

# Moreton Island

## Parents resort to wild ways

**Briar Jensen** shows nerves of steel to make her kids think she's awesome.

**A**WESOME!" said our dolphin-mad 10-year-old when told we were going to Tangalooma Wild Dolphin Resort where he could handfeed bottlenose dolphins. Even our 13-year-old daughter was mildly impressed.

By the end of our stay, and much to our surprise, quad biking and sand tobogganing were also up there on our son's "awesome" scale.

Watching our children overcome their fears and sample some adventurous sports was enormously satisfying. Overcoming my own apprehension and participating in the same activities was a thrill – and showed the children that their parents aren't quite as boring as they had thought.

Tangalooma Wild Dolphin Resort is on Moreton Island, 75 minutes by launch from Brisbane. Moreton is the third largest sand island in the world, behind Fraser and North Stradbroke. Thirty-eight kilometres long by

12 kilometres at its widest point, the island is 98 per cent national park. White sand beaches surround woodlands and forests, interspersed with lakes and sand dunes.

Tangalooma is an Aboriginal word meaning "place where fish gather" and not only can you see dolphins from the beach, a short cruise gives access to green turtles, dugongs, sharks and rays. And, from mid-June to September, humpback whales.

Moreton Island was home to the largest whaling station in the southern hemisphere before it closed in 1962. The remains of the flensing deck (where whales were processed) is used by the resort for basketball, one of the numerous activities on offer.

Our first adventure was the desert safari. Heading off in a four-wheel-drive bus our larrikin driver-cum-guide, Allister Parker, had us in fits of laughter as we jerked along, alternately crawling up then hurtling down the tortuously bumpy track that leads to a 42-hectare sand blow.

After a quick stop to learn about the coloured mineral sands, and be sucked in several times by Allister's ruses, we eventually arrived at the base of a 70-metre sand dune and were handed our "toboggans" – a generous description for a slab of masonite.

"No way!" said our daughter, sizing up the mountainous dune and ditching the masonite for her camera. Not wanting to be a cowardly mum, or be outdone by the 75-year-old woman from the previous week, I walked, trudged and finally scrambled up the dune.

My husband whooshed down first, determined to go as far and fast as possible. Petrified that I would overbalance, I was concentrating on lifting up the front of the board when Allister gave me a shove. Tipping over the edge is definitely the scariest part, but by the time my internal profanities had slowed (you must keep your mouth shut) I was nearly at the bottom, where I realised it was sort of fun, though not something my physio would approve of.

As our son hurtled down with sand pelting his face (he didn't lift the board up enough) I expected the worst. But after washing sand from his eyes he bravely decided the second time couldn't be as bad, so we both trudged up for another go, emptying sand from our pockets along the way.

Unbeknown to us there was a

prize for the furthest ride, which my husband won, raising his status in the "cool dad" stakes. When he bestowed his prize of a "dune conqueror" T-shirt on our son, his rating shot up even higher.

We booked our dolphin feeding for the second night at the resort so we could watch the routine on our first. It was more of a production than we anticipated, but given every guest gets a turn, such regulation was to be expected. Protection of the dolphins, who have been coming here since the 1980s, is paramount, so feeding is

carefully controlled by staff from the dolphin care program.

The pre-feed introduction was informative and just

watching the dolphins in the shallow water beside the jetty was exciting. While the queues to feed were long and our interaction with the dolphins was brief, it was still a thrill to be so close to wild dolphins who choose to be there.

Quad biking was next and our son was impressed that he could ride his own bike (minimum age six). Even our daughter reluctantly decided to have a go. After a quick lesson and road test we were assessed and sorted into groups.

I was relegated to the children's group



Bike-owning hubby went to the hoons group, but as my shoulders apparently looked tense I was relegated to the children's group. The grouping left me peeved that I couldn't cut loose in the dunes, and damaged my "cool mum" image. But I was able to watch the children master their first motorised vehicle and morph into petrolheads. "I've never been more scared," blurted our



### TRIP NOTES

- A catamaran operates daily from Holt Street Wharf on the Brisbane River, 15 minutes from the city centre and 10 minutes from the airport. Parking is available.
- Accommodation includes hotel-style rooms, resort units, two-storey town houses and luxury apartments. All are close to the beach. Our resort suite with separate bedroom was spacious, modern and well appointed.
- The Beach Cafe, coffee shop and buffet restaurant operate around a central dining area that is showing its age, but they are complemented by the new Steakhouse and Chef's restaurants right on the beachfront. Some rooms have kitchenettes and basic groceries are available at the resort shop.
- Phone 1300 652 250 or see [www.tangalooma.com](http://www.tangalooma.com).

daughter, "but it was heaps of fun!" "Awesome!" said our son.

The resort is family friendly with two large pools, plenty of free sports and lots of eco activities for kids. They are catered for in the evenings too, with a family trivia quiz (believe your daughter if she says the *Mona Lisa* is missing eyebrows), karaoke nights and the hilarious Tangalooma horse races – if you don't mind

introducing them to a little light gambling.

Unfortunately we ran out of time (and money) for paragliding, jet skiing and snorkelling the wrecks. Guess they'll have to wait for next year's "awesome" scale.

*The writer and her family were guests of Tangalooma Wild Dolphin Resort.*



**WADING GAME:** Tangalooma's attractions include dolphin feeding and kayaking.