

Island Camping in the Whitsundays

The islands of the Whitsundays are the remains of a mountain range which was isolated from the mainland when flooding took place at the end of the last ice age. These continental islands form the largest offshore island chain along the entire Australian coast, and are a popular holiday destination.

Many of the islands are steep and rugged, and are surrounded by beaches or rocky outcrops scattered with the distinctive hoop pines. Dry rainforest and vine thickets line gullies and hillsides, while eucalypt woodlands dominate the drier slopes. Native grasslands can also be seen on some of the islands.

A variety of native animals occur on the islands, including goannas and fruit bats. The more commonly seen animals are birds. White-bellied sea eagles and brahmyn kites can often be seen overhead searching for food. Along the rocky shores, pied oyster-catchers probe for small molluscs and eastern reef egrets can be seen stalking small fish in the shallows.

Most of the Whitsunday Islands are national parks and offer quite special locations for a camping holiday. Commercial campers and independent campers can choose from many of the sites established by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) to suit their needs and interests.

QPWS promotes eco-friendly use of its campsites from both independent and commercial campers. The national park campsites are used by people seeking a range of different adventures including: a remote experience; small group camping; sea kayaking camping tours; and large sailing vessel camping safaris. The number of people and the size and number of tent sites vary with each location and the time of year.

Getting there

There are three options for camping on the Whitsunday Islands: you can join a camping tour, make your own arrangements through a tourist operator or travel with your own vessel. Boat transfers can be organised at tourist/booking agencies. Boats leave from either Shute Harbour or Abel Point Marina. Once you have selected a suitable campsite and arranged transport, a camping permit can be purchased. For those going it alone, public boat ramps are located at Shute Harbour, Airlie Beach, Shingley Beach and Abel Point.

What to take

Campers must be completely self-sufficient regardless of the facilities present at each campsite.

1. Fresh water is an essential item. Do not risk running short. The recommended amount is 5 litres per person per day.
2. Sufficient food should be taken for your intended stay, plus meals for three extra days in case you are stranded in adverse weather. To reduce the risk of native animals raiding your food, securely store or seal all foods. Do not leave food on tables even for short periods.
3. Gas or liquid fuel stoves are required for cooking. Do not light fires on island national parks or beaches.
4. A basic first aid kit which includes vinegar to treat marine stingers and insect repellent for protection against sandflies and mosquitoes is essential.
5. Sunscreen, a hat and sturdy footwear are recommended.
6. Strong garbage bags are needed for removal of rubbish. *"Ship it in, ship it out"*. Do not bury or leave any rubbish. What you carried in must be carried back to the mainland.



Marine Parks

7. Where toilet facilities are not provided, a hand trowel is useful for digging toilet holes. Please bury human waste at least 100m from a watercourse or campsite and all faecal waste at least 15 cm deep.
8. Warm clothes should be taken as winter nights can be cool.
9. An insect and waterproof tent, sleeping mat and sleeping bag will make your stay more comfortable.

Gloucester Islands National Park

1. Gloucester Island

Bona Bay 36 people



Accessible by boat from Dingo Beach or Bowen, this site is popular among locals. It has a good sandy beach and anchorage, and is accessible during all tides.

2. Gloucester Island

East Side Bay 8 people



This bay is set between two rocky headlands. The east-facing beach is steep and the anchorage is unreliable. The campsite is set in the vegetation behind the beach adjacent to a seasonal freshwater lagoon.

3. Saddleback Island 12 people



Can be accessed from either Earlando or Dingo Beach. This small site offers a wilderness camping experience. Located on the island's western side, the anchorage is reasonable for small boats with access during all tides, but be aware of the current.

4. Olden Island 12 people



A peaceful island with a small secluded campsite and attractive rubble beach. The anchorage is unreliable in high winds.

5. Armit Island 12 people



This camping site is suitable for small groups and is situated on the south western side of this attractive island. The beach is sandy and the boat anchorage is good with access during all tides.

Whitsunday Islands National Park

6. Whitsunday Island

Dugong Beach 36 people



Popular with local residents, this is a suitable campsite for larger groups, with a good sandy beach backed by rainforest. A 1km walking track connects this beach with Sawmill Beach.

7. Whitsunday Island

Sawmill Beach 24 people



Until about 1901 the sawmill on this site was used to cut hoop pines obtained from the surrounding hills. It is a pleasant camping area, divided by a seasonal creek. A short track passes through a palm thicket and follows the creek for 200m to the water tank. Dugong Beach is reached via a meandering track through coastal rainforest. The anchorage is very popular and smaller boats can be beached.

8. Whitsunday Island

Nari's Beach 6 people



This site has outstanding views of Cid Island. The camping site is set under the rainforest canopy, tucked against a steep hill. A reef line is



Saddleback Island

close to shore with good access at mid-tide and plenty of anchorage.

9. Whitsunday Island

Joe's Beach



Joe's Beach provides a secluded campsite and beach area with outstanding views of Cid Island and the Molle Islands. The fringing reef provides good snorkelling, and is exposed during low tide.

10. Whitsunday Island

Turtle Bay 12 people



This site provides outstanding views to Pentecost Island and the Lindeman Island Group. The beach is backed by rainforest and scattered with large hoop pines. This site provides a good anchorage during northerly winds.

11. Whitsunday Island

Chance Bay 12 people

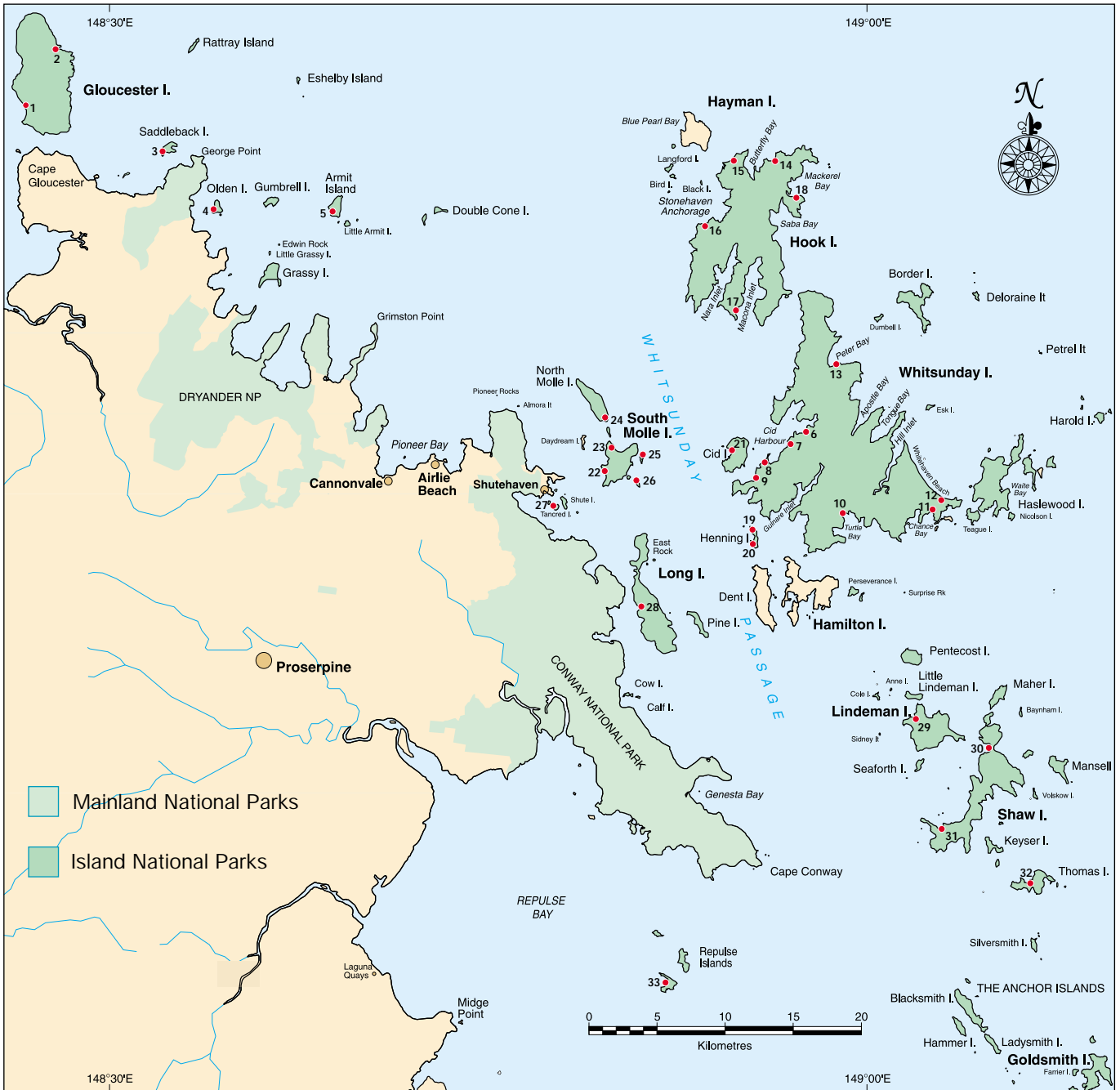


Views across the sandy beach extend to Pentecost Island, the Lindeman Group and Cape Conway. This site is difficult to access in south-easterly winds but provides a good anchorage during northerly winds.












To Sawmill Beach

Whitsunday Islands National Parks



Legend

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|---|---------------------|
|  | Commercial Camping All Year Round |  | Bush Walking Track |
|  | Commercial Camping Off Peak |  | Shelter Picnic Shed |
|  | Independent Camping All Year Round |  | Picnic Area |
|  | Bush Toilet |  | Water |
|  | Compost Toilet | | |

12. Whitsunday Island

Whitehaven Beach 60 people
peak time 24 people off peak



The dazzling white, pure silica sands of Whitehaven Beach are one of the best known sites within the Whitsundays. This spectacular beach is backed by lowland vine forest and eucalyptus woodland which provides good shade.

13. Whitsunday Island

Peter Bay 12 people



This site has outstanding physical beauty with excellent views across the bay to Border and Dumbell Islands. A large intertidal sand and rock flat is fed by a winding creek behind the beach.

14. Hook Island

Maureens Cove 36 people



The Bays of Hook Island offer some of the most beautiful fringing reefs which provide for good diving and snorkelling. Maureens Cove has a coral rubble beach which is popular with snorkellers and divers. This is a frequently visited anchorage with public moorings. Anchoring is not permitted in some areas of the bay. As there is no fishing allowed, please ensure that you are familiar with Marine Park Regulations before visiting this site.



Sawmill-Dugong Beach



Dugong Beach

15. Hook Island

Steen's Beach 12 people



This campsite is set in the rainforest behind a sandy beach and overlooking Hayman Island. A small reef flat provides good snorkelling.

16. Hook Island

Bloodhorn Beach 12 people



Bloodhorn Beach is situated on the southern end of Stonehaven Bay, on the western side of Hook Island. The sandy beach is small and covered in rocks with a limited amount of flat terrain. However, it provides one of the better snorkelling spots.

17. Hook Island

Curlew Beach 12 people



A sandy beach backed with rainforest. Accessible at mid to high tide by shallow craft only.

18. Hook Island

Crayfish Beach 12 people



Crayfish Beach has outstanding physical beauty with an extensive reef flat area. Access to the beach is restricted to mid-high tide by shallow craft only.

19. Henning Island

Northern Spit 24 people



Located on the northern side of the island, this pleasant sandy beach is backed by closed forest canopy. While it is accessible at all tides, it is not a suitable anchorage.

20. Henning Island

Geographers Bay 12 people



A lovely secluded beach with a small campsite, backed by rainforest. Suitable anchorage for small boats. From mid-high tides by shallow craft only.

21. Cid Island

Homestead Bay 12 people



This sandy beach is backed by rainforest. Accessible at mid-high tide for all vessels.

Molle Islands National Park

22. South Molle Island

Sandy Bay 36 people



A good campsite for bush walkers with 15km of graded walking tracks passing through grasslands, open forests and rainforests to lookouts with spectacular views. Has a pleasant beach fringed with casuarinas and can be readily accessed at mid-high tides. This site also provides good snorkelling.

23. South Molle Island

Paddle Bay 12 people



This rainforest site backs onto a sandy beach and overlooks Daydream Island. South Molle Island is a favourite with bushwalkers with access to over 15km of walking tracks. Access to the track system from Paddle Bay is only possible at low tide. Access to this site via boat is at mid-high tides.

Camping Guide

24. North Molle Island

Cockatoo Beach 48 people



A number of large campsites around the forest edge are a feature of the camping area at the southern end of North Molle Island. A small water tank provides a seasonal water supply. Access is limited by tide. Anchorage off the beach is not recommended as it is exposed to currents and weather. Smaller boats may be left on the beach.

25. Planton Island 4 people



An island which offers a pleasant experience with that "lost on a deserted island" feel. The campsite is set in dry rainforest behind the beach.

26. Denman Island 4 people



A small island offering pleasant bush camping with a remote feel. The campsite is set in dry rainforest behind the beach.

27. Shute Harbour

Tancred Island 12 people



While close to mainland facilities, it is still a very private campsite with Shute Harbour being hidden from view by Repair Island. This island can be easily accessed by small boat, though care should be taken on the fringing reefs at mid to low tide.

28. Long Island

Sandy Bay 12 people



A small secluded beach lined with mangroves and backed by



Cockatoo Beach

rainforest. A walking track that leads from Sandy Bay allows you to explore Long Island and provides views of the Whitsundays. Access to the beach is restricted to mid-high tide by shallow craft only.

Lindeman Islands National Park

29. Lindeman Island

Boat Port 12 people



A quiet camp site with sandy beaches backed by rainforest. A good area for campers who like bushwalking as walking tracks take you through rainforest, grassland, open forest and into areas with spectacular views.

30. Shaw Island

Neck Bay 12 people



This small, quiet campsite has a beautiful sandy beach, but access is limited to mid to high tide. A small walking track takes you across to the eastern side of the island. The anchorage is good and often frequented by cruising yachts.

31. Shaw Island

Burning Point 12 people



Sheltered by the dry rainforest canopy at the beach edge on the north-eastern side of the island, this site provides wonderful views and sunsets over Lindeman Island. The anchorage is good and access to the beach is during mid to high tides. This site is closed between 1 October - 31 March.

32. Thomas Island

Naked Lady Beach 12 people



This site is nestled in beach scrub and offers views of nearby Shaw Island. The protected bay and sandy beach combine to produce a wonderful swimming spot. Access is good during all tides.

Repulse Islands National Park

33. South Repulse Island 12 people



A sheltered bay and campsite with views of the Conway Range. The anchorage is good and access to the beach is during mid-high tide.

Minimal Impact Camping

Please help protect the camping areas of the Whitsunday Islands by following the Minimal Impact Camping Code:

- ✓ The surrounding landscape, plants and animals should be left undisturbed. Remember the islands are national parks.
- ✓ Use beach access walkways and camp only at designated campsites.
- ✓ Keep to the walking tracks. Do not create new trails by taking shortcuts.
- ✓ Do not light fires on island national parks or beaches. Use gas or fuel stoves and lanterns.
- ✓ Soaps and detergents harm marine life. Wash away from waterways and the foreshore area and scatter wash water when finished.
- ✓ Domestic animals are not permitted in the national park, on beaches or in the waters adjacent to marine parks.
- ✓ Do not feed native animals. Human food will harm them and feeding can lead to aggression.
- ✓ Firearms must not be taken onto national parks.
- ✓ Generators and diving compressors are not permitted in national parks.
- ✓ "Ship it in - ship it out" : take all rubbish with you when you leave.

Camping Guide

Marine parks

The waters surrounding the Whitsundays are part of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and are protected as a multiple-use marine park. In order to manage the marine park, the region is partitioned into a number of different zones. Zones are designed to ensure that different activities can be undertaken on the reef and that this valuable resource is used wisely. The Marine Park Zoning Plan defines the range of activities that may take place in each zone, particularly in regard to fishing and collecting. The Whitsunday Plan of Management describes setting areas which define the scope of tourist activities in particular areas.

In addition to zones and settings, anchoring regulations now apply within the Whitsunday Area. These regulations add extra protection for the reef in popular boating areas by helping to reduce anchor damage to coral. To assist us with protecting the coral reef, please use public moorings where possible and do not anchor in a "no anchoring" zone.

Information about marine park zoning, the Whitsunday Plan of Management and anchoring regulations is available from the QPWS Whitsunday Information Centre.

Facilities

QPWS provides basic facilities at many campsites including pit or composting toilets and picnic tables. Many of the more remote campsites have only bush toilets where campers must provide their own screen and toilet pedestal. Access to Resort Facilities on national park islands requires Resort Management approval.

Further information:

Further information about national parks and marine parks can be obtained from the following offices:

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS)

Whitsunday Information/ District Office Cnr Mandalay and Shute Harbour Rds
PO Box 332 Airlie Beach Qld 4802.
Phone: (07) 4946 7022
Fax: (07) 4946 7023

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)

2-68 Flinders St
PO Box 1379 Townsville Qld 4810.
Phone: (07) 4750 0700
Fax: (07) 4772 6093

Fuel stoves only

In the Whitsunday Islands, using fuel stoves and lanterns reduces the risk of wildfires, and ensures the availability of driftwood which many animals, particularly shorebirds, use for shelter and as nesting material. For cooking and lighting, fuel stoves and lanterns should be used. This also applies to beach areas.

Be weather-aware

Whenever boating in the Whitsundays, weather and tidal influences should always be considered. Cyclones can also prove to be a major hazard to campers isolated on islands. A good guide to boating in the area is *100 Magic Miles of the Great Barrier Reef* by David Colfelt.

Camping permits

A camping permit is required and can be purchased from the QPWS Whitsunday Information Centre located on the corner of Shute Harbour Road and Mandalay Road. Advance bookings can be made by writing or telephoning with full payment to:

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service Whitsunday Information Centre

PO Box 332
Airlie Beach Qld 4802
Tel: (07) 4946 7022
Fax: (07) 4946 7023

Camping permits can only be purchased during office hours. Office hours are:

Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm
Saturday 9am - 1pm
Hours are subject to change
Closed Public Holidays

Camping fees

Camping fees contribute to the cost of upgrading park facilities.

As from 1 July 2002 Fees are:

\$4.00 per person per night or \$16.00 per family per night (GST inc).

A family group is up to two adults with accompanying children under 18 years.

Children under 5 are free.

Camping fees can be paid by cash, cheque or credit cards. You can pay by phone using Bankcard, Visacard or MasterCard.

Applications should indicate:

- your name, address and contact phone number;
- number in the party;
- preferred island camping area (beach name/island name);
- date of arrival and length of stay;
- size of tent (small, medium or large); and
- means of transport to the campsite (name and/or registration number of the boat or name of commercial operator).



Whitehaven Beach

Marine Parks



GREAT BARRIER REEF
MARINE PARK AUTHORITY



Queensland Government
Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service