirits on holiday. We're able to give them a good time. There's also the perk of being able to go out on the boat. It is amazing here - we're so lucky to call it home and then to get to share it with people.

I got into droning by chance after my accident, as I searched for a new hobby that allowed me to connect with the ocean. I still remember the first time I filmed dolphins surfing and I have been in love with it ever since. I've been lucky to have success online with the videos and growing a following on Facebook and Instagram.

WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE FOR ANYONE CONSIDERING A CAREER IN TOURISM OR HOSPITALITY?

The best thing to do is to reach out to a local organisation; they may have casual roles or work experience for younger people. If you're a teenager keen to get out on a boat, put your hand up to do some work experience during the school holidays. It can be dangerous with all the ropes, so you need to do multiple trips with someone who's experienced.

You often hear that people who are semi-retired don't think anyone wants them, but I feel the opposite. Older people don't want to work as many hours and are good to call when you need someone to fill in, and it's a good way for them to share their local knowledge. It really is an industry where all ages can succeed.

STEPPING STONES

1.

Fell in love with the ocean

2.

Completed tourism and other certificates at school

3.

Started full-time work in tourism business

4.

Life-changing accident - started learning office work

5.

Now runs tourism business and works as aerial photographer