

Goold Island Trip Report



Goold Island 17- 19 April 2009

text & images HJ Preuss

Where are we staying and where do we eat tonight ??? Dunno, guess we'll work it out when we get to Cardwell, OK ? Sounds like a disaster waiting to happen.

BUT despite the lack of planning our own ability to adapt and overcome turned this trip into a real winner. A quick recap – our Club trip was planned for the weekend for the 18 and 19th April. Due to unforeseen circumstances “the planning” did NOT get done and only Stumpy and I drove to Cardwell. The idea was to paddle along the west coast of Hinchinbrook Island for about 20 kms past Garden Island and camp on Goold Island for the Saturday night.

Having arrived in Cardwell we went to Port'o'Call boat-ramp to check the security of the area. We hoped to leave my car in the car-park overnight. Everything appeared good so off we went to eat then look for accommodation. Annie's Kitchen provided a great meal for a reasonable price and the Kookaburra Caravan Park had dongas we could stay in. These are air-conditioned units with 2 beds and storage space – perfect for weary kayakers. Close by was a secure area where we parked the car with both kayaks on top.

After a good night's rest and breakfast we headed to the boat-ramp. The Tackle Shop owners assured us our vehicle would be very safe so we loaded our boats and took off across the Channel. With calm seas, light winds and slight wispy clouds overhead we paddled across to Hinchinbrook Island. The Island always impresses me with its brooding primordial appearance. The recent rains had clothed the hills in a coat of green. In the distance we saw the outline of our own destination, Goold Island.



*top: SE corner of Goold Island
above: Hinchinbrook Is from north
below: Goold Island*



Crossing to Garden Island we had several encounters with turtles and accidentally interrupted a large pair of mating turtles. These two creatures shot off at terrific speed – much faster than I thought they could achieve.

Gradually the wind speed increased to around 12 knots causing a small choppy sea. As we approached Garden Island we stopped for a chat with a local boat owner who gave me some extra water. Quite a few boats had anchored in the lee of the Island in crystal clear waters. As we approached the shoreline fish and crabs darted away from our boats shadows.

The shady site on Garden Island is hidden from the sea and until you are nearly inside the tree line. A resident goanna slid out of the shadows looking for a free meal but left disappointed. Several photos later we continued our journey – a brief paddle around the sand-spit into the sheltered side of Goold Island.

Here the undisturbed waters were again crystal clear with fish and crabs scuttling away from us. The campsite here is completely in the shade and looks as if no-one has ever been here. The cleanliness was very impressive – not a sign of humans. After a quick exploratory walk around we set up camp and put our boats in under the trees close to our tents.



This campsite has some amazing features – a gas BBQ, water (boil or treat before drinking, a tin sheltered area with bench seat and a short distance away a totally new one standing next to an older version. It appears that about 10 tents could be set up quite easily within the leafy canopy. And ... because it is so sheltered rain and wind rarely affects this spot.

After lunch Stumpy and I decided to spend the rest of the day paddling around Goold Island. We set off around the east coast hugging the shoreline and the diversity of the vegetation soon became apparent. Gum tree, palms and mangroves within 4 metres of the windswept rocky shoreline.

The east coast does not offer many places to land a kayak as it is far too rocky and the waters hide oyster-encrusted rocks just under the surface. Please note going too close to shore results in nasty scratches on your kayak.

This was offset by the beauty of Hinchinbrook Island only several kilometres across the Bay. As we slipped through the rocks between Goold and its little neighbour (I forget its name) we nearly shaved the sides off our boats ... again. The west coast features many steep drops into the sea with many bommies close to shore. It looked a good place to dive for crayfish and possibly spearfish. The afternoon sunlight and wave motion made photography a little difficult.

As we neared our campsite the shoreline became less steep and the waters much shallower. Everywhere fish moved constantly. We finally arrived at our camp site and spent a good half hour talking to a nice couple from a yacht anchored in the little bay. Having solved the world's problems both groups separated and headed to our respective eating places. After tea we chatted for a while then retired to our tents. We drifted off to sleep with the surf gently lapping the shore. The next morning I took a walk before dawn around the narrow spit we were camped on to get some early morning photos.



*left: campsite, Goold
above: rocks SE Garden Island, mainland beyond*

The peacefulness was almost tangible in the soft morning light. I noticed that several more craft were now anchored in the lee of Garden Island. After a leisurely breakfast we slowly repacked our boats then paddled off towards the 2 large rocks on the eastern side of Garden Island.

We briefly saw the Marine Parks boat as it motored between the anchored vessels. The crew wished us a safe journey then blasted off to inspect their territory.

We paddled across to Hinchinbrook Island and mooched along it's side until we felt like a quick break. A most interesting episode followed with us gingerly "beaching" our boats on a rather rocky shoreline.. The slow trip back to Cardwell was broken by frequent sightings of fish and turtles in the shallows. By the way on low tide stay close to the marked channel as the water levels get very low. At last we were back at Cardwell. Car loaded we headed off for a quick meal then back to Townsville. This trip had the three main ingredients of a great trip – excellent company, good sea and great weather.