



Cruising Marinas by Sarah Goddard-Jones

This is the second in a series of articles intended to assist those cruising north for the winter regatta season in the Whitsundays. As mentioned in the first article on Cruising Guides, this article will cover Marinas between Sydney and the Whitsundays. It is written from the experience of Wine-Dark Sea, so contemplates a 15 metre sailing vessel which has a draft of 3 metres. Use the Cruising Guides mentioned in the earlier article to help you find suitable marina facilities for different sized vessels and note that Robs Passage Planner gives you detailed information and marina plans for all marinas mentioned, as well as contact details.

Whilst there are a number of marinas available in Pittwater, I do not propose to cover them here, as most people heading north will be familiar with the facilities available there.

For the trip north, I recommend you join the Shag Islet Cruising Yacht Club for just \$65 life membership. Once in Queensland many of the marinas and supporting businesses offer special deals for "Shaggers". They are not well publicised by either the business or by the SICYC website but it always pays to ask.

Newcastle

Newcastle Cruising Yacht Club have a great facility on the Hunter River suitable for most draft yachts. They can get busy so it is always best to book ahead if you can, to ensure there is a berth available. They can be contacted by email, mobile phone and land line. Whilst not in the centre of Newcastle there are several options for provisioning nearby, with large shopping centres within easy taxi ride or car trip. At the marina, there are good shower facilities as well as coin operated washing machines, and the Yacht Club does great food. You can get fuel at the marina and there are great Boatyard facilities for all types of services and repairs.

Port Stephens

Port Stephens has two marinas with different attractions. Peppers Anchorage Marina is out of town, further up the bay, but staying at the marina gives you full access to the resort facilities. On the other hand, D'Albora Marina puts you in the centre of town, with access to shops, cafes, restaurants and bars, as well as easy provisioning and access to boatyard facilities. Peppers is slightly more expensive, but worth it if you want to be away from the hustle and bustle of a tourist town, and often has space when D'Albora is full. D'Albora is less expensive, but convenient for town if you don't mind the tourists! This marina fills very quickly at holiday time, so book well in advance. Both can be contacted by email, mobile and land line, and D'Albora also monitors channel 16 VHF. Full bathroom and laundry facilities are available at both, as is fuel. D'Albora was previously 24 hour fuel but has recently stopped 24 hour service.

Coffs Harbour

Provided you don't have a massive southerly or easterly swell making the entrance to the harbour at Coffs difficult, the Coffs Harbour International marina is a great place to break your trip and re-provision. Shops, cafes, restaurants, bars and small supermarkets are a short walk from the marina, and you can catch a bus or cab into town for more extensive shopping. Bathroom and laundry facilities are good, and most Boatyard facilities are available. You can pick up fuel in the marina, but you may have to wait for the fishing fleet to take priority. The marina monitors channel 16 VHF,



and has email, mobile and land line contacts. It is as well to book in advance for Coffs, but you can anchor in the harbour if you needed to wait for space.

Gold Coast

Within the Broadwater there are several marinas to choose from. We have generally stayed to the south of the seaway entrance at the Marina Mirage, rather than the Southport Yacht Club, because there has been room and it's cheaper. Both have good facilities, including bathroom and laundry as well as fuel. Marina Mirage has a boutique shopping centre directly adjacent to the marina but Southport Yacht Club is closer to the Main Beach shops and cafes. Both are contactable via email, mobile and land line, and the Yacht Club marina keeps a listening watch on channel 74 VHF.

Bear in mind though that both Marinas are a good hour's run from the Seaway, so you do need to think about tides for both arrival and departure.

There are marinas to the north of the seaway entrance at Runaway Bay, Hope Harbour and Gold Coast City Marina (SICYC sponsor). All require a tricky river navigation with shallower depths than to the south of the seaway

Mooloolaba

The entrance to the Mooloolaba River can be tricky, so ensure you check Notices to Mariners (<https://publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/brisbane-notices-to-mariners>) if you intend to stop there. Look for the Notices referring to the Mooloolah River and you will find a very detailed chart of the river mouth with very accurate recent soundings. After the river mouth it pays to be closer to the southern shore for deeper water. For us, the easiest Marina is the old Yacht Club Marina, the first you come across as you round the first bend in the river. There are other options further up river, but we have not tried these. It's not easy to get fuel at Mooloolaba, unless you can catch the fishing fleet fuel and squeeze in between the trawlers, the only other way is to cart your jerry cans into town. Facilities are great, with the usual bathroom and laundry, and it's a short stroll to town for provisioning as well as cafes and restaurants. They monitor channels 16 and 73 VHF, as well as email, mobile and land line. You will need a screw in shore power cable for shore power here, and for most other Marinas in Queensland. We recommend you fit one before you go, as they also work in non-screw power bases.

Bundaberg

One of our favourite marinas on the east coast, Bundaberg is very well set up for cruisers. You can contact them on email or land line and they keep a listening watch in channel 81 VHF. Once you get past Fraser Island, all the marinas seem to do cheap car hire, and Bundaberg does a great service, having about 3 cars and 2 utes available for just \$40 a day. From the marina at Burnett Heads, it is about a 25 minute drive to town, so it's worth having a car for the day. However, you can get provisions a 20 minute walk away, at the Burnett Heads IGA, and there is also a bakery and a butcher, though these are pricey compared to the main supermarket chains. There are also farm stalls if you have a car, so it's great for picking up farm fresh fruit and veg. The marina is very reasonably priced, with fuel and all dockyard services available, as well as a great chandlery. The fish co-op is right next door and it's worth trying the spanner crab here, though all the seafood is brilliant. The facilities are excellent, with two sets of bathroom facilities and plenty of washing machines, plus "Cruisers Corner", a camp kitchen for the cruising fraternity, with fridge, freezer, sink, crockery, cutlery, BBQ and even a TV. Bundaberg is a port of entry, so you will meet plenty of well travelled cruisers here, and you should make the most of chatting to them over sundowners on a Friday in the "corner"! The Marina is a SICYC sponsor with a wide range of special deals



Gladstone

If you need to find a marina within about 100nm of Frazer Island, Gladstone is a great stopover. Despite the very long entry channel (22nm) which seems to go on forever, and the constant shipping traffic, the Marina is very well located and always has room. Contact them on email or landline and they keep watch on channel 82 VHF. It's very reasonable, being run by the Port Authority, and whilst cheap car hire is not available, the marina runs frequent shuttle buses to local malls for free. The facilities are excellent, and it's a short walk into town where you can find the Yacht Club, small shops, cafes and restaurants. Fuel is available as are Boatyard facilities. Reduced rates for SICYC members

Roslyn Bay

Another favourite of ours, but don't arrive on fishing comp weekends or you might not get in! They can be contacted by email or landline and keep a listening watch on channel 21 VHF. Good facilities here, including laundry, fuel and fish co-op, as well as dockyard services. Some friends of ours had to install a new engine in their 58' Yacht and were very happy with the service. Shag Island Yacht Club has 2 courtesy cars here, free for members, but \$40 per day car hire is also available. The best provisioning is in Yeppoon, a 15 minute drive away, and if you feel adventurous, you could go to Rockhampton, though it's the best part of an hour's drive. There are some lovely walks from the marina, and it has a fabulous cafe, with devine breakfast, lunch and dinner menus. The entry can be shallow, so check your tide heights when planning to go in, and you may find you sit in mud at low water with drafts over 2 metres.

Mackay

You are within cooee of the Whitsundays when you get to Mackay, so it is often bypassed in favour of island anchorages, but for work on your boat, it is far superior to anything on offer in the Whitsundays, as well as very reasonably priced. They can be contacted on email or landline, and keep a listening watch on channel 16 VHF. Ensure you check with VTS Mackay before entering as you need to approach the marina through the Port. All Boatyard facilities are available, including travelhoist, which can be interesting when you lift out on low water in a 5 metre tide! Being a port of entry, Mackay is well set up for cruisers with excellent facilities, though the laundry is a bit expensive. Provisioning is surprisingly challenging with nothing at the enormous marina other than a few restaurants and bars. However, cheap car hire is available when you need to get into town for a big shop. Reduced rates for SICYC members especially for longer stays if you are breaking your return voyage for a few weeks.

Whitsundays

You have the choice of Hamilton Island Marina, which is small, expensive and often full, or Abell Point at Airlie Beach, which is enormous, generally has space and is much more user friendly for boat work and provisioning. If you are doing either of the race weeks, you will of course be a captive of one or other of these marinas, with little choice. If you are simply cruising, the anchorage option is probably much more practical, and choose to do your fuelling and provisioning at Abel Point. Here there are 2 Shag Island courtesy cars available from the chandlery in the North Basin, or you can hire substantial Utes from the marina office at reasonable half day rates. Another option for provisioning is online, and Coles will deliver to the marina at Abel Point. Abell Point Marina also have a flat 10% discount for SICYC members.

If you are closer to Hammo and need to pick up quick provisions or crew, pick up a free courtesy mooring in Dent Passage and take your dinghy in. If you take your boat in, you will be charged a minimum of \$18 an hour just to pick up or drop off. If you have crew arriving by plane, you can pick



them up at the airport wharf in your dinghy but be careful of interfering with the ferry that arrives to pick up other passengers!

I hope you find this helpful, please feel free to drop me a line if you have any questions. The next article will cover all-weather anchorages as an alternative to Marinas.

Sarah