

## Moreton Island - middle section - notes for the explorer

Moreton Island is one of four large sand masses on the Queensland coast. The others are Stradbroke Island, the Cooloola Coast, and Fraser Island. The 37 kilometre long narrow island is almost all sand, anchored by a rocky outcrop at Cape Moreton on the north east tip. The island is across the waters of Moreton Bay from Brisbane, lying to seaward as a low blue strip along the horizon, with patches of bare sanddunes visible from the mainland.

The kayaker can paddle to Moreton, in a direct line past Mud Island to the Big Sandhills, or island hop from North Stradbroke Island across a four kilometre wide channel. Given the temperamental nature of Moreton Bay weather, and the limitations of a two day weekend, it is not surprising that many kayakers take the ferry over.

Once you are there, the north south lie of the island gives some protection from the prevailing south east winds. The Wrecks is the ferry destination for the major service to the island, and it lies about in the middle. Go south to the Sandhills, go north to Bulwer and round the north west point.



*Ferry landing. "The Wrecks" National Parks camping site to the right*

The middle section of Moreton Island is dominated by the the 280 metre high Mt Tempest.

A line of scuttled ships, The Wrecks, forms an artificial reef just offshore from the bay side. Keep in mind a mask and snorkel when choosing gear for the trip.

Immediately south of the Wrecks is the National Parks camping area, "the Wrecks". The resort settlement of Tangalooma is 1.5 kilometres down the beach. From the bay side, it is seven kilometres east across the island on the one way, four wheel drive only, Middle Road.

The Middle Road starts 600 metres north of the Wrecks, where the Micat vehicle and passenger ferry drops the ramp. The return road runs parallel a hundred metres north.

This one lane sand road is the only means of crossing the island in the middle section. Unless there has been very recent heavy rain, the sand will be soft and deep.

There is no walking track across to the ocean beach. In soft sand it is a two hour walk each way, on the road. As the track is World War II vintage it has cut many deep trenches into the sand.

These trenches can be up to 4 metres deep, and last for several hundred metres. They are barely one vehicle width. A person cannot move to the edge of the road and be out of the way.

There is no room for walkers and cars down in the trenches, nor is it possible to walk next to the road.

In one section, the return road runs uphill for about four hundred metres in a deep, soft sandy trench. Given the dangers involved, the use of the road cannot be recommended.



*Cape Moreton visible 15 kilometres north from Middle Road exit*



*The Wrecks and Tangalooma*



*drivers view, down in the trenches*

**Mt Tempest, highest sand dune in the world, is found six kilometres east across the island on the Middle Road (one kilometre west from the ocean beach). A walking track to the summit runs north from the Middle Road, and its start is signposted. The outlook is worth an early morning visit, with views over the entire island.**

**One kilometre south of Tangalooma, and 300 metres inland, is a kilometre square of sand known as The Desert. The 4wd cars and tour buses get there by going up the Middle Road, then south along the Tangalooma bypass road, then left along the Desert Road. Given the soft sand it is not the recommended access for walkers.**

**From the Wrecks go 1.5 km down the beach to Tangalooma, then 1.5 km along the beach to a walking track to The Desert, 300 metres inland. Keep in mind almost all beaches are 4wd roads, and don't leave canoes and kayaks anywhere on a beach. The Desert is much visited by sandboarders who ride strips of fibreboard down the face of the main dune. When you emerge from the vegetation after the walk up from the beach, the high dune used for boarding is on your right, at the far end. If you are sandboarding, climb back up the dune face above the small stand of sheoak trees, to avoid putting your bumpy footholds where people slide.**

**Note that at the far right of the dune is a log fenced car park. This is where the Desert Road ends. Some tour buses are allowed to drive into the dune area.**



The Desert

If you were intending to walk to the Rous Battery (World War II fortifications in the dunes on the ocean side), the walking track starts half a kilometre back up the Desert Road, from the carpark. It is well signposted. Don't even think about walking with a day or overnight pack up Middle Road to the Tangalooma bypass, to the Desert Road to start this walk. Go in from the beach.

It is 10 kilometres to the Rous Battery from the start, on firm sand, and has the advantage over the ocean beach walk (Middle Road, then beach, 20 km one way) of having some shade.



*below: a narrow track, scribbly gums and grassstrees*

*Rous Battery track. The Desert is half a k to the right by road*



