

K'Gari (Fraser Island) – September 2025

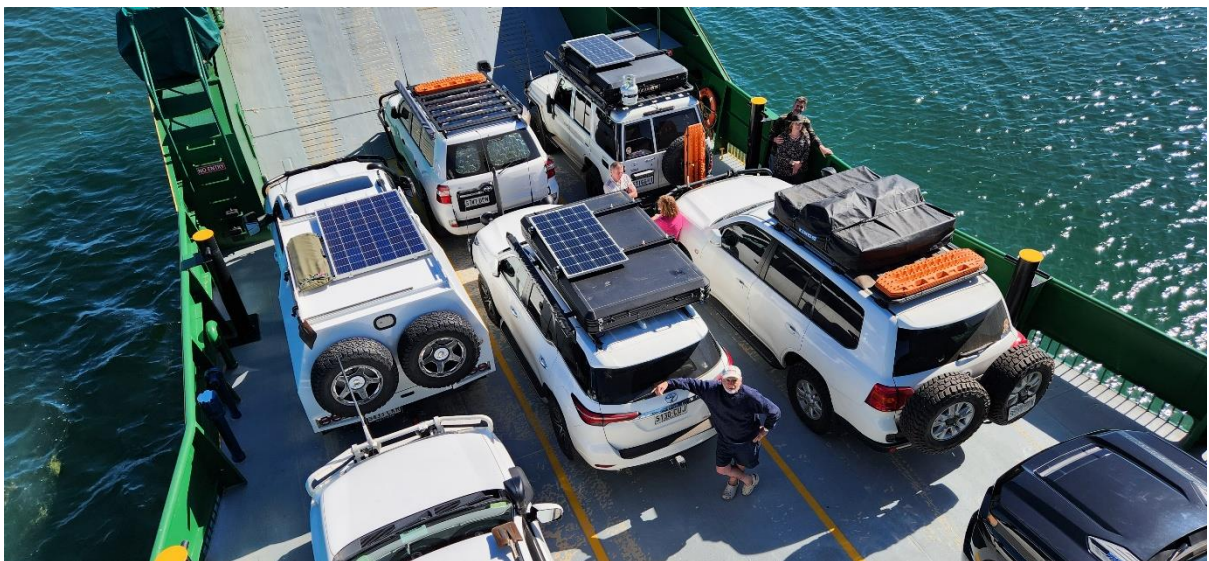
Club Members: Craig (Trip Leader), Leon and Michelle, Jeff and Cathie, Stephen G, John O, Russell and Genevieve.

Sunday 31th August

We met at the entrance to the Rainbow Beach Caravan Park at 9am for a quick chat and to air down. It is about a 10-minute drive to Inskip Point where you catch the barge across to K'Gari, so airing down before we left meant we would be able to drive straight out on where you board the barge.



We timed our run to Inskip Point perfectly, as the barge was waiting for us when we arrived. We drove straight on, and it wasn't long until we were on our way to the island 😊



With a nice sunny day, and the tide on its way out, it was an easy 40km run up the beach, before we headed inland to Lake Wabby. Lake Wabby is the deepest lake on the island at about 11 metres, and is slowly being consumed by the Hammerstone Sandblow. The Sandblow encroaches on the lake at a rate of about 1m a year, so it is expected to fully consume the lake within the next 100 to 200 years.

We all took the 700m walk down to the lookout, where you get great views of the Sandblow and the eastern coastline of the island.



With the carpark to ourselves, and with a bit of a drive to get to our next destination, we had an early lunch, enjoying the tranquillity of the surrounding bushland. It was then onto Pile Valley, one of the original logging sites dating back to the late 1800's.

A picturesque rainforest location, there are several walks you can do at Pile Valley. A short boardwalk takes you down into the valley, where you walk adjacent to a crystal-clear stream.





If you are feeling energetic, this then continues on and you can do a 5km loop, which Craig, Stephen and John opted to do. It is well worth the effort, with the trail passing through thick rainforest and towering Satinay trees.

With the afternoon getting away from us, and the tide coming in, we needed to get going, and head south along the beach for about 15km to Dilli Village, our campsite for the next 2 nights.

The weather wasn't the best, a bit windy and rainy, so we didn't bother with putting the fire on or beer o'clock. We set up our camps, had dinner and then a relatively early night, hoping the weather would be kinder to us in the morning.

Monday 1st September

Everyone was up early this morning, so we headed off before 9am to explore more of the island. Our 1st stop was Happy Valley, about 40km north of Dilli Village. With a good sized shop, stocked with souvenirs and along with Barista coffee, it was worth a stop so we could treat ourselves.

We then headed inland on the Lake Garawongera Scenic Drive. The inland track was quite rough and slow going, so we were only averaging about 20kph. You wouldn't want to be driving these secondary inland tracks in peak season that's for sure. The passing spots are very limited. Our luck was in though, having only to pass a few vehicles and being able to do so without too much backing up.

The inland lakes are great swimming spots when the weather is nice and warm. Today though it was quite cool and windy, so none of the crew were keen for a swim. We settled instead for the leisurely stroll down to the lakes edge, and simply enjoyed the peacefulness of the area.



Continuing the lakes' theme, our next stop was Lake McKenzie, one of the bucket list destinations on the island. Lake McKenzie with its white sand and usually crystal-clear water, is one of the top swimming spots on the island. However, with the wind blowing, unfortunately it wasn't conducive for swimming, so we settled for a walk along the shoreline, and around the general area.



After everyone had lunch and some more leisure time, we started heading back to Dilli Village. High tide was late afternoon, and not knowing how much beach would be available, we headed to the western side of the island, before taking an inland track back to Dilli. Along the way, we had a few little obstacles to negotiate ☹️, along with a very picturesque drive through more thick rainforest.





We arrived back at camp at 4pm and had beer o'clock at the BBQ area, enjoying a platter of cheeses, watermelon and assorted treats. With it still being quite windy (a common occurrence on K'Gari), most of the crew cooked on the BBQ's before another early evening.



Tuesday 2nd September

We woke to a much calmer morning, the wind had settled down overnight so it was a nice relaxed start to the morning, with a casual breakfast before packing up camp.



We were even treated to a couple of rainbows throughout the morning 😊



Setting off at 9am, our 1st stop was Happy Valley so the coffee lovers could get a fresh brew, before making our way to Eli Creek. Still being relatively early in the morning, it was nice and quiet, so we were able to wonder up to the top of the boardwalk, and have the creek all to ourselves.



It is certainly a special place, crystal clear water that feels so soft on your skin. It was a bit cool for a swim, so Craig and Leon walked down the creek instead, to where it arrives at the beach.

Next stop was the Maheno ship wreck, only a few minutes up the beach from Eli Creek. Another amazing sight, and considering that it has been there since 1936, it is surprising just how much of the ship remains. Particularly considering the Airforce used it as target practice during World War 2! Maybe they weren't very accurate, who knows....



Continuing north for another 20 minutes had us arriving at our lunch spot, Indian Head. There is a boardwalk you can do that goes around the headland, giving you great views of the coastline.



We were lucky enough to spot whales not too far offshore. Amazing to see them migrating and there appeared to be quite a few of them.



It is also one of the few spots on the island where it is safe to swim in the ocean. Champagne Pools is named due to the way the waves break over the rocks, creating foam and bubbles as the waves then flows into the rock pools. It is quite a strange feeling, having the sea water bubble around you.



After lunch we made our way to Orchard Beach for some treats, as a few of the crew had a craving for Ice Cream! We also wanted to see if the Driftwood Bar would be showing the footy on Thursday night, as there were a couple of Crows fans who were desperate to see the game. No luck however, so it was going to have to be old school wireless for our intrepid Crows supporters.

Waddy Point campground was to be our home for the next 3 nights. Being this far north on the island, and outside of school holidays and peak season, we were expecting the campground to be relatively quiet. Well, little did we know, it was Tailer season (similar to Australian Salmon), and the campground was full of fanatical fishermen! There wasn't anywhere big enough to fit our group comfortably, so we had to squeeze in next to a few

other campers. Everything was fine though, we got chatting with them, one of them had come all the way over from the Pilbara, just for Tailer season.

With camp set up, beer o'clock started at 4pm around the campfire.



Another relatively early dinner and after another drink around the fire, we headed off to bed. It was likely to be an early start, as our fishermen neighbors mentioned they were heading off at 5am to catch the high tide. Ouch.

Wednesday 3rd September

Well, it wasn't just our neighbors catching the high tide, as it seemed ½ the campsite had headed off by 6am! Therefore, we were all up and about quite early, so there was no problem meeting our scheduled departure time of 8am, as today we were heading for the very top of the island 😊

With a clear and still morning, it was perfect beach driving weather as we made our way towards the infamous South Ngkala Rocks.



Today though, it was not a big challenge, and after walking the coffee rock section, and inspecting the gentle uphill climb where a lot of people get bogged, we all made it through with relative ease.

What has changed though, is North Ngkala Rocks. Before the cyclone in March 2025, you were able to stay on the beach, and simply drive past it once high tide has subsided. Now though, even at low tide you have to negotiate the coffee rocks a sand dune climb, as the cyclone has washed away a lot of the beach.

Unless you do some track building, a high clearance vehicle is required, as one the crew found out the hard way, beaching themselves on one of the rocky sections.



No amount of pushing, or use of Maxtrax's made any difference, the car was well and truly stuck. Thankfully, there was a winch on hand, and we were able to drag the car back, before using 6 Maxtrax's to build a ramp, and clear the obstacle.



While all of this was going on, another one of the crew managed to pinch a tyre, causing it to slowly deflate. By this time, a queue had formed and a crowd had gathered, some with

beers in hand, watching all the mayhem. Not wanting to hold people up longer than necessary, we moved the vehicles out of the way, so the queue could clear.



By now it was 11:30am, and not knowing what the beach conditions were like further north, along with how much drivable beach was available at Sandy Cape, the decision was made to not continue on. Therefore, we retrieved the vehicles that had made it to the other side, regrouped on the beach and set ourselves up for a nice lunch looking out over the ocean.

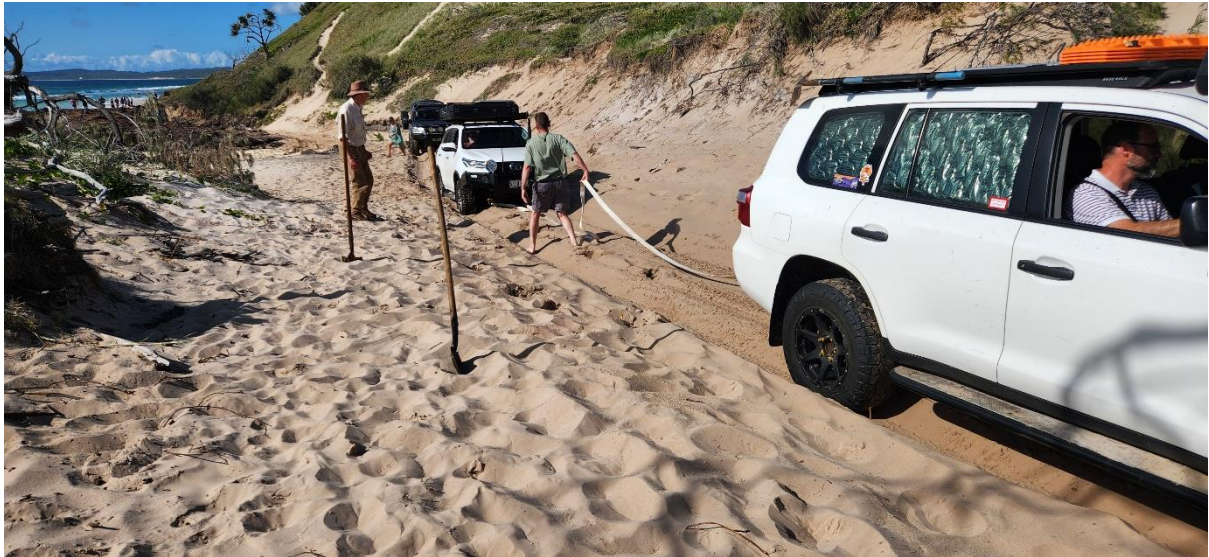
After lunch, we headed back to Orchard Beach and then Indian Head, to go for a swim at Champagne Pools. A nice relaxing way to end the afternoon. With a lot of the people still off fishing, the campground was nice and quiet. So, after freshening up, we put the fire on and had beer o'clock, sharing an assortment of cheese, dips and other nibbles.

Thursday 4th September

Around the fire the previous night, we decided to give the run to Sandy Cape another go, so we were up early, and heading off at 8am, 2 hours after high tide. With another perfect morning, the beach run to South Ngkala Rocks was easy, and we were there within a ½ hr.

With 4 of the 5 cars on the other side and a few minutes passing, Craig got on the UHF to make sure everything was alright. Russell replied "We're a bit stuck, just give us a moment". Oh No! So, with a few directives to hopefully not make the situation worse, Craig turned around and headed back over to assist, while Leon and Stephen walked back, carrying the shovels.

Upon arriving, it was clear John had well and truly joined the ever popular "I got bogged at Ngkala Rocks 4WD Club!". The sandy section is not that bad, unless you stop. The soft deep sand and gentle incline make it hard to get going if you do. Craig had to go down to 16psi to be able to turn around, and then needed to gently drive forward and backwards 4 times, just to compress the sand a little, so a bit of momentum could be gained.



With lots of digging, and Leon playing policeman guiding the snatch recovery, we were able to get John going again.



With everyone safely on the other side, we continued on to North Ngkala Rocks, the site of yesterday's dramas. With yesterday's experience of how to navigate the coffee rocks, and then correctly drive the chewed up sandy hill climb, it didn't take us long to get back down

onto the beach.



As we re-grouped, Craig asked for his phone back from when photos were being taken of Johns recovery, at which point there was a big “Oh sh%t” moment. The phone had been left on the rear bumper while the recovery equipment had been detached. Bugger!

Not wanting everyone to miss out on getting to the cape, we split the crew with Jeff, Cathie, Leon and Michelle heading north. The rest of us headed all the way back to South Ngkala Rocks, in the probably vain attempt at finding the phone, knowing the possibly once in a lifetime opportunity to get to the cape, was going to pass us by.

Upon arrival, Russell headed to the top of the sand dunes in the hope of getting a signal, with the idea to continually ring the phone. Assuming it had fallen into the ruts, and then been buried by all the subsequent vehicles, John, Stephen and Craig shuffled up the track, in the hope one of them would step on it.

Well, the travel gods were certainly with the crew today. About 30 metres from where the track comes back out onto the beach, there was the phone - half covered in sand, sitting in the middle of the track. Amazing! Somehow, it had stayed on the back bumper for a couple of hundred metres all the way through all the wombat holes and rough twisty section of the track. Emotions went from rock bottom to one of joy and disbelief. With no time to spare, we raced back to the cars, and for the 3rd time in 2 days, went back over North Ngkala Rocks.

The further north you go, the less people there are, and the better the beaches get. It is certainly a scenic drive to the cape. Pulling up at the lighthouse, crew no.2 made haste, up the fairly steep 1.2km walking trail to the lighthouse. Which upon arriving at, greeted crew no.1, much to their amazement 😊



The lighthouse is quite elevated, so you get 360-degree views of the north of the island. With a gentle breeze to cool us down, we spent a ½ hour soaking up the serenity.



Having seen on the way in, how little drivable beach there was, we made our way back down to the cars for a drink, before heading back down the beach for some lunch.



The cyclone in March has washed away some of the beach, along with dumping a heap more drift wood above the high tide line. Even at low tide, you now have very little room to get past the drift wood. Thankfully, the trip leader had done his homework, and we had no drama's getting around to the lighthouse and back again safely 😊



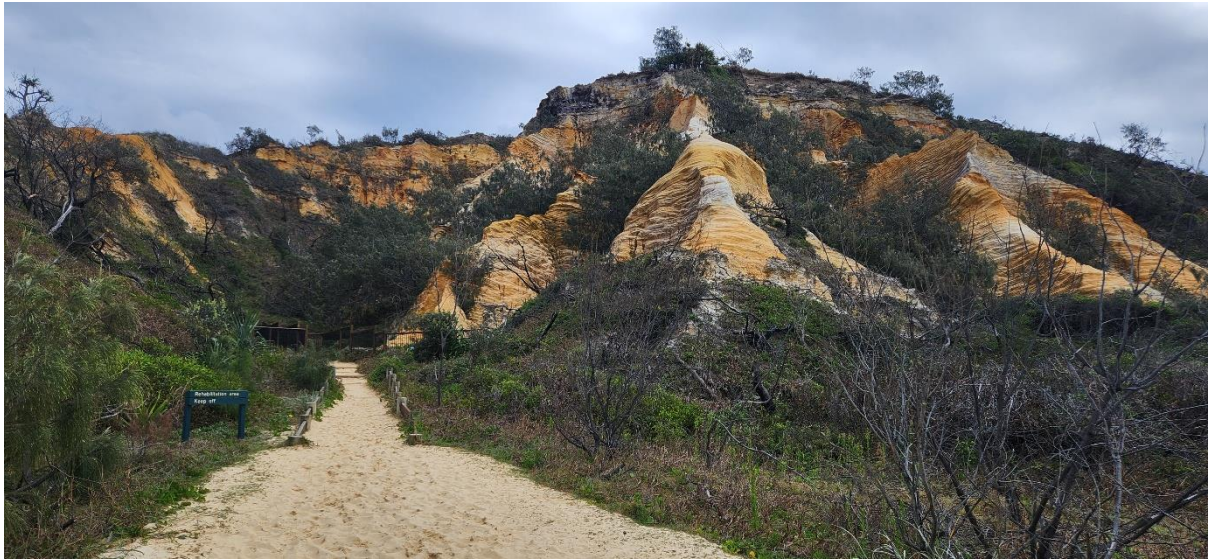
We spent an hour having lunch and paddling in the water, before making our way back to camp. After the day's adventures, we deserved a treat, so we detoured to the café at Orchard Beach for some cool drinks, coffee and ice cream.

Once back at camp, we did the usual around 4:30pm. Put the fire on, had some drinks and nibbles, and with all's well that ends well, had a joke and a laugh about the day's shenanigans.

Friday 5th September

With early starts the previous days, this morning was a more relaxed affair, with departure not until 9:30am. A few of the crew cooked breakfast, and after a casual pack up, we were on our way. Another nice morning weather wise, so we stopped at Indian Head to walk around the headland and admire the views. Once again, we spotted quite a few migrating whales. Simply amazing to see these huge animals playing and breaching. The size of the splash, even from around 1km away, just incredible.

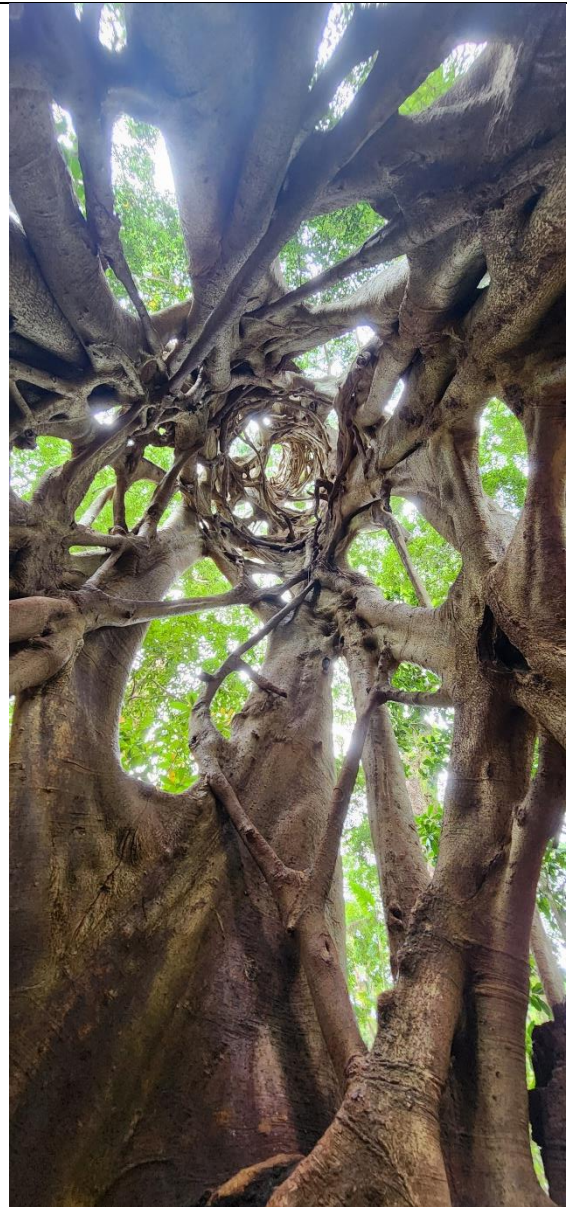
We then continued on to The Pinnacles. Worth a stop as it is interesting to see the Iron Oxide leeching out, and staining the sand.



Having chickened out of swimming at Eli Creek on our 1st visit, we had to stop again, so at least a couple of us could tick off the bucket list item of swimming at Eli Creek. Cathie grabbed her noodle, and Craig his blow-up ring, and the race was on. Who could float down the creek quickest? Cathie hit the lead with a few swift strokes, while Craig was beached on a sandbar, claiming the victory and associated bragging rights.

While we were having lunch, a few of us got chatting with some island regulars, who gave use a tip off about an attraction not on the tourist map. They described how a large tree with Strangler Fig Vines wrapped around it had died and rotted away, leaving this large spiral column of Strangler Fig which continues to grow. Very strange and rare so we thought why not, and with specific directions on how to find it, we headed inland.

Well, we were all glad we'd made the effort, certainly strange and quite unique. Hopefully it stays off the tourist map, and remains relatively undisturbed.



The other bonus of driving out to see the Strangler Fig tree, was another drive through the rainforest. With thick forest and large trees, it was great to get one more drive through this

amazing environment.



With the afternoon tide coming in, we needed to get going, heading further south to Zone 2 for our final night of camping on the island. All camping on K’Gari is zoned, on a 1st come 1st serve basis. Once we arrived at the start of zone 2, Craig asked the crew to wait on the beach, before he headed into the sand dunes at Cornwells as this is one of the main camping spots.

Unfortunately, the larger sites were taken, so exiting further down onto the beach, Craig gave instructions to continue along the beach. This was when confusion started to reign down on everyone.

Why is Craig telling us to continue when he’s still in the dunes? “Why don’t we just wait here for him?” Why’s he saying “just keep going down the beach when he’s behind us” Craig was like “Guys, just keep going down the beach”. With a bit more chatter and then one of the crew radioing they are gone up into Cornwells Craig was like “Arrrrghhh, Guys, I’ve just been through the whole section, there’s nothing suitable!” and after more chatter, “Pleeeeeease, just keep going down the beach until you get to the aircraft landing sign!”

With Craig wondering why everyone had gone rogue on him after such a great week, the penny then dropped with the crew, he must be in front of us! With relief, the crew continued on down the beach, to eventually see Craig standing on a sand dune, radio in hand, wondering what on earth everyone was playing at.

A great example of how easily someone can become separated from the group. All of this simply because the trip leader did not realise the rest of the crew had not seen him come back out onto the beach. No big deal this time as we were not travelling at high speed, but a good reminder particularly when travelling at pace in remote areas to always follow convoy procedure.

With a nice spot where we were protected from the onshore winds, we set up camp and had our customary drinks and nibbles. Dinner was a simple affair with everyone doing their own thing, before another quiet drink after dinner and then early to bed.



Saturday 6th September

This morning, we had our 1st close encounter with dingoes. As Craig climbed out of his swag, 2 dingoes were within a couple of metres of him, as a 3rd trotted around the side of the car. Slightly startled, he grabbed his dingo stick and shooed them away before they could get too friendly.



High tide was bit after 7am this morning, so there was no rush to get away. With plenty of left overs, Leon decided a communal cook up was in order. So, we gathered up eggs, bacon, sausage, onions, tomatoes and toast and cooked up a feast.



It was then time to make our way off the island 😞. We packed up camp and headed south for the 30-minute drive to Hook Point. Our timing was perfect, the barge was sitting there waiting for us, and we all drove straight on, with 1 spot to spare.

Back on the mainland, we headed to the car wash to get the salt off our cars, before making our way back to the caravan park to freshen up. After a great week, an end of trip dinner was in order at the Rainbow Beach Surf Life Saving Club. A great spot overlooking the ocean, a few drinks were enjoyed before we said our goodbyes, as a couple of us were heading off very early the next morning.

In summary, a great week on the island. If going, definitely do your research on tide times, and plan your itinerary accordingly. The inland tracks are slow going, and there are sections of the beach you do not want to be stuck on at high tide. Avoid long weekends/school holidays like the plague, it must get crazy as when we were there in the off season, it was still quite busy. You want at least a week on the island, as even though we did a lot, there was still a lot more that would have been great to do.