

# Fraser Island tag along with 4WD Action

Special trip to Fraser Island.

Glenn, Margaret, Mitchell Evans & Maddyson Mills.

After replying to a request from 4 Wheel Drive Action, we were asked to tag along to Fraser Island for a photo shoot of family camping for an upcoming special feature and have the FJ feature as a customer tourer. With my trip with the club being scheduled for the same time next year, the opportunity to do some "reccy" work was too good to pass up.

The idea was to make our way to Inskip point and meet the other families to spend a few days on the island and do some general touring and basically enjoy what Fraser has to offer.

With the camper trailer in tow, the FJ was serviced and loaded and we sent off. Not leaving until late Thursday afternoon and at that stage the fires around Raymond Terrace were in full swing and the call of Woodberry pub for tea was too great so we decided to stay at a friend's house that night.

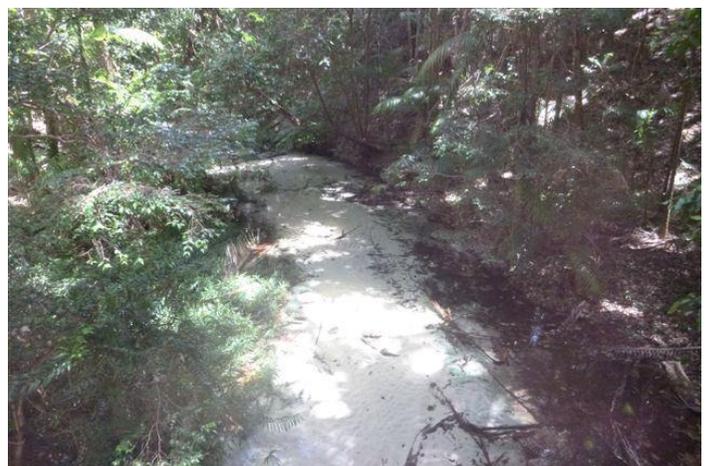
We left and I decided to go up the scenic inland road via Stroud and take the Buckets way which brings us out at Uralla. The trip went well until we go to Armidale when the woman realised that Armidale has some good shops so we had to detour through the town. We then spent the night at Warwick in a motel as I was too lazy to set up the camper for the night.

Next day we were to camp at Rainbow beach so we set off and decided that our big shop will be at Nambour. Stocking up in Nambour we headed off to Rainbow beach for the night and final preparations before going on the island.

As this was my 4<sup>th</sup> time on Fraser, I was thinking that all should be OK but as the area was so dry, I knew that sand would be quite soft so we started to air down as with a full camper and fuel tanks as well as the water tank and 4 people in the car and only having a Toyota to pull it was going to be a hard slog. 10 PSI all round. Sure enough, as we drove off the ramp onto the beach to get on the

barge we went down to the floor sills. The only thing was for every 10 cars with or without trailers going onto the barge 9 got stuck. Out came the Max Trax and shovel but it took another car on the trip a hard long steady pull to get the FJ out. One of the Max Trax is still there as even digging down 2 foot it could not be found. All on the barge we met up with the other families and headed off up the beach to see several dead sea turtles as it seemed that there had been quite a big storm out to sea and these had not survived. We were also greeted with thousands of mutton birds which were in the progress of migrating from South America. These were exhausted and some were dead but the ones that survived were in such poor condition that they could not even move as you drove past them.

First stop was Eli creek for a swim. Despite the area being very dry, the creek still was running and was a welcome stop. The previous year the water was waist deep near the bridge but it was down to below your knees this time.



Next stop was the ship wreck for some photos for the magazine. This had changed as well as at low tide you can now drive around both sides of the wreck and hundreds of tons of sand had been washed inside the wreck.

We then headed off to find a camp site on the beach for our stay. Not far south of Dundaburra, we found a great spot sheltered from the wind but level and big enough for everybody to set up. The race was on to get set up and have our first beer. We then had a bit of a meeting to discuss what we had to do as far as commitment for the magazine photo shoot but it was more like well we are here, who wants to go somewhere. Everybody was on holidays. Sandy Cape, Champagne pools and Lake Mackenzie on the list of things to do. As we had quite a few children on the trip nobody wanted a real early start so working with the tides, 9.00 was the start time. Today was to get some photos and drive up to Sandy Cape. As we pulled into Orchid Beach and as it was after 10 o'clock the bar was open so Mitchell & I had to make sure the beer was up to standard for my club trip next year. I am pleased to say that the beer and pies were acceptable and that we might even stop here next year. The tide had turned so we headed further north with the bypass track at Ngkala rocks which I expected was going to be a challenge as the area had not had any rain for quite some time. It did not let us down. I walked the track to make sure we would not meet a car coming the other way only to find a car stuck and in the process of being recovered. With the track clear I called the cars through one by one and then we were off to beat the tide to get to the light house. How things had changed from last year. The ramp from the light house to the beach had about a 6 foot drop off where last year it was on the beach. Some decided to walk up to the light house (haha) but from previous experience I decided along with the photographer to stay and do the custom shoot on the FJ. A good choice I feel.



We had lunch and a swim while the kids played watching the fish and building sand castles. It was also noted that the sand dunes that were as high as some of the biggest on Stockton beach had been reduced to about half the size they were last year. With the tide on the way out we headed off to the Champagne pools for a look and a swim. Again what a difference a year makes. It seems that the sand from the dunes had been dumped in the swimming holes. Last year they were about 5 feet deep but now about 3 feet deep. But still a beautiful spot for a swim and photos.

With the sun setting, we headed back to camp for a drink and dinner. Camping on the beach, showers were located at Dundubara so the daily track about 5 minutes up the beach was on. It was dark when one of the members came back in the land rover which was now in a desperate need for a wheel alignment. He had hit one of the many creeks at the wrong angle and the left wheel was about 30 degrees to the left compared to the right. With the aid of the winch and a bottle jack, the wheels were soon straight and the car was drivable again.

Next day again had no real agenda. A trip to Lake Mackenzie and Central station was organised but we were going to call into the villages on the way just to catch on what was



happening in the world and ice cream while some topped up the fuel tanks. \$2.10 a litre for unleaded and \$2.15 for diesel was reasonable. The trip took us to Lake Wabby and to the look out. While some of the enthusiastic members took the track to the lake we decided to stay at the look out and watch the whales play in the distance. The drive to Lake Mackenzie was rough and very tough in places. Even the tourist busses were having trouble with reports from the locals that several had to be recovered themselves. I was lucky enough to meet one on the way and had to reverse into a lay back only to get stuck but despite the tourist busses reputation, he pulled us out so we could both continue.

Lake Mackenzie was as usual beautiful and as it was mid-week and no school holidays, we had the lake to ourselves for about an hour until we were joined by a tag along group. Some then decided to drive back to camp while some decided to go to Eurong to stock up and fuel up. The tide was on our side with the speed limit of 80 k's being reached most of the way home and several local dingos spotted. We decided to call into Cathedrals as this is where I have booked for next year. This camp site has improved with the new owners and only makes me glad we are coming back.

Originally we were to leave Wednesday but everybody decided an extra day was needed so Central Station and a lazy day was scheduled. All the last of the custom photos and action photos were taken and we took the walk down to the creek. Back via Eurong for ice cream and a general walk around. Back to camp for the last lot of drinks and stories around the camp lantern (total

fire ban so a torch was used as the camp fire) and get ready for the reluctant pack up.

With the reluctance to pack up and leave, we left at different times meeting at Eurong to regroup so we could get on the barge together. With the tide coming in the race was on. Things were going well until we reached the last 10 k's where the beach as with the tide coming in the beach was narrow and very very soft. The cars were really struggling with 4000 to 5000 RPM being the norm at about 10 k's a hour. The beach was very rutted and trying to dodge the exhausted birds was a real challenge.

We all made it to the barge and waited for it to come across. Radio chatter, we all decided to air up at the servo's on the main land and go our separate ways. Many new friends have been made and some good contacts made from Rockhampton to Wagga. Next stop was the Gold Coast for a couple of nights to do a theme park and drive home.

The article will be published in 4WD Action over a period on several months starting in about 3 months. A great trip and cannot wait to get back on the island next year. That will make it 4 years in a row!

