

DESTINATION FRASER ISLAND Queensland

Fraser Island is one of the jewels in Australia's crown and is justifiably on the World Heritage List. We need to get to Fraser every few years and the problem is: so does everyone else, it seems.



We've been visiting Fraser Island since the late 1970s and it's almost miraculous to note that the essential wilderness value of the world's largest sand island remains virtually unchanged.

The forested areas and the beachfronts have actually improved, because logging was stopped 12 years ago and the former beach-humpy 'villages' that sprang up in secluded areas – in particular at Waddy Point – have been replaced by highly-organised camping areas, with toilets and open-air showers. Free camping is still permitted just off the beachfront on the eastern shore, but access to these areas is rotated, to allow the bush to recover from human visitation.

In the beautiful, sensitive areas of Eli Creek and Wanggoolba Creek, boardwalks keep visitors off the vegetation and limit erosion. Sure, the sand tracks that criss-cross the Island are wider than they used to be and there's more traffic on them, but if you choose outside-peak times to visit you can have as uncrowded a visit as you could have had 30 years ago. If you're forced to go during the peak times of mid-summer and during school holidays you'll feel the pressure.

Many people visit Fraser Island for the fishing alone, which is a pity, because they miss out appreciating the Island's spectacular beauty. Even if you're fishing freaks it's wise to allow time for bush driving or walking around the inland.

The most interesting inland drives on Fraser Island are clearly signposted with colour-coded direction arrows at intersections. The suggested drives are marked on Island maps and if you're camping at Central Station or on the beach between Dilli Village and Cathedral Beach Resort you're in the ideal place to start these drives.

Lake Garawongera Tourist Drive – this one-hour drive passes through tall forest that was extensively logged in the past. There are many stumps with wood cutters' plank grooves cut in them. There are several rainforest patches on this drive, but near the beach the trees are smaller and the forest is quite open. The Lake is deep and pristine, flanked by reed beds and water-loving melaleucas.



Central Lakes Tourist Drive – this two-hour drive takes in Lake Wabby – the lake that's gradually being invaded by a sand 'blow' and the favoured swimming lake, Lake McKenzie.

The start of the loop is difficult to spot on the beach, but is signposted Cornwells Rd. This track climbs up to the Lake Wabby lookout and then leads to Lake McKenzie.

The loop continues through the magnificent timber stands in Pile Valley to Central Station, where you can catch up on Fraser Island's history at the visitors' centre. The Wanggoolba Creek boardwalk is an essential short stroll, before you rejoin the track and head for the beach at Eurong. Although the driving time for this trek is two hours, side visits to the lakes and time spent at Central Station can make it a great day out.

The Northern Forests Tourist Drive – this 36-kilometre trek takes in the beautiful rainforest sections around Yidney Scrub, Boomerang Lakes – the highest perched lakes in the world – and the Knifeblade sand blow.



The northern exit from the track onto the beach is close to The Pinnacles coloured sands and the 'Maheono' wreck. The southern approach to this trek is Happy Valley, from where you simply follow the blue circuit signs. 'Yidney Scrub' is a strange name for magnificent rainforest featuring gigantic Kauri, Satinay and Strangler Fig trees, separated by Piccabeen Palms.

The track passes through open woodland dominated by Banksias, then gum forest, before culminating in testing soft sand over the last few kilometres.

The Southern Lakes Tourist Drive – this green-signposted track leads towards Central Station from Eurong, then swings south and wanders around Lakes Jennings, Birrabeen, Benaroon and Boomanjin, before emerging onto the beach at Dilli Village.



The Beach Drive – northwards up Seventy-Five Mile Beach as far as you like – tides willing – but at least as far as Orchid Beach.

This trek is best done at low water, on the hard tidal sand. The greatest difficulties along the beach front are shallow creeks that often have hard, vertical sides. Smack one at speed and you'll do tyre and suspension damage – or worse.

The tracks around Waddy Point used to be hazardous, but now there are two one-way tracks, so there's no longer the risk of a head-on collision.



**Bridgestone's
Dueler 683 HL**
is our tyre choice
for this trek

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FACT FILE

Where

South East Queensland

Time required

Two weeks

Best time to go

All year round

What to do

Beach driving - always check tides (normal road rules apply) walking, fishing, scenic drives, swimming, whale watching

Maps

Fraser Island mud map

www.derm.qld.gov.au/parks/fraser/pdf/fraser-island-visitorguide.pdf

Camping

Dundubara, Waddy Point, Wathumba, Central Station, One Tree Rocks, Coolooloi Creek, Dulara, Midyim, Garulim, Cornwells

Permits

Vehicle access permit is required before driving on the beach and a camping permit is required before setting up camp

Online bookings (and other booking options) at:
www.derm.qld.gov.au/parks/fraser/index.html

4WD access to Fraser Island is via barge (fees apply)

Inskip Point, a 15 minute drive from Rainbow Beach - east of Gympie,
River Heads - east of Maryborough
Hervey Bay - Urangan boat harbour.

Track closures

See conditions report at

www.derm.qld.gov.au/register/p01663aa.pdf

Last fuel

Rainbow Beach, Hervey Bay (no fuel on Fraser Island)

Contact

www.derm.qld.gov.au/parks/fraser/index.html