

AUSTRALIA

Hinchinbrook Island Group

North Queensland Paddling Adventure

Seven day trip



Australia: Hinchinbrook Island Group



Seven day sea kayak trip

Hinchinbrook Island, Goold Island and the Family Islands are located along the tropical coast between Ingham and Tully in North Queensland. Hinchinbrook's 39,000 hectares makes it Australia's largest island national park and part of the Great Barrier Reef UNESCO World Heritage listing, due to its unique flora and fauna.

With granite peaks rising 1142 metres directly out of the sea, Hinchinbrook Island is a magnificent backdrop for sea kayaking. Waterfalls, tropical rainforests, precipitous headlands, coral reefs and secluded beaches are among the island's treasures. The island is uninhabited and is, perhaps, the last remnant of the eastern coastline that remains exactly as it was before white settlement of Australia.

After four to five days exploring Hinchinbrook Island, our paddles continue north to Goold Island. We camp with beautiful views of the Family Islands to the north and the towering peaks of Hinchinbrook to the south. From Goold we continue north to picturesque Wheeler Island, one of the Family Island group. On our last day of paddling we pass Bedarra and Timana Islands before a stop on Dunk Island. Then it's back to mainland Australia where we make landfall at South Mission Beach.

Using our specially designed sea kayaks, we paddle approximately 90 kilometres over seven days. Most days allow for some island time in the afternoon to walk, snorkel or just relax in a hammock. Each evening ends with a gourmet meal cooked by your skilled guides who are just as handy with a chef's knife as they are with a paddle.

Join us on this special wilderness adventure!

A Quick Itinerary

B = Breakfast • L = Lunch • D = Dinner

Pre trip: A pre trip briefing is held at 7.00pm in Mission Beach.

Day 1: Transfer to Lucinda and begin sea kayaking. L • D

Days 2-6: Kayak Hinchinbrook, Goold and the Family Islands. B • L • D

Day 7: Finish kayaking at Mission Beach where trip concludes. B • L

Meeting Place and Time

Our adventure begins at Mission Beach, two hours south of Cairns. **The pre-trip briefing will take place at 7.00pm on the evening prior to Day 1.** The pre-trip briefing meeting place is **Mission Reef Resort, Wongaling Beach.** At this briefing you will meet your guides who will explain the itinerary for the next seven days. The guides will inform you of the pick-up time from your accommodation the next morning (the time can vary due to tidal movements).

How to Get There

The closest passenger airport to Mission Beach is Cairns. You can travel from Cairns to Mission Beach by coach and tickets need to be booked in advance. Mission Link is the only service with a direct transfer from Cairns airport to Mission Beach and v.v. Confirm times with your chosen transfer provider before booking your flights into and out of Cairns. Hire cars are available at Cairns Airport, please check in advance if they are able to organise one way hire.

Coach Options

Mission Link Phone 0407 337 661

<https://www.missionlink.com.au>

Two services per day on weekdays between Cairns airport and Mission Beach, one service per day on the weekends. Confirm transfer times with Mission Link before booking your flights. Cost approximately \$55.00 one way. Journey takes about two to three hours.

Greyhound Phone 1300 473 946

<https://www.greyhound.com.au>

From Greyhound Bus Cairns terminal to Mission Beach Bus Terminal. Cost approx. \$50.00-\$70.00 return. Journey takes about two hours. Usually two services per day.

Premier Motor Service Phone 13 34 10

<https://www.premierms.com.au/PMS/pages/home/>

From Premier Bus Cairns terminal to Mission Beach Bus Terminal. Cost approx. \$40.00 return. Journey takes about two hours. Usually only one service per day.

Please note that all our kayaking trips require minimum numbers to operate. It is best to hold off booking non refundable travel arrangements, including flights, until we let you know that your selected trip is guaranteed to operate.

Sea Kayaking and Fitness Level

Sea kayaking is an activity that any reasonably fit person can participate in. We ask that all participants should feel confident in swimming. The mainly double fibreglass kayaks are stable, easy to paddle and control. They are very forgiving and are suited for beginners to experts. The kayaks are designed as an expedition boat and it's important to keep gear to a minimum as we carry on board all food and equipment.

Our leaders are highly experienced sea kayakers and professional wilderness guides. They will teach you efficient paddling techniques, kayak rescue and safe surf entries before setting out on this adventure. We limit our group size to a maximum of 12 participants.

The degree of difficulty of the trip will vary greatly depending on the weather encountered. The sea and weather conditions off Hinchinbrook are affected by the south-easterly trade winds that blow from April to November and assist us as we paddle north. Conditions are rarely dead calm and our stable sea kayaks easily handle swell and/or chop. On occasion, the winds may be too strong and require a layover day; but on average, a paddling day will range from 3-5 hours with the afternoons free to explore our surrounds which may include more activity in the form of swimming/snorkelling and hiking. If you have not paddled before we highly recommend some kayak tuition before your trip and we may be able to suggest a local operator near your home.

We always feel that the fitter you are the more you're able to enjoy your holiday. It's a good idea to begin some form of regular exercise well before the trip. Walking, jogging, cycling, aerobics and swimming are all worthwhile methods for achieving a reasonable level of overall fitness. Swimming and paddling are recommended for developing upper-body strength for sea kayaking.

Proposed Itinerary

The following itinerary should be used as a guide only as it can vary due to weather, sea conditions and unforeseen circumstances. Our sea kayak guides have a good knowledge of the area and will plan the best alternative route where necessary. We aim to experience the true wilderness of Hinchinbrook and the best of expedition sea kayaking.

Pre trip: Meet your guides at 7.00pm in the front lobby of Mission Reef Resort, Wongaling Beach (**not Mission Beach Resort**). Your guides will conduct the group meeting and discuss the trip schedule. They will hand out dry bags, show you how and what to pack and answer any questions. Storage for gear not required during the paddle trip should be organised through your Mission Beach hotel. Alternatively, your guide can arrange luggage storage, just let us know before your departure. Your dry bags should be packed and ready for your pick up the following morning.

MEALS AND ACCOMMODATION NOT INCLUDED

Day 1: An early start is sometimes necessary, often 7.30am, but will be confirmed by your guides as tidal change can affect departure times. The group transfers to the departure point at Lucinda, two hours south of Mission Beach. Here we pack the kayaks, practise paddling skills and discuss all safety procedures. The group sets off across the channel to lunch at Georges Point, the first landing site on Hinchinbrook Island. After lunch we continue paddling, taking in the southern reaches of Hinchinbrook Island. Our first night camp is at Mulligans Bay, Sunken Reef or even Zoe Bay depending on wind and weather.

L • D / CAMPING

Day 2: Following the coast, we round the most southerly point of Hinchinbrook Island, Hillock Point, and then head north into the very picturesque Zoe Bay. We'll take a walk through the luxuriant forests surrounding Zoe Creek to the base of Zoe Creek Falls. Eating lunch while soaking in the large crystal clear pool is the perfect way to relax. Refreshed, we continue along the coast finishing the day's paddling at sheltered Agnes Beach campsite.

B • L • D / CAMPING

Days 3-4: Paddling up the eastern shores of Hinchinbrook Island gives us our best views of Mt. Bowen (1142 metres). The rugged granite crags form a magnificent skyline often dotted with cumulus cloud as the island's dominant position often creates its own weather. En route we have ample time to paddle along rugged cliffs and into picturesque coves. This untouched wilderness is one of the finest examples of Australian coastline. After paddling the eight kilometre length of Ramsey Bay, we head for Cape Sandwich, the most easterly point on Hinchinbrook Island. Rounding Cape Sandwich can involve some specific timing taking in the prevailing wind and swell. We end our paddling days at Blacksands Beach and Sunset Beach with a sundowner and a delicious meal.

B • L • D / CAMPING

Day 5: Heading north, we paddle across scenic Shepherd Bay towards Cape Richards, the northernmost point of Hinchinbrook Island. After lunching on Orchid Beach we cross a short stretch of open water to Goold Island's sheltered beaches. Tonight we camp on beautiful Goold Island which affords great views and excellent beachcombing.

B • L • D / CAMPING

Day 6: We set out across our largest stretch of open water to explore the idyllic group of tiny islets comprising the Family Islands. These tiny islands are surrounded by fringing reef with white sandy beaches. The sheltered campground of Wheeler Island offers beautiful views back to Hinchinbrook's lofty peaks and west to view the sunset over mainland Australia. We have the afternoon to explore our private island, snorkel or relax on the beach.

B • L • D / CAMPING

Day 7: After a leisurely breakfast we set out for Mission Beach passing Bedarra and Timana islands. Dunk Island is the most well known of the Family island group and our last stop of the expedition. Our last paddle back to civilisation at Mission Beach is filled with satisfaction and achievement at having completed a unique and memorable experience. On arrival back into Mission Beach we enjoy our final lunch together. The guides will drop you back at your Mission Beach accommodation or the bus terminal if required.

B • L / END OF TRIP ARRANGEMENTS



End of Trip

We finish the trip at Mission Beach on Day 7 by 4:00pm. It is possible to connect with a 5.30pm bus to Cairns, however, please don't book a flight out on this day in case of delays.

Climate

The trip departure dates range from May through to October/ November, being the cooler part of the year. Expect daytime temperatures ranging from lows of between 18-24 degrees celsius (Jul and Aug) to highs of between 27 - 32 degrees celsius (Oct and Nov). The south-easterly trade winds move along the coast at this time of year and will often assist our journey, with our morning departures taking advantage of the lighter breezes. When on the ocean it is advisable to have good protection against all the elements. Ensure you have good sun protection and a lightweight wind/rainproof jacket.

Trip Organisation

The sun rises and sets quickly in the tropics. Paddling days will start early and finish early to take advantage of cooler temperatures and lighter winds. It's a good idea to pack up your dry bags before breakfast, prepare your personal items for the day and take down your tent so that loading for departure can be organised. We like to be on the water before 9:00am and arrive into camp around lunchtime or mid afternoon. It's important to realise that the group will kayak at the speed of the slowest members.

A successful trip will require teamwork by all members of the group. Your participation in general camp activities will be appreciated. For example, on arrival in camp you would unload your own boat, set up tents and perhaps a few members of the group can assist in preparing the evening meal. The afternoons will generally be at your leisure although the guides will conduct escorted walks for those who would like to explore a bit more.

Expedition Staff

Your guides are highly experienced sea kayakers and love to share wilderness experiences with others. The guides are experienced in trip logistics, local knowledge and expedition organisation. All guides are qualified in Wilderness Medicine and CPR. They are chosen not only for their experience and qualifications but also for their interpersonal skills -- they will be fun to be with and approachable, so if you are having any problems, please feel free to discuss any concerns with them in confidence.

Accommodation

Mission Beach comprises of several beaches, each with its own small village. There are various places to stay ranging from resort style to backpackers accommodation.

For Mission Beach accommodation information, have a look at:
www.missionbeachtourism.com

For convenience, you may like to stay at Mission Reef Resort, our pre-trip briefing location.

<https://missionreefresort.com.au>

Please don't get confused between Mission Reef Resort and Mission Beach Resort, they are different places.

On the kayak trip we camp every night and sleep in single or double tents.

Meals

Your guide will prepare fresh, quality cuisine during the seven day expedition. Breakfasts usually start with a fruit smoothie or a tropical fruit platter and freshly ground coffee. When we have a leisurely start to the day this is followed by a more hearty cooked breakfast; French toast, bacon/eggs and pancakes are common. On faster paced mornings we offer things like Bircher muesli and muffins instead of a cooked breakfast.

Lunches are usually a beachside picnic of salads and sandwiches and on occasion we mix it up with sushi (Nori rolls) or potato salad.

Dinners are a gourmet affair usually with a tropical theme. We try to stick to meals suitable for hot climates so there is a strong Asian and Mediterranean influence but with a bit of Australian fusion thrown in for good measure. We often fish as we paddle and when successful, serve ceviche or sashimi on the beach before tucking into a delicious fish curry. It's a very satisfying feeling sourcing seafood sustainably from the waters you are paddling on.

We provide clean, fresh drinking water on the trip.

A complimentary glass of wine is offered in the evening, usually one glass per guest each night. BYO is welcome, however please remember space is limited in the kayaks.

For vegetarians and those who have special dietary requirements, we are happy to make the necessary arrangements. Please note your requirements on the medical form.

Washing and Toilet Facilities

Our campsites are remote and basic. There are no shower facilities and only occasionally will you have the chance to wash with fresh water. It is a good idea to bring along some biodegradable sea soap, which will lather in salt water. Some campsites have enviro-composting toilets, otherwise we will dig a small pit toilet.

Travel Arrangements

Should you voluntarily decide to alter your travel arrangements after commencement of your trip, Southern Sea Ventures and local partners, Coral Sea Kayaking, are not responsible for any additional charges involved. Our staff will assist you if possible but you are responsible for organising these arrangements yourself. Delays may occur due to weather or transport difficulties and staff will do their best to rectify these situations.



Travel Insurance

It is highly recommended purchasing a personal comprehensive travel insurance policy. Please make sure your insurance policy covers lost monies in the event that you need to cancel your trip.

Australian residents should note: Under the Federal Government Medicare Act it is prohibited for any domestic travel insurance product to provide any financial reimbursement with regards to ambulance or air ambulance services. We advise clients to take specific cover for ambulance services through the respective State Ambulance Service providers or through your own private health insurance.

Time & Communication

Mission Beach and Cairns are always on Australian Eastern Standard Time (i.e. there is no daylight saving). During the trip your guide will carry a satellite phone for outgoing emergency calls. If your mobile phone carrier is Telstra, there is coverage while on the trip, except for the two days on the east coast of Hinchinbrook.

Conservation

It has always been our motto that “we take only photographs and leave only footprints”. We are keenly aware of the ecology of the areas we visit and try to limit our impact on them. We ask that each person takes out everything they bring in including sweet wrappers, batteries, etc. Toilet waste will be buried in pit toilets in less frequented areas. The use of biodegradable soaps would be appreciated and the guides will outline what we can do to limit our impact on the environment.

Photography

The humidity is always high in North Queensland and as we are paddling in a salt water environment the delicate electronics in cameras can be damaged. You might consider a waterproof camera or a small plastic waterproof case or dry-bag with a supply of silicon packs. Ensure you have sufficient memory storage and batteries/chargers as there is no opportunity to purchase batteries or access electricity during our island stays.

Money Matters

Your tour cost includes:

- Two-person expedition kayaks, paddles, life jackets and safety equipment.
- Single and double tents.
- Camp chairs.
- All camp kitchen equipment and shelter.
- A sail for the front of each double for the 'downward' run.
- All meals from lunch on Day 1 to lunch on Day 7.
- Transport from Mission Beach to the start of the trip on Day 1.
- Dry bags and watertight containers for your personal gear. Dry bag size is 40L for the majority of your personal gear and a smaller 10 -20L day bag for access when kayaking.
- Professional guides.
- National and marine park fees.
- Group first aid kit.
- Appropriate toileting facilities including toilet paper.
- Emergency radio or satellite telephone and marine distress kit (flares etc).

Your tour cost *does not* include:

- Travel between Cairns and Mission Beach before and after the trip.
- Mission Beach accommodation.
- Meals in Mission Beach.
- Travel insurance.
- Sleeping bag, sleeping mat and sleeping sheet.

Money to Bring With You

You may like to have a small amount of cash or a card to purchase a morning beverage/snack on the way to Lucinda on Day 1 of the trip. Lunch at a cafe on the last day is included in your trip cost but if you would like to buy beverages then bring cash/card. Mission Beach does have a Bendigo Bank, ATM's and offers a wide variety of activities for those staying pre and post kayak trip.

Glasses and Jewellery

People wearing glasses or sunglasses should tie them on with some elastic. This is something you can prepare before the trip. Take a spare pair of glasses if you depend on them for survival or comfort. Contacts can be used if you close your eyes at the right times! Bring a spare pair.

We suggest you do not wear jewellery during the trip.

Security

We accept no responsibility for the loss of, or damage to, any valuables or equipment whilst on the trip. With all adventure travel, it is best to leave unnecessary valuables at home or in your hotel safe. All passports, airline vouchers, valuables, excess cash and credit cards should be secured in the hotel reception safe in Mission Beach during the kayaking.

Medical Matters

Trip participants are required to provide us with a medical questionnaire filled out completely and accurately. For those aged 65 years or over, a doctor's sign off or letter is required stating your fitness for a multi-day kayak trip.

Please advise us of any side effects of any medication you take and of any dietary requirements related to the medication. Be sure to let your guide know of any drugs to which you are allergic as well as noting this on your medical form. If you are anaphylactic, you will need to supply and carry two Epipens. You will be isolated from modern medical facilities and attention to medical matters is vital.

Hygiene

In remote wilderness areas, good hygiene is essential to ensure that you don't fall ill during the trip. Wash your hands after using the toilet and before preparing or eating meals. Your guide will always have soap and water available.

Vaccinations

Generally speaking, there are no specific vaccinations required for travel to Australia, however it is always wise to consult your doctor or traveller's medical centre. Due to the chance of cuts and scratches, we strongly advise that you be up to date with your Tetanus vaccine.

*Covid-19 vaccination requirement will be conveyed pre-booking.

Medical Supplies

On our trips into more isolated areas we carry a comprehensive medical kit. However, it is your responsibility to bring sufficient quantities of any specific medications you require. In addition we suggest that each passenger bring:

- Sun screen (water resistant variety at least SP30 and reef safe if possible).
- Lip protectant (high SPF).
- Band-aid strips.
- Compeed (or similar) blister protection.
- Insect repellent is essential. In the tropics, repellents containing DEET are generally more effective eg: RID or similar.
- A mild anti-nausea drug if you are concerned about sea sickness.
- Paracetamol or equivalent headache remedy.
- A mild antiseptic soap/liquid hand wash.

Equipment & Clothing: What You Need to Bring

As we carry all of our food and equipment in the kayaks, it is essential that you travel light. All personal clothing and equipment are stored in the supplied dry bags. Dry bag size is 40L for the majority of your personal gear and a smaller 10 -20L day bag for access when kayaking. If you have any sharp objects or unusual items, these will be stored separately. If you'd like your camera to be accessible during the day, consider bringing a waterproof camera or a separate waterproof bag for storage on the kayak deck.

Gear List

The following checklist is a guideline for your trip. Light coloured clothing is advisable as at certain times of the year sand-flies and mosquitos may be present and are more attracted to dark clothing for better camouflage.

Essential Items:

- A wide brimmed hat for protection from the sun is essential. Visors are inadequate. A hat with a stiff brim that will hold rigid in a breeze, e.g. straw hat with a strap to put under your chin is good. A scarf made from a light material like silk to protect your neck can be useful too.
- Sun-glasses with a cord to prevent them from falling into the water. Side flaps are a good idea.
- Light weight rain jacket or spray jacket (you may want two, one for paddling and one for camp).
- One long sleeve lightweight synthetic shirt. This is highly recommended for sun protection while paddling. Cotton is not very suitable for paddling as it gets stiff with salt and can irritate the skin. A lightweight capilene or polypropylene top may be suitable.
- Two t-shirts.
- A lycra sun top is useful for swimming/snorkelling.
- One pair of light-weight, quick drying, full length pants for camp.
- Long-sleeve shirt is recommended in camp for insect protection.
- Two pairs of quick-dry shorts and swimwear.
- Sarong (this can double up as a second sheet).
- Very light-weight fleece jacket (not a heavy jacket), i.e. Polartec 100 is sufficient, or a sweatshirt.
- Lightweight and compact sleeping bag and inner sheet.**
- Sleeping mat.** Mats with a cover can be hired for \$10 per day (please advise us if you need to hire).
- One pair of running shoes and socks (recommend to get away from wet sandals and sand in the evenings and insect protection).
- Reef shoes for paddling or a good fitting pair of sandals that attach solidly.
- Small towel (a chamois towel is ideal, or a medium sized hand towel).
- Minimal toiletries (a bio-degradable soap that will lather in salt water is very useful). See Medical Supplies section above.
- A headlamp or small torch and batteries.
- One or two 1-litre water bottles—the type used by cyclists are fine and inexpensive.
- A small dry bag is good for holding things like sun screen, glasses, water bottle, etc. (try and avoid day packs with metal zips as they will corrode).
- Lightweight cycling gloves can ease blistering if you are not used to paddling.
- Pillow case or very small pillow (e.g. airline pillow). It must fit into your dry bag. A pillow case can give you the flexibility to make for a comfortable sleep.

Optional items:

- Camera, with waterproof container if the camera is not waterproof.
- Book, cards, games.
- Binoculars.
- Small fishing rod or hand line for fishing.
- Talcum powder to prevent salt water rash.
- Snorkelling gear (there is snorkelling gear available for a loan but bring your own for a good fit).
- Device/phone and small battery pack for recharging.

Delays or Problems

In case of last minute delays or problems, contact Southern Sea Ventures in Australia. The guide's phone number in Mission Beach will be noted on your final documents.

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