

Tips for Camping on Pelorus Island

Getting there:

The best launching point for Pelorus Island is the Dungeness boat ramp, which is around 2 hours north of Townsville. To reach Dungeness, drive north through Ingham on the Bruce Highway. At around 8km north of Ingham, exit (right) off the highway at the Halifax sign. This road leads you through the small sugar mill towns of Beamerside and Macknade, and then on to Halifax. From Halifax, follow the signs to Lucinda. When you drive into Lucinda, turn left at the Lucinda Point Hotel and continue along Dungeness Road (for 1km) until you reach the boat ramp. The Dungeness boat ramp has excellent facilities and plenty of parking.



Pelorus Island is around 16km off-shore from Lucinda, and (depending on the vessel) takes about 30 minutes to reach in good weather, or up to 90 minutes in poor conditions.

You will find good camping areas above the beach along the north-western shoreline. This beach has a short sand bank and a long flat intertidal zone of coral rubble. We highly recommend timing your arrival to coincide with a high tide, and bring sturdy footwear.

What to wear:

Upon arrival you will need hard-soled dive booties or reef shoes, although old Dunlop Volleys or your retired running shoes also work well. Once you're on the island, thongs or flip-flops are OK for the harder compacted sand, but you will find it difficult to walk in these over areas where the high tide has formed large coral piles.

What to bring:

Camping on Pelorus Island is known as 'wilderness camping'. This means you must be fully self-sufficient because there are no toilets, rubbish facilities, or established water sources (accurate as of October 2021). All your gear will be unloaded and loaded on the beach, so it pays to carefully assess each item, and be mindful that what-ever you bring over must also come back.

We recommend:

- An eskie with block or dry ice, depending on your length of stay and the season. Party ice will last in winter, but melts quickly in summer, even in expensive ice boxes. Dry ice can be purchased from BOC Gases on Ingham Road, and it should be wrapped in hessian to give your food a contact barrier.
- Five litres of water per person per day in cooler months, and double this during summer. You can supplement your water supply and also add to your block ice by packing frozen water bottles in your eskie.
- Depending on your bush culinary desires, the flat 3.5kg LPG camp stoves work well, as do the compact butane cartridge cookers (provided it's not one of the 'cheapies' which can leak gas).
- Plan each meal, leaving a small food reserve just in case your departure gets delayed. If you want to reduce your cooking time; bring frozen pre-cooked meals like stew, pasta, meat loaf, or spaghetti which just need to be thawed and re-heated.
- To avoid doubling up on common-use cooking gear; nominate individuals within your group to bring communal items such as pots, pans, egg flips, tongs, kettle, wash tub, tea towels, cleaning gear, condiments, coffee, sugar, etc.
- Try not to bring glass to the island, use tins, casks, or plastic containers if possible.

Tips for Camping on Pelorus Island

- A folding chair – highly recommended!
- A head torch – also highly recommended.
- A hat, sun screen, and insect repellent.
- Two towels, with one reserved for salt water.
- Toilet paper and a small fold-up shovel. When selecting a suitable site, please be a responsible camper; avoid rocky creek beds and dig deep (the depth of your shovel head) to fully bury all your out-goings!
- A Number 7 GBRMPA Reef Zoning Map, so you know what you can do around the island under marine park rules.

How to pack your gear:

As your gear will be unloaded from a vessel parked on or near the island's beach, we recommend packing with two things in mind: *Protection from water ingress*, and *consolidating small items into larger containers*. This second point is made because loading and unloading vessels often works well using a chain of participants, and consolidating small items into larger containers speeds up the process by reducing the total number of individual items that require handling. Here are some further recommendations:

- Bedding such as pillows, swags, and stretchers should be protected from water as it is likely your gear will be carried over knee-deep water. Large plastic bags used by removalists for covering mattresses work well, as do good quality garbage bags.
- Try to get all of your small miscellaneous items of camping gear into one large bag or crate (i.e. cooking gear, torches, batteries, hammer, ground sheet, etc.)
- Pack your clothes into a single drybag rather than using several small backpacks.
- Pack your non-perishable food into a plastic crate with a lid that can be fixed in place. If you don't have a suitable crate, then consider supermarket cooler bags which at-least zip closed, rather than shopping bags which can't be closed and must be stored upright.
- Dive gear is best transported in a large bag with strap handles or a crate or tub, and to lessen the risk of manual handling injuries please avoid packing dive weights inside containers, these are best left on the belt or in their pouches.
- For the same reason, please use water containers of no larger than 20 litre capacity.

Camp site set-up suggestions:

We've seen the full range of set-ups in use on the island, from the opulent 30-second stand-up tent to the not-so-opulent bush walking 1-man dome tent, and even the very rudimentary sleeping bag placed directly into a shallow sand-scraps hastily excavated by the boot of a weary camper! A great feature of camping along the north-western shoreline is its protection from prevailing south-easterly breezes. The vegetation just above the top of the beach also gives some cover from light rain. I started off using a low-profile 3-man dome tent; however, I've now discovered the benefits of a good quality swag placed on a comfortable stretcher. This set-up is really quick and easy, and gets you up off the ground away from any crawling beasties.

NQUEC uses a 7m by 5m tarpaulin placed above the beach on level soil. This provides a communal space for meeting, cooking, planning, relaxing, and socialising. A folding outdoor gazebo would also provide this space. Whatever you use, aim to set it up before any other activity, so that your eskies are in shade as soon as possible after arriving. A communal structure also serves as a prominent location for your group's safety gear.

Tips for Camping on Pelorus Island

Safety gear:

- Mobile phone reception with the major providers on the island is quite good. For groups that have been dropped off, make sure you have your skipper's phone number, and reserve the use of at-least one phone exclusively for this contact. You may also wish to consider portable battery power banks, solar blankets, or fold-away solar panels. We've also used small generators on the island for charging phones and running lights.
- A comprehensive first aid kit is a must-have, including several pressure immobilisation bandages as there is always a risk of snake bite.
- Depending on your group and how you intend to arrive (chartered boat or private vessel); consider taking a personal EPIRB.
- For groups intending to walk around the island; bring a set of portable CB radios so walkers can contact the main group in an emergency.
- Full length wetsuits or lycra suits and vinegar is important if you intend to swim or dive (regardless of the season), because the distribution of stinging jellyfish and the frequency with which they are found seems to increase each year.
- Download a Lucinda tide chart from the BOM QLD Tide Tables Page, as your water-based activities should be planned to suit the tides. Aim to swim in slack water at the 'stand' of the tide, and be aware that on the inside of Pelorus the current generally runs north on an ebb (outgoing) tide.
- Most importantly, leave your critical trip details with someone at home (e.g. departure time, expected return time, and contact number).

Emergency Contacts:

Queensland Ambulance Service **000**

Divers Alert Network (DAN) diving emergency hotline **1800 088 200** (24 hours/7 days)

Townsville Hospital Hyperbaric Chamber **4433 2080 or 4433 2088** during business hours, or 4433 1111 after hours

Ingham Hospital medical advice line **1343 2584** (24 hours/7 days)

Ingham Coast Guard **4777 8110 or 0429 778110**, and VHF channels 16 and 81 as Call Sign Name *Ingham Coast Guard* (8am to 5pm, weekends only).

Orpheus Island Research Station **4781 3480**, and VHF channels 16 and 72

Orpheus Island Lodge **4777 7377** (9am to 5pm, 7 days)