

EP SQUID SAFARI!

Eyre Peninsula is blessed with endless jetties and places to camp that put you in prime squid country this summer

WORDS & IMAGES BY: GLENYS GELZINIS

A road trip along the Eyre Peninsula coast for a 'squidding safari' saw our biggest success at the end of the journey. After having driven more than 2,500 kilometres from home and trying a whole heap of jetties along the coastline, it was our final ditch effort at Whyalla that saw the most frenetic action. Along the way there were many attempts in all types of weather conditions and different times of day. But in the end, we threw

away all the 'rules' for catching squid and were more successful for it.

Eyre Peninsula is the ideal getaway if you're after an extended road trip, with so many towns and localities with jetties, it's paradise if you're a squid fisho!

The appeal of targeting squid is that you don't have to carry too much gear. A simple rod and squid jig is all that's needed, and a float if you want to set and forget. Just look for the telltale signs of ink on the jetty and have a go.

On the EP it's not too far between towns, so if you're not having success in one spot, you can simply move on to the next town and jetty. We caught

squid in a mix of conditions, from first light and sunrise, and in the hour before sunset. But our most successful times were usually in the middle of the day, no matter what the tide or wind was doing. The only condition that did have an impact was if the water was cloudy and stirred up. The squid on Eyre Peninsula definitely seem to like their water clear, much like the rest of the state.

If a road trip on Eyre Peninsula is on your list, well at least between Streaky Bay to Whyalla, then I can recommend the following hot spots for squid, which are still only a pinch of the actual areas on offer!



This picture and below: Squid bonanza at the Whvalla Jetty!



"We had to keep up a frenetic pace to get them in and quickly recast the jags into the school still bent on striking anything in the water"

HASLAM

The locality of Haslam is 45-kilometres north of Streaky Bay off the Flinders Highway, and the jetty was a reliable source of squid of all sizes during our stay. A jag was all that was needed here, and this was another spot where the action can be frantic when the squid are around.

A bonus is that Haslam has a camping area within walking distance of the jetty, where you can stay for \$10 per night. There are around a dozen sites to set up and public toilets, a dump point, shelter shed and barbecue nearby. With Streaky Bay not too far away, you have another awesome jetty to try there if needed as well.

VENUS BAY

The squid were cagey at Venus Bay during our stay, only being caught just before dawn and at first light from the jetty. With the action over by the time the sun had fully risen. The ones caught here varied in size, but a couple of really big ones were hauled in with the help of a crab net to get them onto the jetty.

Jigging and using a float were equally as successful at catching them. The Venus Bay caravan park is a convenient place to stay, an easy walk

from the jetty, and it has great facilities for cleaning and cooking your catch at this picturesque location.

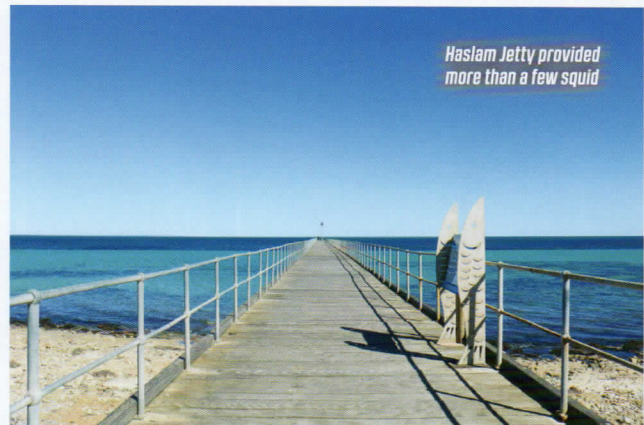
ELLISTON

The Elliston Jetty is a long one at 424-metres, and it was consistent with squid in the mornings on our latest trip. Those landing there were happy with the large sizes caught, with one squid caught by a happy fisherman having a tube over 30-centimetres long. If you want to stay in the area, the Elliston Caravan Park is directly opposite the jetty.

PORT LINCOLN AND NORTH SHIELDS

A stay at the Port Lincoln Tourist Park gives you access to a jetty on your doorstep, which makes it easy to venture out at any time. We pulled in a couple of squid here in the early morning, and tides didn't seem to have any impact on when they were caught.

You also have the Town Jetty in the middle of Port Lincoln that is a reliable producer, especially in low light. If things are a little slow, the jetty at North Shields is not far away and we were able to haul in three more squid here in an afternoon session.



Haslam Jetty provided more than a few squid



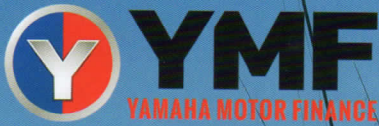
The long Elliston Jetty is a reliable producer

From here Louth Bay and Tumby Bay both have well-known squidding jetties, although Tumby Bay is closed for repairs and won't be open this summer most likely.

ARNO BAY

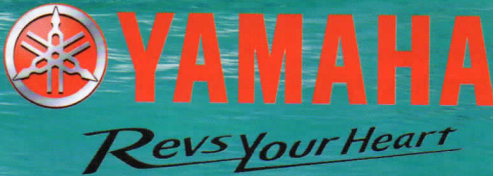
Arno Bay is around

45-kilometres south of Cowell (which has a productive jetty in its own right!) and the jetty is another one just a short distance from the caravan park. If you pick the right site, you can literally watch the fishing action from your caravan or campsite. It was also one of the



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A nice double from Arno Bay

more successful jetties for us on this trip, with the outgoing tide producing the best results.

On one afternoon the squid were on the hunt, with five other punters on the jetty each bagging at least a couple in the space of an hour. The squid were in attack mode, and just when I thought I'd lost one, leaving only one tentacle behind, the same squid came back for a second strike and didn't get away.

The following day saw a haul of five squid, one in the early morning and the other four on

the outgoing tide in the early afternoon, while it was drizzling with rain. When they were on, they weren't fussy about the colour of the jag being used and some very decent sized squid were caught.

After a change in the weather, a big swell rolling in stirred up the water, and when the clarity was gone, so were the squid for the next couple of days.

WHYALLA

This is one jetty worth seeing, because unlike any other jetty in Australia, the Whyalla Jetty

has a circular section in the middle which gives massive amounts of space for fishers, and has so many more features that make it a dream to fish from.

There is loads of car parking and it has three covered areas along its 165-metre length, where you can shelter from rain. There is lighting underneath the railings as well as overhead, meaning you don't even need to carry a torch. It is a spacious 4.5 metres wide and with ramp access, and a surface made of pre-cast concrete, it's

easily accessible for people with mobility issues.

The jetty has a mix of open sections and sides made of steel mesh, which act as wind breaks. I can vouch for the fact that they really do work and give respite from blustery conditions. It has unique round steel pylons and brushed steel balustrades, and the whole structure is absolutely beautiful to look at.

When it came time to see if all of this would mean good squidding opportunities, the ink painting the length of the



Arno Bay squid. There's so many options along this coast!

jetty gave us plenty of hope. We thought we'd play to the odds and have a squidding session on the jetty at first light and into sunrise, however two-hours only brought us two squid and fairly small ones at that.

Our next attempt was to throw away the rule book and venture out around 11am, midway through the incoming tide. Within minutes I had jagged a small squid and soon after, it was bedlam. All at once there was a swarm of squid all hunting and attacking anything we had in the water. In the clear

water we could see easily a dozen squid darting and lunging at the jags, flying through the water and fighting each other over which one would strike first. We had to keep up a frenetic pace to get them in and quickly recast the jags into the school still bent on striking anything in the water. We had rods and a handline in the water, two with floats and one just a jag and all with different coloured jags, and they were all hit.

After a crazy five-minutes of full-on frenzy, we had six decent size squid landed on the jetty

with no time to even put them in the waiting bucket. As quick as they came on, they all but disappeared with just one more caught around half an hour later.

Feeling pretty grateful that we had finally been at the right place at the right time and witnessing a feeding frenzy like we'd never seen before, we happily left the Whyalla Jetty and the Eyre Peninsula odyssey as happy campers and fishers. The squidding options truly are endless on the Peninsula, check it out sometime if you can! **FSA**



Squid from Haslam Jetty

Top Catches

BIG JETTY KING!

Bailey lands his dream sized king land-based from a west coast jetty

WORDS & IMAGES BY: BAILEY JAMES

Ever since I was old enough to hold a fishing rod, I loved the feeling of hooking into big fish that could pull drag.

As I became more and more hooked on the rush, I began to meet mates who were interested in the land-based gamefishing side of things. I started meeting people like Ryan Trezona and Josh Kovacic who were equally, if not more intrigued, by the feeling of a big fish pulling string.

As the search to catch a different variety of big fish began, we all had that land-based kingfish on the top of our bucket list. I was 14 when I first saw a kingfish, and by 15 I had hooked and lost a monster king to my fault, as I was using pretty average gear and was quite inexperienced. From here the hunger to catch a jetty/land-based kingfish accelerated.

Over the years my perspective and knowledge of these fish grew. I started to understand

their eating patterns and what livebait they would take easiest, and how to rig them, as these fish can be ultra fussy eaters.

During spring I was planning to head up the coast from Streaky Bay to find a school of these big kings that I had heard about. I received news just a few minutes into my drive that a kingfish school was seen in the general area I was aiming to fish. I met with my mate Ryan up the end of the jetty.

With squid being the preferred live bait we began casting squid jigs around. Once we had a few healthy squid in the live bait bucket we persistently looked for the kingfish hoping they would come past.

Three-hours went by and it was around 2pm when Ryan spotted the kings. At this point we were both full of excitement, and our mate Josh was there to help with anything we needed. I took a few deep breaths to calm my nerves in preparation for the school that was just metres away from the

jetty.

As I cast the unweighted squid out, it came flying off my double hook rig. Reacting almost immediately, I grab another squid from the bucket. While hooking my squid on, Ryan hooked-up to a huge king, but unfortunately pulls the hooks. In seconds I'm back with my fresh squid, and as I slap it on the surface and give it a few tugs a big king engulfs my squid centimetres beneath the surface. Seconds into the fight the kingfish comes towards the jetty, instantly my gut drops and my stress levels are spiralling through the roof. Luckily, she didn't go to the pylons and followed the school along and out past the jetty. Now I had the fish worn out and away from the jetty it was time to bring her in and try get her on the planks. A few scary moments around the pylons and

Josh uses a small Hook 'Em gaff at the base of the ladder to get a holding shot, but unfortunately it rips out. I was now left holding onto this kingfish with no gaff shot, and as one hook pulls out the other hook is holding into the skin of the gill plate.

This was the scariest part of the whole fight, but luckily with Ryan's quick thinking he races down the ladder with my drop gaff to assist Josh. Both getting good holding shots on the fish we all drag this huge fish of a lifetime up, which measured a solid 1.4m long. Seeing this fish up close and personal was a dream come true after four years seasonally chasing these green and yellow slobs. I'm happy to say that I will forever cherish this moment I got to share with a couple of good mates! **FSA**

