

eeexplore

PROSAIL ASIA
FEBRUARY 2020
ISSUE 02

*3 hulls
6 days
30 plus knots of NE!*

OUR TOP SECRET HIDEAWAY
ADVENTURES OF EEPAI

50 MK II



island life

The safest place to be right now is on an island by yourself!..

DAILY

- 01** Nongsa Point Marina to Bintan Marina in a cool 20 knots plus! [3 hours]
- 02** Bintan Marina to White Sands Beach Island "over the top"... [4 hours]
- 03** White Sands Island to Mapur Island [1 hour]

- 04** White Sands Island to Pualu Pangkil [2 hours]
- 05** White Sands Island to Bintan Marina - "the long way round" !..
- 06** Bintan resorts Ferry to Singapore, Tanah Merah.

EXCLUSIVES

- 01** Bintan Marina notes
N 01 09.651
E 104 19.292
- 02** Grand Lagoi Hotel.
White Sands Island. .
- 03** Easter Rally 2020...



Why not!..

Dash around Bintan in the blow!..

Ever since the 40' tri 'Tantrum' told us of "rough" while they made the Round Bintan record in 11 hours, we've been curious as to what is 'rough'. The opportunity popped up with 'Eeepai' sitting in Nongsa Point Marina. "Here's our chance to go find out before we bring her back to Changi, Singapore".

The "rough" area refers to the dog-ear corner of Bintan Island called Berakit. There's a shallow bank of 8m deep water that conspires with the Northeast Monsoon wind and east running tide to dish up some tasty waves but it's only for a short distance and only during the NE Monsoon. At all other times of the year, it's flat. We know we saw it in July when we made the exact same passage!

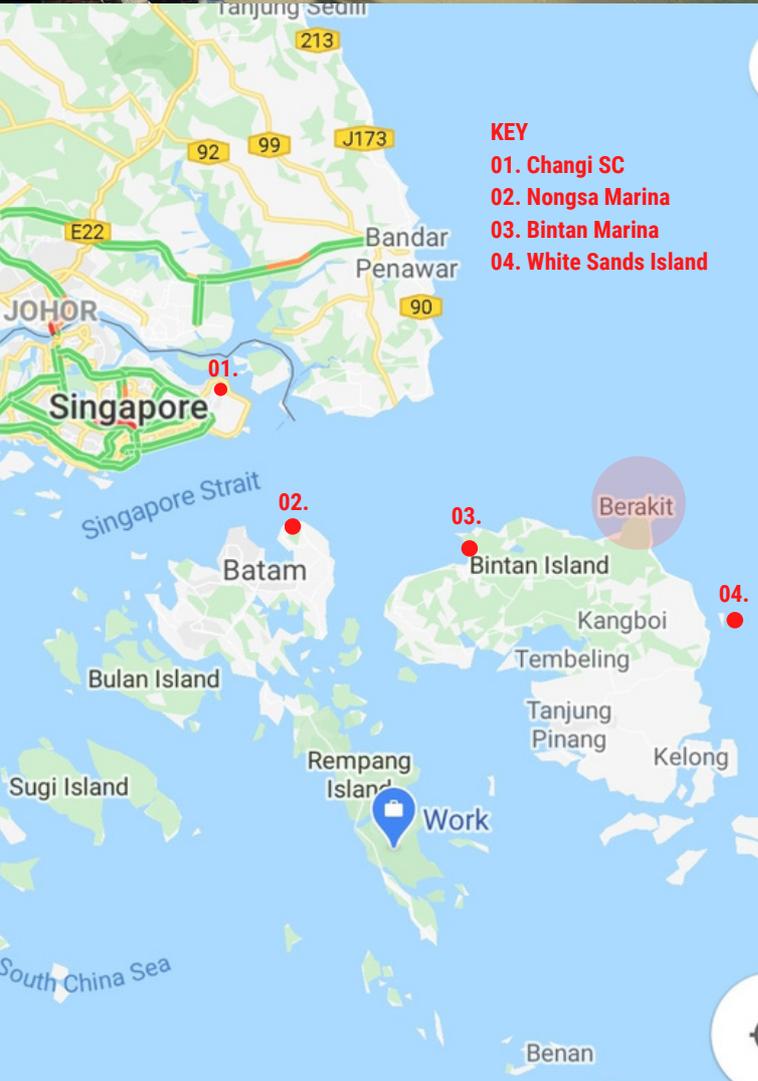
Now it must be said, February 2020, is the windiest in recent memory and for once the sailing fleet at Changi Sailing Club have been shortening sails - and that never happens in Singapore!

So our basic plan was set. Fetch Eeepai from Nongsa Point Marina, head over to Bintan Marina for an overnight in Lagoi and then "over the top" to White Sands Island the following day. Spend a few days looking at Bintan's east coast jewels and then "the long way round" - as they say, life begins where the road stops!

Though we have covered many places around here, we've never been around Bintan in the NE but it has always fired the imagination.

So "over the top" in the best monsoon on record...

[Bottom photo: Eeepai Corsair Dash 750 lying in Bintan Marina. The Marina is located exactly where the Bintan Resorts Ferry docks from Singapore. It has full CIQP facilities. In and out takes about 40 minutes to complete. Very good.]



01. Bintan Marina

The entrance into the channel is clearly marked with channel markers and due to the headland surrounding it, very protected from both Monsoons. On the night we slipped in, some of the port hand markers were not lit and so, entering on dark might need a little extra vigilance.

The best land mark is, a large ship that is in process of becoming a hotel. The private marina has space for about 10 boats and is located 50m beyond the ferry berth.

From the screengrab you'll see that it is shallow just after the marina. The 3.6m was at the bottom of the tide!

At BBC you hand your papers over to the Clearing Agent and they will be handed back to you in about 40 minutes. Bintan Resorts is like a separate territory within the Indonesian Island. All the ritzy resorts are located in this belt. The cheapest room along this coast is about S\$ 130/night. (Grand Lagoi Hotel). We opted to stay one night and continue on the next day to our target paradise island and thanks to the Virus, the room was only S\$63/night! Bargain!

Fee's for the Marina and Clearing came to about 2 Million Rupiah (S\$ 200). This included the Inbound/Outbound charges, stamping fees and the marina charges for a berth for 2 nights. Best idea would be to leave the boat there a few weekends but on this occasion, we were just 'testing' all the systems.





Nongsa Point Marina

Day One...

Nongsa to Bintan...

Since Eepai was already in Riau waters we avoided sailing across the Singapore Straits dodging ships of all sizes! The sail from Changi, Singapore to Bintan Marina normally takes between 3 - 4 hours. From Nongsa over to Bintan it's relatively straight forward. Depart NPM, clear the entrance and turn due east and just keep going.

The whole Riau Province has some heavy tide action going on. From the south, the Java Sea collides with the South China Sea in this area and creates some interesting action! Seems to be that during February the current was flowing from west to east at a good rate making for an easy trip from either Nongsa or Singapore.

Helped along by the tide, the travel time was about two and a half hours. The heading from Nongsa lies south of the main shipping lanes so the only traffic is the Singapore-Bintan ferries and the coastal traders that use the Selat Riau channel between Batam and Bintan. Located in this channel is the local ferry terminal of Tanjung Uban, the Riau base for the Indonesian Navy and further to the south is the city of Tanjung Pinang.

The entrance to the Bintan Ferries channel is clearly marked, just keep an eye out for the Bintan Resorts Ferry and follow it in! This is actually an easier entrance than the Nongsa one as there is only one channel unlike Nongsa's marina and ferry channels that lie side by side.



Day Two...

The bit 'Over The Top'.

This is what we really wanted to experience. Whilst we could have sailed south, we wanted to see the 'rough' spot of Berakit. As the breeze had been steadily in the 20+ range and we were on 'delivery' we reefed the mainsail kept the full jib. This made for a very relaxed mode for the 50 km trip to White Sands Island.

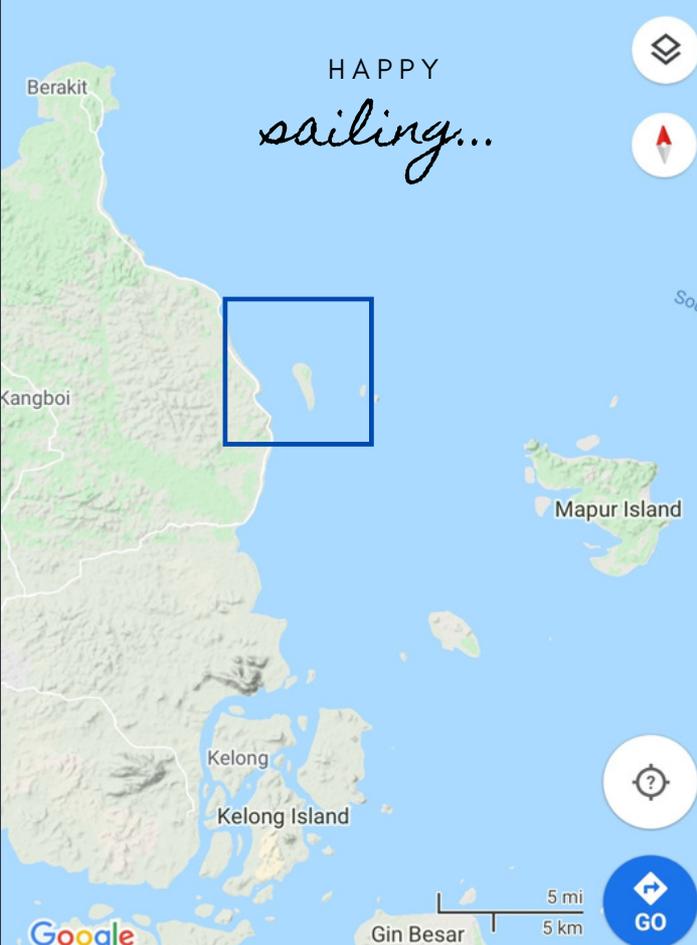
Berakit lies just 30 km east of the marina and we ended up clearing it in 3 tacks. The east going tide was kicked up with NE wind creating 1 - 1.5m waves. In the shallow patch right at Berakit the waves stood up to 2m maximum but were steep and of short wave lengths. So beating to windward at about 8-10 knots the first foot of the bow pole would poke into the bigger of the waves before the bow would lift and go over the wave. It wasn't that uncomfortable and the 'patch' is relatively short of about 2km's.

During the Southerly season, the Berakit area is festooned with fish-trap mega-structures. These are catamaran platforms with house above/net below that are towed into place for a season of fishing. The local fisherman put these onto their favourite fishing spot. We had always imagined that they were placed over a rock or coral head but without their presence, we could see that most of the area where they normally anchor is in the 5-8m depth area. But during the NE the platforms are all ashore to wait out the season and so that was one less 'hazard' to worry about.

Once we rounded Berakit and were in deep waters heading south, the whole thing settled down and we experienced some nice surfing rides for the next 25km's down to White Sands Island.

From Bintan Marina to Berakit was about 2.5 hours and then another 2 hours from the point to the island. All very leisurely.





HAPPY
sailing...

02. White Sands

This has fast become our preferred island destination for its proximity and 'exclusiveness'. The chalets and yurts are a treat as is the island itself. While it is private you don't suffer the same tax as you would visiting the other private island nearby!

It's enough of a distance from Singapore so that you feel the openness of the South China Sea but not too difficult as you can break it up into two 4 hour sectors. In the southerly season the waters are flat and the wind is much more benign.

The island is small and you can walk right around it in about 40 minutes. The White Sands lie on the southern most tip while the northern end is rocky with mangroves. As the island lies virtually north-south there are chalets and yurts on both the sunrise and sunset sides. It's a very charming setting for sure.

The chalets are very charming, air-conditioned, very clean and with an attached bathroom. While the yurts are equally charming and air-conditioned, they don't have attached bathrooms but the shared shower block is very clean indeed! The cafe has a limited menu but the Bintang's are cold and they do have a range of alcoholic drinks to make up for any short falls in the menu!

WiFi if you must, is available on the island although you will be missing the real attraction of White Sands Island if you just keep glued to your wee screen! By night you will be treated to a fabulous view of all the stars as ambient light pollution is very lacking. The waters are clean and clear. There's a snorkeling platform anchored in about 5m of water and while not stunning, is nice if you haven't snorkeled for a while.

But the best idea, take a great book and find your own corner of paradise where you won't even know the outer world exists.



Room with a view



Sunset chalet



Coconut Beach Bar



The yurt



Day Three

Island hop Mapor...

Within a 10 mile radius of White Sands Island you have Nikoi, Mapor, Pangkil, Poto and Kelong Island plus the fishing town of Kijang. Each is an easy day-return trip from the island.

Mapor is the largest of the islands with its own village tucked in the shallow western side. Beaches along the north and north east have beautiful long sandy beaches and all reef protected. During the southerly season you could drop anchor off virtually any of them and lie in some very nice waters. There is a jetty and small day tripper rest spot on one of the northern beaches but for our visit it was all offbounds due to the heavy wave action.



Day Four

Island hop Pangkil...

It was an easy ride down to Pangkil with the NE pushing the Dash 750 along easily but a little longer and a lot more bumpy coming back up into the NE with its 1 - 1.5 m waves. This was vastly different from the July trip when the whole area was flat water and a nice 10 knot SW Monsoon prevailed!

Pangkil is another private island with very nice beachcomber style 'palaces' for guests. Worth having a look but a bigger budget required as compared to White Sands.

The whole area is a turtle breeding grounds and during the SW Monsoon many species head onshore to lay their eggs. That's a real treat!

Gunk holing... That's why we enjoy the Corsair Dash 750 so much!





Part of Kijang town in the Kelong Channel

Day five...

'Wrong way round'...

With the prevailing NE still pumping in, we opted for the clockwise, long way around trip..

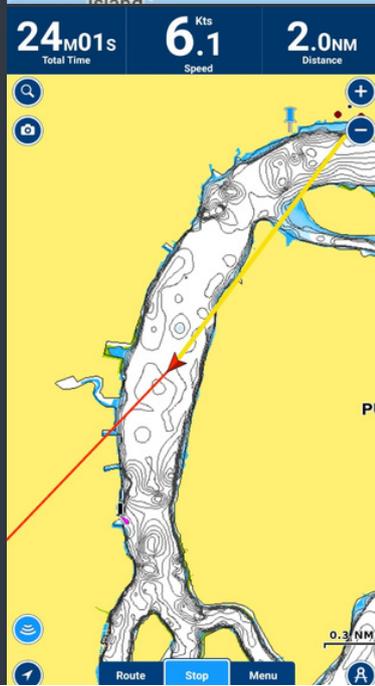
By Sectors,

- White Sands to the Kelong Channel, 2 hours
- Kelong Channel to 03 Tanjung Pinang, 2 hours
- Tnj Pinang to Lobam 1.5 hours
- Lobam to 'Big Wind' 1.5hours
- 'Big Wind' with big slop to Bintan Marina, 2 hours

Before departing White Sands we'd figured on a 10 hour trip right round Bintan and we left the double-reefed main in place and kept the full jib.

The first sector from White Sands Island to Kelong Island Channel was a nice ride on the 1 - 1.5m waves.

Our favourite sector is from through Kijang Channel where Bintan's port is located. This is the scenic bit as you go past the port then the fishing village and great to see normal life prevails in these parts.



Popping out near Mantang Island you then sort of aim up towards the city of Tanjung Pinang and it's busy little ferry terminal. Along this stretch the waters are flat but the breeze still keeps coming. Interestingly, competitors from the Neptune Regatta have commented that this section is where some of the best gusts come through! On this day we could confirm that there were some very juicy gusts rolling out from the land.

From Tanjung Pinang over to Lobam Island, that was a very nice fetch with speed enough to keep pace with the departing ferries.

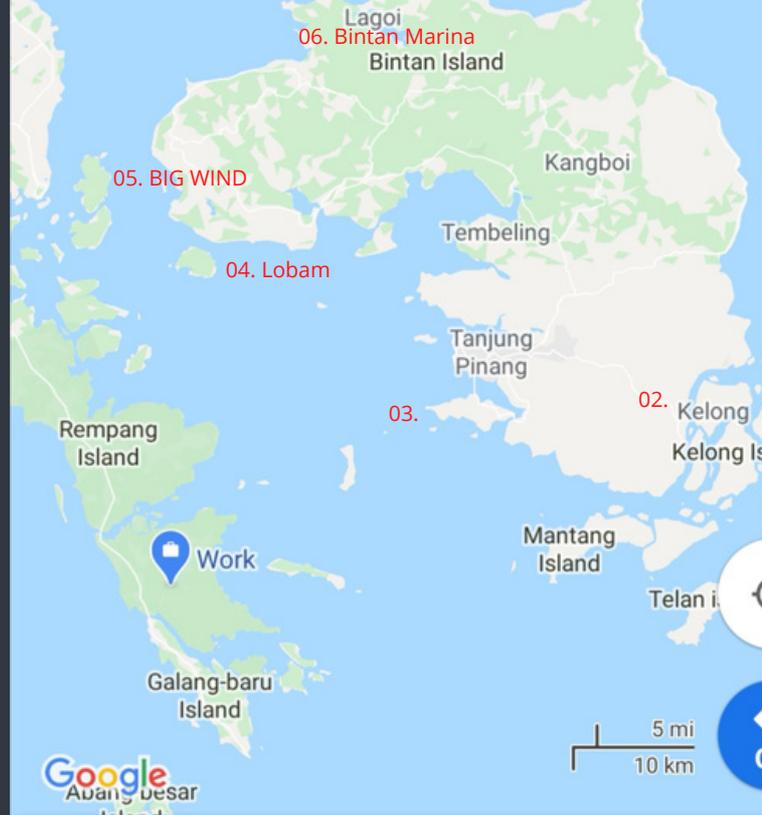
Lobam Island was the scene of one of our Nacra Raid-a-Riau trips in the 90's! Three Nacras made the trip over from Singapore so it was good to visit memories past!

As we entered Selat Riau, the wind compressed between Batam and Bintan Islands and so the double reef was starting to look like a very nice idea. But the best was about to come!...

A few tacks up the channel and just offshore from the local ferry port of Tanjung Uban, low clouds could be seen scudding overhead and that could only mean one thing, MORE wind. By now the double reefed main was a very good idea but the full jib had to be reduced. With about a turn on the furler, things were much more settled in the 35+ knots that was blowing by. At the mouth of this channel the north flowing tide was gushing out of the Selat Riau into the Singapore Straits and right into the face of the NE Monsoon. Soon the waves were standing up with some very steep faces of around 2m.

We knew it would only be sloppy for a few kilometers until we could get a little offshore. Glancing at the distance to go, 16km.

All good, but then...



All big adventures begin with a loud bang!

As the rigging loosened up and the forestay went a little soggy, never a good sign and always at the worst possible time. Fortunately before we left White Sands the Spinnaker halyard had been connected to the bow and tensioned. That was good fortune as the spare halyard was now load sharing with the jib halyard and the stainless steel forestay had given up!

Things like this happen when the most load is on. In this case, we were smack bang into sloppy waves and 35+ knots of wind.

To stabilise matters, the jib had to come down before it would flog itself to threads. To ensure the rig would remain upright, the Screecher halyard was attached to another solid bow fitting. The double reefed mainsail was furled around the boom leaving only the top 2 battens visible. Then the jib lowered and lashed down on the trampoline and the jib halyard was attached to the nose of the boat.

Throughout all that we were certain that we would never make headway against the breeze and slop but surprisingly Eepai was still moving forward at about 4-5 knots. So we pressed on but used the outboard motor to ensure that we didn't go backwards!



We pushed on, ensuring that we stayed enough offshore to sail a safe track back downhill should the engine fail. But all was good. The mishap had turned the delivery sail into more of an adventure and 2 hours later, in the dark, we slipped into the Bintan Marina entrance.

Note: You are much safer with Dyneema synthetic rigging! If you think stainless steel is good, get this! The cycle life for s/s is 100,000 cycles. Sounds like a lot until you realise the cycle life on Dyneema synthetics is 1,000,000! You are way ahead with the synthetics!

Lessons

- Always use high-specification halyards, nothing less than high quality Dyneema on all halyards.
- Attach spare or unused halyards in strategic places i.e. bow and each side of the boat.
- Never trust stainless steel! Within our fleet, we have yet to break a synthetic sidestay but in the same period of time we have had 3 stainless steel forestays give way.
- Ensure your auxiliary power is reliable and can push your boat through strong winds.

The culprit, stainless steel wire!
You can't trust stainless but you can trust Dyneema





02. Grand Lagoi

Lagoi Beach is the plaza area for Bintan and is the only 'town' area in all of Bintan Resorts. When we do overnight stays in the Marina we choose to stay here as it's one of the closest and there are shops and restaurants around the Grand Lagoi Hotel.

In July 2019 when we first explored White Sands Island the daily rate at the Grand Lagoi was S\$ 130. With the current Virus climate the room rate had shrunk to S\$ 65 inward bound and S\$ 53 when we were outbound! Bargain! There is a shuttle bus to/fro the marina but it only runs when there are guests on the ferry. All other times you will have to cab it!

03. The Easter Raid 2020

During Easter Weekend 2020 we are organising the Easter Raid to White Sands for sailors in the Singapore Corsair Fleet. The whole island has been booked and so, those who arrive by boat will be the sole occupants of the island!

For those not sailing down, the island can be reached by taking the Tanjung Pinang Ferry from Tanah Merah Ferry Terminal, Singapore. A White Sands transfer bus will deliver island hoppers from Tanjung Pinang to the White Sands jetty where a dinghy will make the transfer to the island.

There are only 10 wooden chalets and 10 yurts on the island, so island accommodation is limited. The Corsairs have a distinct advantage of being able to anchor close to shore. Deeper boats will have to anchor in 5-8 metres of water surrounding the swim platform just 100 metres from shore. Contact info@prosailasia.com for more information

