

Triquet Island

A Mid-Coast Tropical Isle

Soft sand, clear water and rolling surf—if it weren't for the driftwood and evergreens, you might think you were in Polynesia

STORY AND PHOTOS BY **JENNIFER & JAMES HAMILTON**





North of the 49th parallel, Triquet Island's idyllic northwest beach evokes images of the tropics.

When we first arrived at Triquet Island, a deer bounded toward us across a wide, white-sand beach. Nearby, a wrecked fishing vessel embedded in the sand was evidence of the ocean's power. On our second visit, we found a whimsical wilderness hut above an even nicer sand beach as well as a trail to a lookout with Pacific Ocean views. The third visit yielded the best beach of all, along with a kayaker camp, a nearby sheltered lagoon filled with shorebirds and a trail to a rocky, debris-strewn beach with awesome southern views. Although Triquet Island has many attractions, its beaches are the real standout. The soft sand, clear water and rolling surf give the island a surprisingly tropical feel. Ignoring the driftwood and evergreens, you might think you were in Polynesia.

Triquet Island is at the southwest corner of the Breadner Group in Queen Charlotte Sound, near Spider Anchorage. Like many feature names in the area, the name Triquet comes from the Second World War, when the Canadian Air Force established a base at Shearwater on Denny Island. To orient themselves, the pilots christened many of the unnamed geographical features, such as Spitfire and Hurricane, after fighter planes. Other names instead recognize military leaders and heroes. Triquet Island was named after Captain Paul Triquet of the Canadian Infantry Corps, who was awarded both the British Victoria Cross and the French Chevalier of the Legion of Honour for leading his company to secure a key road junction against formidable odds.

West Beach The western cove is the most accessible anchorage on Triquet Island and has unimpeded views northwest into Queens Sound. While anchored there, we watched a single troller drift slowly north toward Spider Island with its fishing poles extended far out on either side. This would have been a common sight 40 years ago; Queens Sound was once a popular fishing ground before the decline of the commercial fisheries. In her book *Fishing With John*, Edith Iglauer relays several stories of trollers working the area, sometimes coming ▶

close enough to tangle their poles. Sport-fishing boats are more common today, and the cove at West Beach is a convenient stop for cleaning catch.

Ashore was a more somber reminder of past commercial fishing. The ruins of a thick-planked wooden fishing vessel were scattered across the sand. We found engine, transom, water tank, hydraulic hoses and a large rudder bent at 90 degrees—that must have taken some force.

We'd read that the ruins of a Second World War gun emplacement were on the island somewhere nearby, and one year, we scoured the shoreline looking for them—without success. These facilities were designed to be well hidden from the water, so even if anything did remain, we'd probably not see it except from shore. Although we did land at a couple of likely locations, the woods were thicker than we felt like taking on, especially not knowing exactly where we should be looking.

1. The northwest beach feels the most tropical of Triquet's three beaches, with rolling surf and a warm sand beach.
2. The drying lagoon between the northwest and northeast beaches is so packed with shorebirds that it looks and sounds like a bird sanctuary.
3. A hobbit would feel quite at home in this marvelous, carefully built wilderness cabin for kayakers.

Northwest Beach On our first visit to the cove along the northwest corner of the island, fog hung so thick that we could barely see the shore 200 metres away from our anchored boat. We weren't expecting much from the day, but by the time we went ashore, the fog had lifted to reveal a deep, cloudless blue sky and the sun shone brightly.

The beach there felt the most tropical of the three. The clear weather certainly helped, but it was also partly due to a handcrafted "beach bar" ashore. The bar was constructed from a large wooden spool with a pole through

the centre. A "Gone Fishing" sign pinned to an adjacent tree added to the effect. But even without the bar, the beach evoked the tropics. Gentle surf rolled onto the soft, sun-heated sand, and the water was warm and clear over a gradually sloping beach that was ideal for paddling.

Behind the bar was a marvelous, carefully built wilderness cabin, complete with a shingled roof. A hobbit would feel quite at home there. Nearby, a driftwood handrail stood alongside a trail into the woods. The trail—well trod but a bit overgrown—led about 250 metres to the tiny V-shaped cove on the west shore of Triquet Island. The cove was open to the Pacific Ocean and had wonderful views.

In retrospect, that gun emplacement we were looking for, if it exists at all, would likely be on the point north of the cove. On our next visit, we'll probably try to reach the point on foot from the trail.

Northeast Beach We found the nicest beach of all along the northeast tip of Triquet Island. It was wide and long, with deep, talcum-soft sand. High on the beach, several logs were arranged as seating near a carefully laid out row of driftwood; it seemed we'd stumbled onto one of the region's many kayaker camps. Set in the woods above the beach was a well-used camping area with views north through the Breadner Group.

Behind the campsite, a wide corridor had been cleared for a trail that ran south across a narrow isthmus to a small cove on the other side. We eagerly set off, thinking this



was among the easiest of the trails we'd walked in a while. Whoever had cleared the trail had abruptly given up about a third of the way through, however, and the remainder was rather overgrown. But fortunately we didn't have far to go.

The trail ended at a cove on the south side of the isthmus. Typical of southern-facing coves, the bay was rocky and clogged with driftwood and other debris. We found all sorts of stuff in there, including a tire float and a large number of new-looking crab-trap floats and leaded line buried under driftwood. Storms had also tossed huge logs high up onto the shore. This would be an exciting place to watch a southeast storm.

The best part was the amazing view. From the cove, we could see all the way across Kildidt Sound to Hakai Passage and the mountains on Calvert Island. Closer by, we had a good view of the tricky shortcut we'd taken a few times through the Breadner Group between Spider Anchorage and Queens Sound. The route is easier than it looks, but the ▶



If you go

Good holding and anchoring depths are off the west and northwest beaches. The northwest beach anchorage has the best northwest protection, although strong westerly wind and swell will reach in, while the cove

at the west beach is completely exposed to the northwest. Both, however, should have reasonable southeasterly wind protection. On our last visit to Triquet Island, we overnighted along the east side of the

Edna Islands, about a mile to the north. The anchorage there has good northwest protection and room for several boats. —J & JH



The trail from the northeast beach leads to a cove with views south across Hakai Passage to the mountains on Calvert Island.

scattered breakers visible throughout are a bit unnerving.

Returning north, we found an easier-to-access but less-inspiring view across the narrow neck east of the camp. We had to climb over a pile of driftwood, but it was otherwise a short and straightforward route. This vantage also had a nice view east toward Ronald and Manley islands.

Relatively little debris blows onto the north side of these islands compared to the south, but we did find something

as we left the beach in the dinghy. Glass floats from across the Pacific are a prized beachcombing discovery. What we found was of the more modern, super-sized variety. Tucked against the shore west of the beach was a large plastic float, perhaps a half-metre in diameter, with Asian markings. It must have been completely waterlogged—we tried to lift it against the shore for a better picture and could barely budge it. Unless someone came in with a crane, it's probably still there.



The ruins of a fishing vessel found scattered across the sand: an engine, transom, water tank, hydraulic hoses and a large rudder bent at 90 degrees.

The Lagoon Perhaps the most remarkable attraction at Triquet Island is the large drying lagoon between the northwest and northeast beaches. At most other places on the island, the constant background noise—no matter how calm the conditions—is of surf rolling ashore. But at the lagoon, a shrill chirping drowned out all other sounds.

The lagoon was absolutely packed with shorebirds and both looked and sounded like a bird sanctuary. Even the non-birders would be reaching for binoculars. With its drying, kelp-filled shores, the lagoon—though technically a beach—seemed more suited for birds than for humans.

We crept in slowly by dinghy, trying not to disturb the birds, amazed at their number and variety. Easily hundreds, if not thousands of birds were all along the shore preening, sleeping, feeding or just hopping around. Sandpipers of all sorts dominated, while the occasional ring-necked plover stood in sharp contrast. The birds seemed disinterested in us for the most part, and we were able to land the dinghy and approach quite closely.

Triquet Island, well known to kayakers but little known to boaters, is full of surprises. It feels and is shaped suspiciously like Robert Louis Stevenson's mysterious Treasure Island. We're not sure what we'll find on our next visit—perhaps that elusive gun emplacement, another marvelous beach or maybe even buried treasure. 🗝

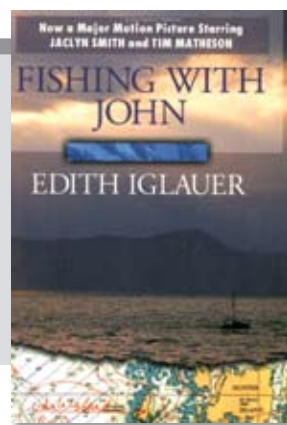
Jennifer and James Hamilton are authors of the new Waggoner sister publication *Cruising the Secret Coast*, which includes comprehensive coverage of Queen Charlotte Sound. The Hamiltons are regular contributors to *Pacific Yachting* and maintain a cruising website at www.mvdirona.com.

Recommended reading

Edith Iglauer's *Fishing With John* (Harbour Publishing, 1989) tells the tale of John Daly, an impassioned and talented commercial fisherman who was convinced he could "think like a fish." The author lived an urban, sophisticated life writing for the *New Yorker* until she met and

married Daly; she spent more than four years on his 41' troller until his sudden death in 1978.

This unusual West Coast love story continues to be a bestseller in paperback and is available through *Pacific Yachting's* online bookstore: www.pacificyachting.com/bookstore. —Eds.





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