



# Sullivan's Travels

By John & Annie Sullivan

## TENTH (and last) Leg Cairns To Home

### 22nd September.

We arrived at Zoe Bay just before high tide and negotiated the tricky entrance to beautiful Zoe Creek (18.22.50 S – 146.19.30 E) anchoring about a kilometre up from the mouth at the first fork.

Getting into this creek in a large boat requires a degree of insanity, and a lot of nerve, not to mention a lot of experience. The entrance is protected by a wall of coral that spans out from the headland and only stops about 8.0 metres from the breaking surf on the left side. To get in without either hitting the coral and destroying the hull or hitting the sand and grounding in the surf one has to first wait for a high tide, then line up the channel, and surf in on a wave and at the last minute turn across the surf and head into the narrow channel making sure not to venture too far right as the coral is only about 3 feet under the hull.

We have done this four times now, so I can say that it does get easier with experience. The reason one does these exciting things is of course to catch great fish, or at least we had hoped to. The last time we came in to this creek on our way up in April we had diurnal tides and the barramundi were on the bite like no one's business, (F & B April issue) but this time we had spring tides and massive current flow...you guessed it, no barramundi. We did however get a nice feed of grunter bream and golden trevally.

### 25th September.

The plan was to stay

up Zoe Creek for a week but due to no barra we decided to exit on the high tide early and head down to Horseshoe Bay on Magnetic Island. Getting out of the creek is also "heart in the mouth stuff" but we managed again and decided as the sea conditions outside were almost glassy, that we would troll some mackerel lures the 60 miles to Magnetic. At 8 knots we took a little over 7 hours in what was a very pleasant sea. At this speed we used only 10 litres an hour all up. Unfortunately, the mackerel didn't show, but we still had a few fillets in the freezer anyway.

### 26th September.

Sitting in Horseshoe Bay having a cold one and updating the web site. We use wireless internet on our lap top so anytime we are near a major town we can log on to the net and check our email and upload fresh info to our web site.

The sun is shining, there is not a cloud in the sky and the wind is a gentle 5 knots from the North. These are the types of days that you wish would never end. We planned to head off to the Whitsundays tomorrow to spend a week or two cruising around the many islands they offer, and maybe do some snorkeling on some of the reefs down there. I have phoned my daughter and asked her if she would

like to spend a few days cruising the Whitsundays with us. She jumped at the chance, so we arranged for her to fly up to Hamilton Island where we could sneak in and take her aboard from the private airport jetty.

### 27th September.

With the help of a slight northerly breeze we cruised into Port Denison which is just off Bowen. We anchored up for the night and phoned a local prawn fisherman that we were told would sell us some prawns at wholesale (*Thank you Ray and Liz on Blue Magic for the phone number*).

The next morning we picked up 5 kilos of fabulous prawns for \$60, and headed across the bay to the Gloucester passage. I put out a lure (a deep diving pilchard) and within minutes had landed a spotty mackerel around 6 kilo. I guess it's fresh fish and prawn cocktails for dinner tonight, eh?

The passage separates Gloucester Island from Cape Gloucester and has a beautiful anchorage on either side.

It officially is the start of the Whitsundays area. There is an 'Eco' resort on the Cape where one can get a meal and a drink. We continued on however, to a little deserted island called Armit ( 20.05.800S – 148.38.800E ) where we anchored up for 3 days, explored the area and just relaxed. There are 74 islands in the

Whitsundays. Most of them are deserted and offer a private experience to a cruising family. We walked the beaches and tidal reefs and fished the many little bays and rocky points. It was like having your very own island to do with what you wanted. Finally, it started to rain so we decided to pull anchor and head



down to Airlie Beach and top off the fuel and do some grocery shopping for the next week.

## 2nd October.

After reloading the stores and liquor cabinet at Airlie Beach, we then picked up my daughter Tracey from Hamilton Island. The next 5 days was spent cruising around the many islands and doing some diving, fishing, sunbaking and just relaxing. I am sure she had a good time, she even caught a couple of good sized red emperor. One of the highlights of this area is visiting the world famous Whitehaven Beach with its pristine powdery white sand and aqua blue waters.

After the weekend we dropped her at the airport and headed off to the Percy Islands via St Bees Island where we stayed the night. St. Bees is regarded as the southern end of the Whitsundays, and together with its sister island, Keswick Island, they seem to act as a gateway to the 74 islands that beckon the adventurer cruising north.

## 10th October.

The next day we cruised at 16 knots to cover the 60 odd miles to middle Percy Island by lunchtime. There was a strong wind warning issued for the entire area, predicted to hit by early afternoon. The winds had picked up from the north by the time we arrived and blew 25 to 35 knots for 3 days. If you ever visit the Percys and the wind blows up, you always have a safe place to anchor regardless of wind direction. We anchored in Whites Bay and spent the 3 days exploring the island and surrounding reef. Graham Scott from Yepoon (another Voyager owner) gave us a secret fishing spot not far from where we were anchored, I'm sworn to secrecy so I can't give you the marks; we caught a great feed off it on the second day. We got 2 red emperor, a huge estuary cod, 4 big stripies and a heap of big parrot. Thanks Graham, there are still plenty of fish left for you.

## 14th October.

The wind refused to abate so we decided as it would be a following sea we would leave and head down to the Keppel group. With 25 knots behind us we surfed down to Rosslyn Bay and pulled into the Marina for the night. After topping off the fuel we ventured

out the next day to Great Keppel Island where we stayed for 3 days fishing and walking over the island. We fished the same reef that we went to on our way up and it was firing again. Annie caught a 5 kilo coral trout and I got a good feed of stripies. With the wind threatening again, we took off for Yellow Patch on the tip of Curtis Island. (23.29.480S – 151.13.925E)

This point is the geographical position of the 'Tropic of Capricorn' We stayed there for 3 days. The place gets its name from the huge yellow sand hills that cover the inner peninsula of Cape Capricorn.

## 18th October.

Again, the wind never let up, so we decided to head across to the 'Narrows'. They are the 30 miles of inland waterways that separate Curtis Island from the mainland and allows one to safely cruise down to Gladstone in any weather. We spent one night in Pacific Creek, then on to Grahams Creek, and finally we shot across to Pancake Creek to escape the sou'easters that were still blowing at 20 knots.

## 22nd October.

We started to think that since the wind was never going to stop, we may as well just head straight down to Urangun, top off the fuel and spend a couple of days in the Great Sandy Straits. Which is what we did. When we headed off in the morning the wind dropped off, and we had a dream run down past Fraser Island to Urangun. We did the 100 nautical miles in 6.5 hours.

## 24th October.

We were starting to think about home by now, as we eased ourselves over the Wide Bay Bar and headed down to Mooloolabah for a quick stop off to see some friends, Ron and Gloria (another happy Voyager owner). We stayed the night and cruised down to Redcliffe the next day to see family and friends before doing the final leg of our 7,000 mile adventure.

## 28th October. 2007

The final leg to the Gold Coast went without incident and we tied up at Hope Island Marina after being away for 10 months. We had travelled almost 6,000 nautical miles to the Kimberley and back and had an adventure of a

**Editor's Note:** John is 63 years old and has been boating for 50 years. Apart from the many thousands of private hours he has accumulated, he also holds a professional skipper's ticket and has driven fishing and charter boats on and off for 30 years. His love affair with the sea and his undying affection for fishing and boating make his life experiences seem to many an enviable accumulation of adventures. I am sure the continuing stories of his trip - from the Gold Coast Qld to the Kimberley Coast, WA - over the next few months will be followed and enjoyed by all our readers who aspire to make a similar voyage.

lifetime. We have met some great people, some of whom will remain friends forever. We saw some beautiful places and experienced the splendor and ruggedness of this great country from another aspect. I hope that all the people that followed our adventures enjoyed the log.

## In Summary

I would say that we are so glad we did the trip and fulfilled a dream we had for 10 years. I look back on the experiences, both good and bad and know that I would do it all over again, but take a longer time to enjoy the destinations. Our only regret is not cruising across the beautiful Torres Straits and exploring all the Top End islands and continuing on to New Guinea, but hey, that's another trip to plan down the track.

For those of you that aspire to do something similar my advice is definitely do it if you can, and do it before you get too old. Do it before the unblemished beauty and serenity of our far northern parts become spoiled with the commercial pollution of development. I hope when you do go you have as much fun as we did and we wish you a safe passage, fair weather and tight lines.

**Footnote:** Hey - we're not letting him get away that easily! John has been invited to be a permanent addition to the F&B team, and will draw on his 50 years of boating, fishing and travelling around this great country to share with our readers his many adventures and experiences.

**F&B**