



The Whitsunday Challenge

Introducing a fascinating, timely assessment a family had to make about the boat they loved: whether to sell it and upgrade to a new slicker model; keep it, renovate and refurbish what has been an excellent craft - or whether the time had come to move on, altogether.

After much debate, one of the siblings decided he wanted to do the Whitsunday 'thing' before it was sold - so a deal was done within the family - and the renovation began. Last month, we learned how "Reel Appeal" was refurbished. This month, we travel to the Whitsundays - and in Parts 3 and 4, join author/photographer Peter Pedersen as he fulfills his dream: Cruising the Whitsundays.

With the ship now looking as good as she probably ever will again, it was time to start work on planning for an extended cruise in the Whitsundays. A stint of long service had provided the opportunity for a three month visit to the area, time enough I hope to slip into cruising life and take a really good look at the area.

To begin with, no trip to the Whitsundays should be contemplated without getting hold of "100 Magic Miles" by David Colfelt. The guide is now in its 7th edition and everything that people say about it is true. It is the one stop reference for everything in the area, and at only \$75.00 is great value. Even after the cruise is over, it makes a

great keepsake, especially if you add your own notations as you go, which you can look back on and reminisce over when you are back in the rat race.

Likewise, the Marine parks zoning map (MPZ10) is widely available throughout the area, or can be obtained from Department of Environment offices or ordered over the web (free publication).

When To Go ?

Time of year is a fairly important factor when considering a visit in a powerboat. Much more than other locations around the east coast, sailboats really seem to reign supreme in the Whitsundays, and it is little wonder. The breezes are usually predictable and strong enough to guarantee good sailing, and most of the best anchorages are an easy 1/2 day sail away. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of charter vessels in the area, are of the stick and rag (sailboat) variety - although a couple of very nice motor cruisers are offered by a number of charter companies.

Of course great conditions for a motorboat and a sailboat rarely mean the same thing, and I had settled on a visit to the area to coincide with the easing of the SE trades and the usually calm period just before the monsoon season. This period (Sept - Nov), also coincides with a quieter time in general for charter boats, as the increasing temperatures scare some Charterers away, and the desired sailing winds drop off. It is also a time of the year in the north, where the days stretch out, evenings are still reasonably cool and the stinger season (inshore for box jellyfish at least), has not yet commenced - more on stingers later.

The Bureau of Meteorology website, as well as *100 Magic Miles* have the temperature and wind data for the area, to help you make your decision based on your own preferences.

Transporting From Bribie Island to Airlie Beach.

I didn't consider *Reel Appeal* to be of sufficient size or set up correctly for an extended coastal passage from Moreton Bay to the Whitsundays. Although the long range tanks and general design of the vessel would in theory cope with a voyage of this length, the thought of hand steering and being subject to the vagaries of the weather for the 7-10 day steam north,

as well as the costs for fuel and engine wear and tear just didn't add up.

There are a number of companies that offer road transport for larger vessels, most of whom have websites, yellow pages ads or both - and usually online quotes are available. I sourced two quotes and they came in within a couple of hundred dollars of each other. I decided on "Express Boat Transport", for the trip north who were quick to reply with a quote and generally professional in their dealings.

I thought the rig used to transport *Reel Appeal* was a little agricultural when the truck and driver turned up right on time at our local marina. A simple large trailer with leaf springs and a tow vehicle. The ship was hoisted onboard and supported by old tyres once on the trailer. I must admit to some concern as to whether or not the vessel would make it in one piece, and was ever so pleased when it arrived in Airlie Beach and I was able to give it a good going over. Clearly there had been some bumps along the way, as the galley doors had flung open and some items had dislodged below decks, but probably no more than what the boat would experience in rough seas when up on the plane.

The crew at "Hawkes Boatyard" at the Able Point Marina operate the only travelift at Airlie Beach, and kindly allowed the ship to sit in the cradle in the water for a few extra minutes, while I checked below to make sure the old girl had not sprung any leaks ! The engine mounts etc were also checked before I gave the thumbs up and she glided to her temporary berth... *finally in the Whitsundays!*

In retrospect, I would look more deeply into the equipment used by transport companies in the future, and am considering using a company with air bag suspension for the return trip... just to be sure.

Also worth noting; trucks with certain oversize rigs are restricted from being on the roads at certain times of the year such as the Christmas period. If you do decide to transport your vessel, check with the company to make sure they can transport it back at the time you wish to end your cruise. The cost to transport the ship from Bribie Island to Airlie Beach came in at \$2300, one way.

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