



Moreton Island trip report

September/October 2013-10-15

Trip Leader – Ben Sweetnam (Connor & Zoe)
Attendees – Scott, Deb(bie), Heather & Erika Lucas
Nathan, Aroha, Joshua and Bradley Gilbert
Glen, Kim and Monica Coddington
(AKA Cods, Mrs. Cods & Ninja Cods)
John, Karina, Liam and Ashley Groth
Al & Glenys Brady
Ryan, Renee, Darlington
Jason, Rassel, Caitlin, Ryan & Jorja Grace Morgan
Terese, Chris and Joshua Ellis
Craig, Shane & Casey Upton
Daniel, Lorelle, Kody & Mitchell Evans
(the smart one)
Lenny, Deb(bie), Jonathan, Lachlan, Kieran,
Cameron, Benjamin & Vivian
Tapan, Venita, Naiyan, Ariyan & Amani Sharma

Saturday 28th September

With a trip of this size (23 adults & 29 kids), it was always going to be hard to have everyone come up to Brisbane in convoy. Some of us managed to squeeze a few extra days and had a stopover in Yamba, while the rest met up at the first point of call, the Sheldon Caravan Park, QLD.

We (Ben, Scott, Nathan and I), were the first to arrive in the earlyish afternoon, after the relatively short drive from Yamba. Soon after, the second wave of travellers made it there including the Coddington's, Ellis', Groth's, Brady's, Darlington's, Morgan's and the Upton's.

It wasn't long before the emergency response team (Ben and to some degree.....me) was put into action, trying to replace Craig's battery solenoid. During the trip, his auxiliary battery stopped charging and the battery voltage was seriously low. A quick change, and a charger put on the battery for the night, all good to go.

With everyone settling into their accommodation, a few went and did some last minute groceries, and fuelled up ready for the next morning. While the kids were in the pool having a swim, and the grownups having a "beverage", Lenny and co arrived.

Squaring away all the loose ends prior to departure, we called it a night, ready for an early start.

Sunday 29th September

We thought we'd get up early on Sunday, so we weren't late. Walked outside, and everyone was already up getting set to leave....BUGGER!!!! A quick scramble to get the cabin packed away, and the camper hooked up again, we too were ready....last, but ready.

A quick dash to the Port of Brisbane and we were queued up and waiting for the ferry across to the island to start loading.....but hang on.....WHERE'S DAN???

Just like the Groth's in 2011, they stayed overnight close by, and were nowhere to be seen. After a few frantic



phone calls, they announced that they were at the back of the queue....Phew!!! All on the ferry...here we go.

Upon reaching the island, the cars were scattered when it came time for disembarking. We slowly moved North along the beach till we found a place where we could stop and wait for the entire group to come together. I was second off the ferry and as I rounded the corner there was a HUGE group of people in front us.....it was OUR group. It didn't look quite as big before, but now seeing everyone out of their cars in a mob, it was ridiculous, we were literally a mini city.

As we were waiting, a few cars had passed us, so Ben made the call to get back in and start heading for the campground. While we were all booked, it was still a free for all at the grounds. It wasn't long before we hit the first bypass track.....and the first recovery. Al was a little precious with the Paj, and got himself well and truly stuck. Nathan and the mighty 'veggieoilless' 80 came to the rescue!!!

Pity it wasn't (as Nathan put it) a Datsun!!!

With Al underway again, we all followed up without drama. Back on the beach, and onto the next bit of soft sand, and Al got stuck again. Cod's wondered about his tyre pressure, and sure enough, that was the culprit. Losing some air, and another quick recovery, we again were on our way.

By this time, some of the guys in the front of the group had made the campgrounds. Chatter on the CB suggested all the larger sites were already taken. A quick reccie produced not much more, until Scott and Dan stumbled onto a site suitable for about 5 or 6 families.

Another small group (two couples) in a larger area were packing up, so we took that site too. It was the best we could do, and so it was...The North Camp, and the South Camp.

We slowly started to get set up. Ben wanted to make sure all was good with everyone before he started, but I think he just did that so we could all help him.

With everyone now set up, it was for North Camp to host the first "happy hour". Scheduled for 4pm, the kids table was cleaned of goodies by around 4.05....it was like they hadn't been fed all day. The seniors "happy hour" was almost done when Karina decided to join us. Nothing like making an entrance!!!!

Later that night after dinner, and kids put to bed, we got back together as a group at North Camp for the nightly shackle nominations and awards. After a few more drinks we called it a night.

Monday 30th September

The plan today was to head for the North Beach. After a leisurely start to the morning, we all departed about

10.30. With John and Karina being our day trip leaders, we got to the beach to find glorious conditions. Some swam, some fished while some just sat back and enjoyed the weather and the whale watching....what could be better!!!!

Leaving the beach relatively early, we headed back to camp to get prepared for the Pizza night. With the Cobbs and Weber's lined up, Kim, John and Dan (the pizza man) began the feast, turning out pizza after pizza, and finishing the evening with some Nutella Pizza's for desert (thankfully, Bradley can now eat Nutella).

Dinner over, it was time to get kids bathed and into bed. Some of us went back to South Camp for some drinks, and once again it was time for the shackle!!! After some more laughs, we called it a night.

Tuesday 1st October

We were leading the trip today. The plan was to depart from the shops at 9.00am, and it was all going well until we made our first turn. A bit of second guessing (along the track we drive everyday), we got it right.....only to get it wrong about 10 minutes later. A quick U-turn from a few cars, and were now heading in the right direction (luckily dodging shackle nominations, Phew!!!).

The first stop for the day was the Lighthouse. Getting there without further drama, we managed to squeeze the 13 cars into the car park (and surrounding areas). After a quick look around we set off again, bound for East beach, with the wind coming from the west, the beach was fantastic. Nice gentle waves in close for the little ones, and some bigger waves further out for the bigger kids, and some of the oldies too, pity we weren't staying. Heading further south, well very south. All the way to the bottom of the island to a quiet little pub (Gutter Pub) for lunch. On the way, we had a quick stop at Mirapool Lagoon. The aquatic life in here was amazing. Every step in the lukewarm water set fish darting off in all directions. A few pics later, lunch was the call.

At around 12.30, right on cue, we arrived at the pub. When 51 people roll into a small establishment, all at once and line up to order lunch, some may fall over with the task ahead. The guys at the 'Gutter Bar' handled the situation well and quickly rang for back up. Some of the lunch orders began to come out before everyone had

finished ordering.

After everyone had eaten, we kept moving. Some of the people who had been on the island before, were raving about the oyster farm just a few k's up the road, so once again, 13 cars rolled into the driveway and the fun began. We had around 15 dozen oysters @ \$10 a dozen, chucked straight away...well, as fast as they could. All sorted, we headed back to camp for happy hour. The road back around the Tangalooma Resort was bit dodgy, but as far as I know, no one lost any oysters. We managed the full lap of the island, and got back into camp a little too late for "happy hour", so we went to our respective camps and got right into dinner, then drinks and once again, the nightly Shackle awards.

Wednesday 2nd October

Ben took it upon himself to lead the trip for today.....yep, today was the day to stay put!!!

With another sunny day, very little wind, and low tide, it was a perfect way to spend the day. Beach cricket, art of frisbee throwing, catching crabs for the kids, swimming, and fishing.....oh, and ensuring we were all well hydrated.

Naiyan managed to catch a fish off the beach. A plate sized flounder. Excited, he ran down the beach to show everyone. John said he'd cook it up, so he was coming to clean the fish when nature called. He put the fish down to relieve himself, and when he returned, the fish was gone!!! What the???? Five minutes of searching the beach up and down, Lenny says "didn't an eagle come down and pick something up?" The same thing was said by Craig. I guess we know where the fish is now. Needless to say, John didn't get his dinner.

With no driving during the day, some of the guys experienced low battery issues. The (Shhhh) generators had to come. So with extension leads going everywhere, we tried to get as much charge into the batteries as we could. It was joy for some, but not for others. Ryan's car didn't like the charge at all, and had a bit of a wobbly. He got things 'kind of sorted', and got his car back to camp (he took the car onto the beach).

As evening fell, some of the kids were playing down at the beach. Naiyan was again fishing, and right on high tide, landed a nice sized bream. He, Lenny and the kids



all came back up the track to camp, but were stopped by a snake right in the middle of the track. Erika, without a worry in the world jumped right over it. Naiyan next in line excited to show his fish off almost stepped on it with one leg in mid stride managed to hold Lachlan and Kieran back when Brave Lenny jumped in and managed to get it away by throwing sand on it, and the kids made their escape. Scott and Venita went back to take photos and investigate only to find that the snake didn't know which way he wanted to go, but it finally slithered away in the bush.

After that bit of drama, we called it a night.

Thursday 3rd October

Nathan & Aroha were today's trip leaders, with Josh taking care of communications in the "Mighty 80". Today's destination was East beach, after seeing it a couple of days ago. One the way, we stopped in at the Blue Lagoon. With a bit of assistance from Ben ("Nathan, go up here....."), Nathan finally found the right track. The Blue Lagoon wasn't blue, it was brown!!! Brook Shields was nowhere to be seen either.....a bit disappointing really. The wind was up, and the chop across the water didn't make it too inviting, so we left fairly quickly.

We pulled up at the northern most part of East beach and it was just the same as a couple of days ago. Conditions were absolutely perfect with the tide out.

We splashed around for a few hours, and had a bite to eat, before packing up and checking out Champagne Pools, which was just over the other side of the headland. A short drive later, and we were there. At low tide, there wasn't much "champagne" flowing, so we took off and headed back to the shops for some ice creams and supplies. With tide almost at dead low, we managed to drive along the beach back to our camp ground / shops. A trip that takes 45 minutes inland, took us 5 minutes along the beach.

It was time for "Happy hour" now. This time, the kids were given strict instructions as to how to behave when chips and dips are placed in front of them, and they actually listened. We even had our first camp fire.

The usual routine from here on was with dinner, followed by the daily shackle awards. Most of the group called it a night at about 10, but Dan and Lorelle had other thoughts. Along the way to the island, they picked up a dart board ... and with Dan thinking he's pretty good.....Lorelle called for a game of "head torch darts". Lorelle, Lenny, Deb, Venita and I, all competed for the much coveted prize of beating Dan. I could say he was competitive, but I'd be lying. After being whooped, he

challenged Lenny and me to a different game. This time, Lenny came up victorious. Dan threw the dart board away.

Friday 4th October

Lenny and Deb acted as our tour leaders for what was the last full day on the island. We were heading back to 'Champagne Pools' to see if there was anything more happening on a different tide. There wasn't much more happening as once again, the tide was out. Ben and Scott took a quick drive west towards "Tailors Bight", which we saw the day before.

With everyone still a bit scattered, we left Champagne Pools in small groups, and headed for Tailors Bight to join Scott who had already set up for the day.

With a small lagoon on one side, a knee deep gutter on the other and the ocean just beyond, It was another great spot to spend the afternoon, and Cods even joined us in wetting a line, but with the tide still out, not much was biting.

Everyone was quite happy, sitting around chatting but our time here had come to an end. Leaving the island tomorrow, we had to start getting things squared away, so the morning would be as painless as possible.

After a quick happy hour, we got the fire going once again. Dinner had by all, we congregated at north camp for the final shackle award. John thought the fire wasn't big enough, so he brought a few more bags of firewood from south camp.....that's certainly one way to make the circle of people bigger.....just add 40 kilos of timber to the fire !!!

After a couple of bottles of port were finished, everyone called it a night for the time on the island.

Saturday 6th October

The night before, South Camp had decided to get an early start. The high tide was due roughly the same time we had to be at the ferry landing, so timing was everything. With Nathan once again the tow vehicle, they set off at around 7 am. We at North camp were aiming for an 8.30 departure, and had everyone hitched up and ready to roll, right on 8.30am.

We received some calls from the first convoy that the beach was VERY soft, so with that in mind, we set off hoping for the best. We didn't get very far before we found the beach access was impassable. The problem was, 4 vehicles had already past the point of no return no return forwards anyway. Backing up the trailer for some 40-50m up the beach with a rising tide, Terese, Jason, Ben and Dan managed to back to the inland

track without a hiccup. Continuing along the inland tracks, we arrived at the ferry point with just over an hour to kill. The guys from South Camp had already set for a cooked breakfast. I think they were making a few bystanders a bit hungry.

Right on 10.30, they started loading the ferry, and so with everyone aboard, we said farewell to Moreton Island.

Back on mainland, we met up at the nearby service station. Some were travelling back south, while others were staying local for a night. Dan and Lorelle headed further north to Noosa for another few days. We said our goodbyes to those not travelling with us, and set off for Armidale for our nights stop over.

Exhausted after the drive, we settled in for dinner and a few drinks before heading off to bed.

Sunday 7th October

Once again, people were leaving at different times. Scott, Craig, Jason, and Cods left at a stupid hour....must have been around 7.30am, while the rest of us (Lenny, Ben, Terese and Us) had a more leisurely departure. A few stops along the way, and we all reached the comfort of our respective homes, in time to watch the NRL Gand Final....and then pass out !!!

Benjamin, once again, a great well organised trip, and no one came home in an ambulance!!!

Cheers,

Taps



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