

WA(2) Exploring the Gulf Back Down The Gulf from Exmouth

For most Australians, this part of the continent could well be on Mars . . . it is SO different to anything on the Eastern Seaboard - or even the SE Coast of WA for that matter. It is breathtaking in its size, its age, its raw natural beauty - and some of the most amazing water you'll ever see. But it's a hard, tough, unkind environment - and even the locals take it very carefully. Author **Mike Levy** lives in Exmouth - and presents this fascinating insight into boating in the Exmouth Gulf itself.

Down towards the bottom of the Gulf, some 40 miles from Exmouth, are a number of low, reef and sand bar protected islands. Four of us had determined to visit again, and make a concerted effort to dive and fish, particularly around the closest island, Whitmore.

Counting on three days for the trip, we loaded the 5m Quintrex and a slightly smaller Poly boat with just the "essentials" - full ice boxes, tucker boxes, water, swags, and barbecue - funny how everything becomes essential!

We launched off the beach about 12 km south of town and worked our way slowly south, trolling over the numerous shoals in the area. Our first campsite was on a sandy beach at the mouth of the Bay of Rest, just around the corner from our goal.

Unloading gear for the night took a little while, and with the tide shortly going to leave us dry 30 metres from dry beach, we called it a day and settled in.

The comprehensive feed (not enough co-ordination, we had each brought enough for four!) and the extended conviviality were not enough to dull the later pain. It was a miserable night!

The sand flies had found their way into our swags, bending their knees to get through the mesh, with the consequent agonizing scratching and interminable wait for the eastern sky to lighten. There clearly had not been sufficient pain killers consumed earlier. Funny though, two of us were really affected, one slightly and one not at all although sleeping outside a swag - must mean something.

Eventually though, the sky lightened gradually into a magic kaleidoscope of pinks and mauves, with the sun bursting blood red over the horizon to set the day in motion.

The light morning clouds were not really a concern, we knew they would disperse early, probably by the time we had finished breakfast and downed the first hydration pills of the day.

What was a little concerning though, in my bleary eyed condition, was the empty beach - we were more than 30 miles from home and the boats weren't in sight!

A quick "Sea Eagle" scan soon located them though, a little further down the beach than we thought - must have let too much stern rope out last night!

By the time all gear was re-



Anchored fore and aft at campsite Day 1