

Fraser Island and Whale Watching

Dates: Saturday, 12th August to Sunday, 20th August 2006 (9 days)
Cost: \$1,750 **Style:** Camping **Start and Finish :** Brisbane

Fraser Island is to the sand masses of the world what the Great Barrier Reef is to the world's coral reefs. It features expansive beaches, majestic forests (including rainforest), magically clear lakes, spectacular variegated cliffs and diverse vegetation, all in sand. Its World Heritage status is based on its outstanding aesthetic qualities and its most impressive geomorphic features such as sandblows, which have been likened to glaciers. This safari coincides with the annual migration of humpback whales through Hervey Bay and includes a tour of Maryborough's heritage buildings with their unique Queensland vernacular architecture.

One-day or even three-day tours of Fraser Island are inadequate to explore its many natural wonders. Covering 184,000 hectares, it stretches in length 123 kms and averages 14 kms in breadth. Dunes reach 240 metres in height. It has evolved over several episodes of fluctuations in the sea levels during the last 800,000 or more years into the most complex dune system in the world. Dune types range from parabolic and transverse dunes to parallel beach ridges and complex lake lunettes. We traverse and interpret all its ecosystems.

Guide: John Sinclair has been an indefatigable campaigner for the protection of Fraser Island for over 35 years. He knows Fraser Island better than any other person. He has written a number of books about it including his autobiography, *Fighting for Fraser Island*, with Peter Corris. He is keen to share his knowledge and show off the Island's most impressive features. You can share John's passion for it.

Style: This camping safari travels in a small convoy of four wheel drive vehicles. Little walking is required, but there are some good walking and swimming opportunities.

Draft Itinerary

Day 1; Saturday, 12th August: Depart Roma Street, Brisbane, at 7.30 am. Travel via Cooloola to Rainbow Beach and then to Fraser Island across Great Sandy Strait. Explore the Southern Lakes — burgundy Lake Boomanjin and the crystal clear Lake Birrabeen — before establishing our rainforest camp. Camp: Central Station.

Day 2; Sunday, 13th August: Visit some of the island's most popular and iconic features — Lake McKenzie, Wanggoolba Creek, Pile Valley — and walk across Hammerstone sandblow to Wabby Lakes. Camp: Central Station.

Day 3; Monday, 14th August: Head north to the "Valley of the Giants", where the world's largest *Syncarpia* and tallowwoods grow. Explore some special forest areas and get an appreciation of Great Sandy Strait's rich diversity. Then via the Bogimbah Scrub to the site of the Aboriginal mission (1897-1905) at Bogimbah Creek, and on to a grand lookout. Appreciate the iconic Eli Creek. Camp: Kgari.

Day 4; Tuesday, 15th August: See beach-side features including the wreck of the "Maheno" and the Cathedrals coloured sands, complex rainforest in Yidney Scrub and near Lake Allom, a perched lake surrounded by rainforest, as well as spectacular wildflower heathlands. Camp: Kgari.

Day 5; Wednesday, 16th August: Top End Run. Travel to discover the wild grandeur of Sandy Cape, Breaksea Spit and Flinders Sandblow. Explore rugged rocky headlands at Middle Rocks and Indian Head. Swim in lovely Ocean Lake, a typical window lake. Camp: Kgari.

Day 6; Thursday, 17th August: Explore Wungul sandblow before visiting Indian Head and crossing the island from Orchid Beach to ford Wathumba Creek at dead low tide. We then drive south along the shores of the idyllic Platypus Bay. Establish a wilderness camp with only bush facilities at Arch Cliffs beside photogenic Bowarrady Creek on the shores of Hervey Bay. Camp: Arch Cliffs.

Day 7; Friday, 18th August: There is an option to relax and stay in camp and keep an eye out for the whales which can be seen from the beach here, or take a very pleasant 16 kilometre hike to Lake Bowarrady. Camp: Arch Cliffs.

Day 8; Saturday, 19th August: Lunch and a swim at Lake Allom. Then stop at the fascinating fens on the way to catch the 4.30 pm ferry at Moon Point to Hervey Bay. Enjoy hot showers and bistro meal. Accom: Motel, Hervey Bay.

Day 9; Sunday, 20th August: Make a pre-dawn start for a close encounter with humpback whales which often play around the boats in Platypus Bay. Back ashore we travel to John Sinclair's home-town of Maryborough, to view the unique vernacular architecture of its heritage houses. Return to Brisbane via the Mary Valley and Maleny, arriving about 6.30 pm.

