



Taking our first look at the Palm Islands Group, the southern Hinchinbrook Passage region, the lower sections of the Seymour River - and here, North Zoe Creek.

Exploring The Southern End Of Hinchinbrook

Last year, F&B travelled to Far North Queensland to explore the Hinchinbrook Island region, basing ourselves in Cardwell, the small coastal community at the northern end of this controversial region.

As regular readers are now aware, the issue covered our circumnavigation of Hinchinbrook Island, the Hinchinbrook Passage and Keith Williams' extremely controversial marina resort and harbour development at Oyster Point. The issue (F&B November #30) went on to become one of the most talked about and biggest selling boating magazines in Australia in 1997.

At the time, we had to spend quite a large percentage of the available five or

six days we had in the Hinchinbrook region dealing with basic research and photography. Although we actually completed our 'mission statement' in circumnavigating Hinchinbrook Island, we did so with such little time to spare that we found ourselves promising to return, time after time, for place after place.

It's a vast, complex area with myriad waterways going off in different directions; with bays, river, estuaries and of course the Great Barrier Reef, all at your fingertips. The Hinchinbrook region would take months to fully explore and so this time, with just a couple of days (*again - grrr!*) at our disposal, we decided to take up the very

kind offer of guided assistance from local fishing club identities, Terrick and Heather Hamilton.

We had met Terrick and Heather on our first trip, and when they learned that we were coming back on the Holden Suburban test program, they volunteered to act as our guides for a fairly hasty reconnoitre of the Lucinda end of the Hinchinbrook Passage. The Hamilton's, like quite a number of fishing enthusiasts and readers in the Hinchinbrook area, felt we had not really explored the potential of the Lucinda 'end' to the extent that it deserved, particularly from the point of view of the interstate reader trying to decide which 'end' of Hinchinbrook

Island was the best to be based.

We didn't need very much convincing. On the first trip, we'd simply come into Dungeness, taken the photographs we needed, and moved out again, before heading east along the Lucinda sugar jetty and then north again towards Zoe Bay. This time, we planned to actually launch at Lucinda, opposite the very southern most tip of Hinchinbrook Island itself, and from there, explore the three most significant aspects of Lucinda's fishing and boating.

First up, we wanted to take a run south-east down to the Palm Islands, Orpheus Island and the various other islands that lay virtually opposite the

township of Lucinda, about seven miles offshore.

Secondly, we wanted to check out the famous night-time fishing under the Lucinda Jetty lights for big mangrove jack, fingermark, giant trevally let alone the resident 800 lb cod! (Yes, you did read that correctly!)

Thirdly, if weather and time allowed, we were mad keen to try our hand barra fishing along the Seymour River and the southern part of the Hinchinbrook Passage.

As most readers will be aware, the strip of coast from Ingham through to Innisfail is believed to be the wettest area in Australia. In the summer months (from December through February) it

comes out of the sky as near to solid water as it gets. This year's floods along the Townsville to Ingham strip were well recorded on our television sets. We were still quite worried about the flooding when we left Brisbane, because the rivers were still above normal levels, they were carrying a big 'fresh' and were very turbid with silt and mud coming down from the mountains. The Passage itself was said to be quite brown, but was clearing slowly.

You can't have it both ways, can you? The very features that make this area such an extraordinary fish nursery, are the same features that holiday makers and tourists dread. When most families