

Title:

Fraser Island - Escape Forever

Word Count:

1896

Summary:

For all its conveniences, modern living leaves a lot to be desired. We spend our days enduring the ever-increasing pressures of work, the city's oppressive unfriendliness, the daily commuter grind and the aggressive reality of impatient road-ragers.

Keywords:

fraser island, travel, island getaway

Article Body:

For all its conveniences, modern living leaves a lot to be desired. We spend our days enduring the ever-increasing pressures of work, the city's oppressive unfriendliness, the daily commuter grind and the aggressive reality of impatient road-ragers.

Is something missing?

Unfortunately, work is a reality for most of us. So too is city and suburban living, dreary weather, pollution, traffic... But it doesn't have to be all there is to life. Try something that puts you in touch with who you really are. Try something elemental. Try something that soothes your soul.

Try Fraser Island.

Fraser Island isn't just an island paradise. It's a unique and luxurious combination of Australia's rich natural heritage, its earthy roots, its wholesome majesty, and its refreshingly simple essentials. It's a chance to touch the fine sands, to drift in the temperate water, to bask in the sun that seems all yours... It's your chance to partake of a life that most Australians have forgotten.

Spend a week on and in turquoise waters, a week without shoes with the sand between your toes, a week fishing and perhaps living off your catch. Your perspective can't help but change.

It's not a mere fleeting appreciation. It's something you take with you.

Fraser can help remind you that you're not your job. How important are the forms and the filing, the meetings and memorandums? You can learn a lot about yourself when you take away all the things that don't matter.

And really... is there any better way to experience this epiphany than in paradise?

Fraser Island certainly is a paradise, no matter which way you look at it. At the southern end of the Great Barrier Reef, and a short boat ride from Hervey Bay in South-East Queensland, Fraser is 124 km from tip to toe and 16 km across the middle. At 163,000 hectares, it's the world's biggest sand island.

Of course, that doesn't mean it's all just sand. Not by a long shot! The whole island is laced with crystal clear fresh water streams, and deep midnight blue fresh water lakes. In fact, with over 40 fresh water lakes - it's home to half of the world's known 'perched' lakes. It also boasts a dazzling diversity of plants and animals (including Australia's purest strain of dingo), and an amazing variety of spectacular landscapes, from 120 km of non-stop tropical beach to dense and towering rainforest, weathered headland to ochre gorge, inspiring cliffs to wandering dunes, eerie mangroves to wind-blown salt pans.

What's more, you have your choice of accommodation, so you can choose your own level of 'communion with nature'. From 4½ star luxury resorts to rental retreats to motels and units, right through to the good 'ole campsite. Whether you're a sucker for a bit of pampering, or you're perfectly at home with a tent and a campfire on the beach, Fraser is a great provider.

And great accommodation is just the start... The island boasts average temperatures of 29°C in summer and 22°C in winter, so it's no surprise that outdoor activities feature prominently on the agenda. Adrenalin addicts and dedicated sunbathers alike will appreciate the vast range available. From sunrise to sunset (and beyond), there's always something for everyone. The only problem is choosing! Fishing, 4-wheel-driving, eating, sailing, bird-watching, bush-walking, swimming, eating, whale & dolphin-watching, shipwreck exploration, eating, beauty therapy, massage, lazing in the sun, eating, beach volleyball, tennis, cricket, eating, canoeing, sailboarding, snorkelling, eating... And needless to say, a few quiet drinks might make their way onto the agenda as well...

With so much to offer, it's no surprise that the Fraser Island was originally known as K'gari - or 'Paradise' - by local Aboriginal peoples.

Fraser Island certainly is "paradise for everyone"!

Four Wheel Driving

Being a sand island, the only mode of land transport is 4WD. Of course, for many visitors, that's the main attraction. 4WD enthusiasts from all around the world visit Fraser Island to pit themselves and their vehicles against the rugged terrain found all over the island. From the hard-packed seashore to the shifting dune to the forests of the interior, Fraser Island is the ideal 4WD location.

Don't be scared though - it's not all about extreme driving for experts! Whether you're an novice, or you just prefer a more leisured pace of life, you'll find a much more sedate satisfaction in one of the many organised 4WD tours offered around the island. Or if you just want to get out on your own, you can hire a 4WD for a day, and indulge in a bit of quiet exploring.

No matter which option you choose, though, there are a few 'ground rules' you should observe. Remember the dangers of driving on the beach. The further you adventure from the shoreline, the softer the sand. The softer the sand, the more likely you are to get into trouble. Generally speaking, keep your speed down, and remember you're in a World Heritage listed environment... so be careful.

Fishing

No island holiday would be complete without a lazy day or two spent fishing. Beach fishing is the big drawcard for Fraser Island. And with 150 km of ocean beach to choose from, why wouldn't it be? Middle Rocks, Sandy Cape, Waddy Point, and Seventy Five Mile Beach are just a few of the choice locations available for you to finally get the better of 'the one that got away'.

The famed 'tailor run' occurs on the eastern (ocean) side of the island between July and October each year. In the angling world, this time - known as 'tailor season' - is a much anticipated event, with huge schools of big fish working the beaches. But if you can't make it between late winter and early spring, rest assured, tailor season is just one date to mark in your calendar. The western side of Fraser has been known to reward the odd angler with a fine bag of bream, whiting and flathead.

Angler's Advice

Pick the fish you're after, and take advantage of the handy hints below to make the most of your fishing trip.

Fish: Tailor

Bait: Pilchard, 3 hook gang, lure

Timing: Late July to October

Location: Eastern Beaches

Fish: Dart

Bait: Pippies or worms

Timing: All year

Location: Eastern Beaches

Fish: Bream

Bait: Flesh strips, mullet gut, fowl gut, pippies

Timing: May to September

Location: Rocky outcrops on east coast or creeks on the west

Fish: Whiting

Bait: Worms, yabbies, pippies, prawns

Timing: All year

Location: Low tide on the east, creeks on the west

Fish: Flathead

Bait: Live baits, pilchards, lures

Timing: All year

Location: Rocky outcrops on east coast or creeks on the west

Fish: Jewfish

Bait: Whole mullet, tailor fillets, beach worms

Timing: May to September at night on the full moon, low or high tide

Location: Deep gutters and rocky outcrops

Of course, many more varieties are there for the taking, including mackerel, tuna, and reef fish. And if you're not indisposed to a bit of sea fishing, you can book a berth on one of the larger boats launched to take advantage of the red emperor, coral trout, maori cod and parrot to be found off the Continental Shelf and local reefs.

Water Sports

As you'd expect, Fraser Island plays host to a vast array of water sports. Whether you're after a lazy drifting afternoon - cocktail in hand, or an invigorating workout, there's a water sport for you. All fitness levels (and energy levels!) are catered for.

Ease yourself into the aqua-life with a refreshing dip at one of the most

beautiful beaches in the world. Surrounded by pure white sandy beaches, the clear blue waters of Lake McKenzie are without doubt amongst the most idyllic to be found. Alternatively, exercise your imagination with a visit to the ghostly shipwreck of the "Maheno", then submerge yourself in the crystal clear waters of Eli Creek.

Fraser Island sits on a huge reservoir of fresh water, and is home to numerous spectacular fresh water lakes, including some perched high above sea level. You have your choice of over 40 lakes... Lake Wabby, Champagne Pools, Basin Lake... to name but a few. Clearly, Fraser Island is amply equipped to pamper even the fussiest fresh water connoisseur.

For something a little more strenuous, why not hire paddle ski or canoe and paddle yourself up Dundonga Creek. It's generally a 1 hour round trip, so by the time you return, you'll be ready to settle back into some more relaxed pastimes.

Whale and Dolphin Watching

Every year from August to October, you can book a berth on a whale watch cruise. Enjoy a fantastic half day of sun, salt, and ocean breezes while keeping your eyes peeled for Fraser's famous migrating humpbacks.

The annual humpback migration is truly an awesome spectacle. Family pods take a well earned rest in the waters west of Fraser Island after travelling 5000 km from the icy waters of the Antarctic. The sight of a 15 tonne (that's the weight of 11 elephants!) adult female humpback rearing out of the ocean is absolutely awe-inspiring.

And don't worry... if your holiday doesn't coincide with the migration, you can still catch a cruise questing for dolphins, dugongs, turtles and the odd Indo Pacific Humpback.

Speak to your hotel or resort for information about organising a whale or dolphin watching cruise. Alternatively, contact Kingfisher Bay Resort and ask about their tours.

Tips & Reminders

- Access to Fraser Island is via vehicular barge or catamaran
- 4WDs only on Fraser Island (there are no paved roads except in resorts)
- Don't feed or pet the dingoes (or any other animals)
- No domestic animals allowed

- Most activities on the island can be enjoyed individually or as part of a booked tour group
- You'll need permits to 4WD or camp
- 4WDs can be hired on the mainland or on the island
- Don't leave food unattended
- All but the hardest sand can be unpredictable and perilous for a 4WD
- High and low tide gutters around dawn or dusk are best for fishing
- If four wheel driving, take a good map and a tyre pressure gauge

For further information about all aspects of Fraser Island, including accommodation, hire guides, and barge booking details and timetables, see <http://www.boxatrix.com/>.

How Much?

- Accommodation - Prices vary from approximately \$4 per night if you're camping right up to \$850 per night for the VIP room at the 4½ star luxury of Kingfisher Bay Resort.
- Permits - A 4WD vehicle permit will cost you \$31.85. Camping permits are \$4 per person per night or \$16 per family per night. Children under 5 are free. To purchase a permit or obtain detailed information, call the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service at Rainbow Beach on (07) 5486 3160.
- Vehicular Barge Access - Barges operate daily from Hervey Bay and Rainbow Beach. Tickets start at \$82.20 return per vehicle per driver. Extra vehicle passengers will cost \$5.50 each. Several barges operate with different destinations on the island. Most require bookings.
- 4WD Hire - Rates start at around \$90 per day for a Suzuki Sierra, up to \$130 per day for a Landrover Defender (depending on the duration of hire).
- Flights to Queensland - Qantas offers return flights to Hervey Bay via Brisbane from \$407 departing Sydney, and from \$527 departing Melbourne.