

A Taste of what others only dream

Its been four years since we launched and we have just experienced our first big trip away. Having had to juggle extended family-sailing-trips with fulltime work, high school and University, has been a big challenge. However, November last (2012), we sailed Pure Majek up to the Whitsundays.



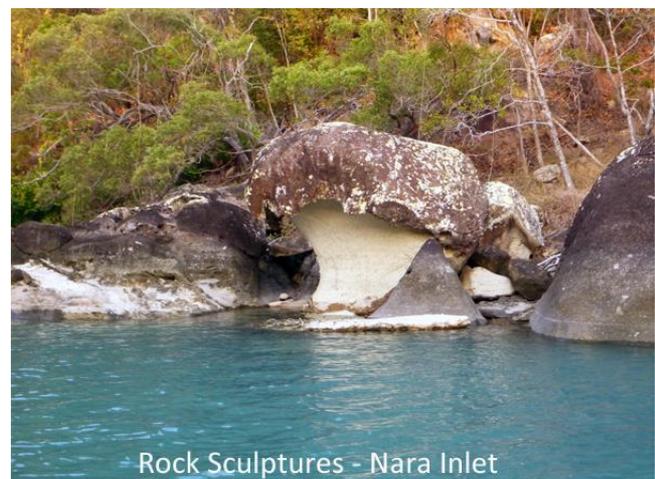
The northern run was done single-handed and took just over week, stopping each evening in some beautiful spots. They included Kingfisher Bay Resort (great for food and a free shower), Bundaberg River (where I topped up with fuel and stayed an extra night due to the strong winds), Great Keppel Island, Hexham Island and Scawfell Island. Scawfell Island was absolutely beautiful, the

waters were very clear, superb coral viewing and fish everywhere. This secluded serene atmosphere forced an extra overnight...damn.

Having spent the last few years fine-tuning my meagre skill levels around Fraser and Moreton Islands, I found the yacht a joy to manage, relying on the Raymarine autopilot to do most of the steering with me overseeing its course management, coffee in hand. I was fortunate to be able to use the spinnaker most of the way and the yacht averaged 7-9 knots, a speed that proved very comfortable below deck too.

The yacht was left at Laguna Quays, which sadly was struggling from the aftermath of a cyclone a few years earlier. The owners neglect was very evident with staff trying the best they could to manage with the meagre resources that remained.

Returning two weeks later, I took Pure Majek around to Airlie Beach to await the arrival of the family by plane a few days later (now being the Christmas School holidays). The last of the foods were bought (cryovaced) for the next few weeks in the Whitsundays, and we were off.



Being December, the temperatures were very high. The predominant wind was south-easterly and at twenty knots, we reached our first stop on Hook Island after a mornings easy sail. Nara Inlet is beautiful. The bay was very sheltered and anchoring easy. There are

some amazing natural weathered rock formations right at the waters edge and just a bit further on, tracks to some very old Aboriginal Rock Paintings. By late afternoon, there were around ten other yachts all hiding from the strong winds.



The public moorings on the west side of Hayman Island was our next port of call. The snorkelling here was superb, however all moorings carry a time limit, making an all-day anchor, a little difficult. The plan was to use this as the launch-pad for a run out to Bait Reef, but sadly, this never eventuated as we were unable to get the right winds for this diversion, may be next time. From Hayman Island it was our intention to zig-zag south

through the Whitsundays, using the winds on the day to dictate our next overnight.

The next port of call was south to Butterfly Bay (northern side of Hook Island) for another few nights. The diving here too was magnificent with Batfish lingering around the back steps awaiting any morsels we slipped them.

From here we ventured south east, off the beaten track (as far as charter yachts go) to an Island called Border Island, in particular Cateran Bay on its northern side. This being one of the more eastern Whitsunday Islands.



The winds this day made sailing impossible, motors were the only way. A walk to the summit allowed for some spectacular views back to the Whitsunday Island region. The winds remained around the twenty knot mark through the night, making the overnight a little 'swelly'.

It was decided to up anchor in the morning and head back south-east through some of the Whitsunday Islands, toward the mainland to South Molle Island to see what that had to offer. The resort offered moorings, but it too was struggling with the downturn of tourism and was only catering for 18-35 backpacker-overnighters at the time we visited. A very sad sight, the staff were super friendly, but food was non-existent and it appeared to be just a matter of time.

Hamilton Island was a buzz with life. What was to be an overnight stop ended up being three days. The staff were very friendly and helpful and of course, the kids

enjoyed the luxurious facilities, free to any yachts staying overnight. We topped up water and fuel and fattened on the grossly overpriced foods from the various restaurants.

On leaving Hamilton Island, the family were told we were off to Pig Bay on Hasselwood Island for the night. For the uninitiated, this is very close to the world renowned Whitehaven Beach. What they weren't expecting was seeing Whitehaven that day.

The swell and eddies were large as we negotiated the southern passage toward Whitehaven. With an excuse that I now forget, all were on the foredeck as we rounded the southern part of Whitehaven. The early start that day meant that we beat the floatplane to the beach that morning. It was absolutely beautiful, this beach runs some seven kilometres and the sand is white, white, white. With the anchor down, we soon joined another two or three people on our own piece of paradise this day.



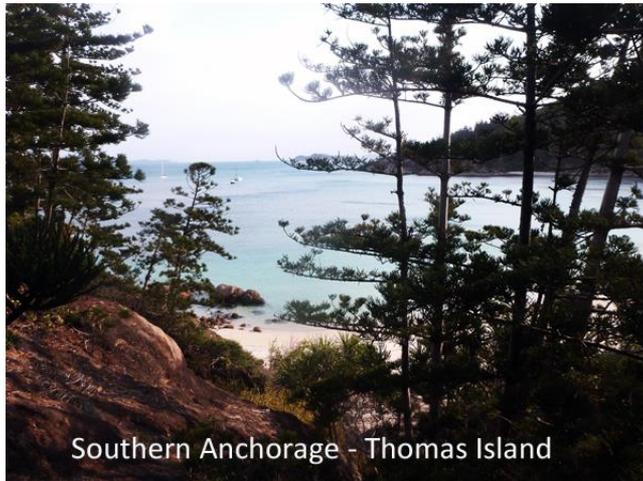
Later that day, we ventured north of Whitehaven Beach to Tongue Bay where we spent the night. The following morning, we used the dingy to get to the beach and ventured up to the summit to view Whitehaven Beach from the north. The views again were spectacular. This also acted as a great vantage point to locate entry to Hill Inlet, an inlet at the top of Whitehaven Beach.

Hill Inlet can only be negotiated by vessels that draw little water as it is extremely shallow in parts, especially at low tide. This inlet is very important in the grander scheme of things as it acts as a nursery for fish and crustaceans that support much of the Whitsundays. This does bring with it some disadvantages, the main one being midgies and mosquitoes.

We have never seen so many small bugs, the inlet teems with them as the sun sets. After cleaning the bug-carnage in the morning, we set course south south-east for Lupton Island, which in the forecast easterly would prove a great spot for snorkelling



and it did. Given the slightly remote nature of this area for most charter yachts, we were one on three yachts this day.

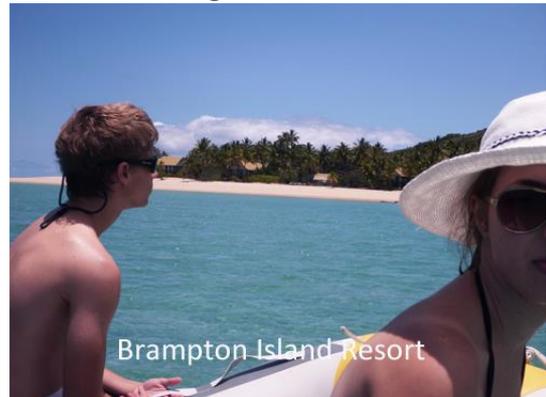


Southern Anchorage - Thomas Island

The next leg was past Lindeman Island to one of the most beautiful anchorages located on the southern side of Thomas Island. This anchorage is limited to vessel numbers given its size, but carries some of the best snorkelling of the southern Whitsundays. One can get beach access at any stage of the tide and there is plenty of fossicking to be done. One of our top spots.

Before we knew it, ten days had flown by and our appointment with relatives in Mackay on Christmas Day was fast approaching. The plan was to make tracks south in that direction and be in the Mackay Marina before it closes for the Christmas public holidays.

After a lazy wakeup, we set sail south to a southern anchorage on Goldsmith Island. The 15 knot easterly was perfect for the run and before we knew it, the anchor was set in paradise once again. After lunch, we were into the water again, however the coral viewing here was limited. The beach is large and absolutely beautiful with a super clear sandy bottom stretching way out into the anchorage. The water was just like a bath and at least two hours was spent here wallowing in the shallows.



Brampton Island Resort

Next port of call was Brampton Island. Sadly, the resort had closed but the waters were clear and teeming with fish. The wharf was surprisingly in excellent shape. The winds were not in our favour tending north easterly, so we chose to venture further south to Keswick Island.



Coral - Keswick Island

The winds now remained constant from the north-east around 20 knots. This was a little disappointing as it meant a trip to Scawfell Island (which only has a pleasant north anchorage) was no longer on the cards. The coral gardens were that nice here that we have uploaded a video about this spectacular spot. Keep eyes open, if you know what I mean.

We spent three days here, finally departing for Mackay for Christmas.

Once the Christmas cheer had settled, the girls flew home and the boys set course for the southern run home.

Heading out from Mackay at 8 in the morning, we had to motor toward the Percy Group of islands until the winds picked up. With spinnaker up, we started a two day run, finally stopping at the Town of 1770. Here we caught up on sleep, topped up the fuel and set off for Bundaberg. The journey was short as a strong southerly was forecast with no let up for a week. The boys decided to board a train home and return when the winds swung in our favour.



A week later, the northerly was at play, the spinnaker was set and a great day was had from Bundaberg down to Browns Gutter (inside Fraser Island near the bar). We actually managed 8-9 knots under sail from Kingfisher Bay resort to Browns Gutter. The following morning, about five yachts crossed the bar for the trip south. The race was on. Ourselves and another cat chose to head east southeast from the bar, while the others set course south-east for Point Danger and they soon made better progress than ourselves.

After an hour, we changed course south (now having the wind behind) and raised the spinnaker. Pure Majek shot off like a rocket at some stages reaching 12 knots. Two hours later, all yachts that had crossed the bar that morning were behind us and by Maroochydore (half way point), they were unseen. The winds did pick up considerably around Caloundra swinging to the east (no longer directly behind) and as it was a single-handed leg, the spinnaker was dropped in favour of the genoa and main. This was such a buzz that we have put a movie about it, see below.

Rounding Bribie Island at five thirty, we cancelled 'watch' with Redcliffe Coast Guard. Ahead were some fast approaching storms so a dash with motors saw the yacht being anchored up the Caboolture river for the night.

Peter, you continue to provide information and guidance four years after the build was completed and this is so much appreciated, thank you.

Some others in the EASY Family that need to be thanked are Anne Snell, Richard (Bad Habits) and Paul (Cop-i-Cat) for your detailed anchorages/ideas for our cruise north. Together, your information provided a 'mudmap' for us and proved very successful. We have tried to return the favour by making more movies and providing ideas on: [youtube.com/diycatamaran](https://www.youtube.com/diycatamaran).

Looking back, its was definitely an adventure with lots of learning and some real happy fun times with the family. Having our own transport allowed us to venture off the beaten track and 'taste' what others only dream.