



experience fraser island

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Getting Off-road On Fraser Island

QUEENSLAND: There is more to driving on Fraser Island than just putting the car in gear and going for it. To ensure you make the most of your four-wheel drive experience on Fraser Island, the following ground rules may be useful - even for the experienced wheelie.

Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service produces a Park Guide to the Fraser Island World Heritage Area/Great Sandy National Park with a section on sand driving safety. This is suggested reading before a visit to Fraser Island.

All vehicles travelling to Fraser Island must first have an official permit from the Department of Environment and Heritage which has offices in Brisbane or on the Fraser Coast (Hervey Bay, Maryborough & Rainbow Beach).

Even before turning the ignition key, drivers should check tide times. The best time to travel is around low tide. Avoid two hours either side of high tide as the beach can disappear as the tide reaches the dunes, it can be soggy going and vehicles can become stuck fast.

There are several good maps available of Fraser Island. Select one with a good scale - such as the Fraser Island edition of the Queensland Sunmap range.

Do your homework before you visit to find out the best places to see. Talk to people who have been to Fraser before or read tourist publications.

When arriving on the island or before driving on to the beach, check that your wheel locks are in the right position to engage four-wheel drive.

Tyre pressure should be adjusted before driving on the island. Generally, tyres should be 25psi. Some areas on Fraser have signs suggesting specific reduced tire pressure to 15psi to enable driving through soft dry sand.

The beach is a designated road and the normal 'keep to the left' rules apply as well as using indicators for turning. Speed should be kept to 80km/ph on the beach (or as signed) and 35km/ph on the inland roads.

There are stretches of the beach which are used as aircraft landing/take-off strips. Take note of the signs in designated areas and watch for aircraft in your rear view mirror.

General rules about driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs apply. At Christmas and Easter holidays, police patrol the island and test drivers.



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Drivers should note the numerous gutters that have been created by the creeks flowing into the sea from the island. Even gutters with small banks - if hit at speed - can overturn a vehicle.

Drivers should beware of the rising tide. Vehicles driven too close to the water can become trapped in wet sand. Drivers of hired vehicles lose their bond immediately if they drive in salt water.

On 'good beach days' the sand is hard-packed and makes for excellent driving. On bad days, the tides may not have been high enough to wash away the ruts from the previous day's traffic - resulting in build-up of sand banks - but that's part of the fun of off-roading.

When driving in deep banks of dry sand, keep the car in a low gear, do not change gears, keep the revs high and do not lose momentum.

Where possible, follow someone else's tracks - choose a set of tracks and stay on them. Do not stop the vehicle in soft sand or in creek beds.

And, if the thought of driving your own four-wheel drive is daunting, there are several excellent tours - like Fraser Explorer Tours - of the island where you can sit back, relax and let someone else do all the hard work for you. Kingfisher Bay Resort has also teamed with the folks from Australian Offroad Adventures to run twice-monthly courses on sand driving for novices (more details on kingfisherbay.com).

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