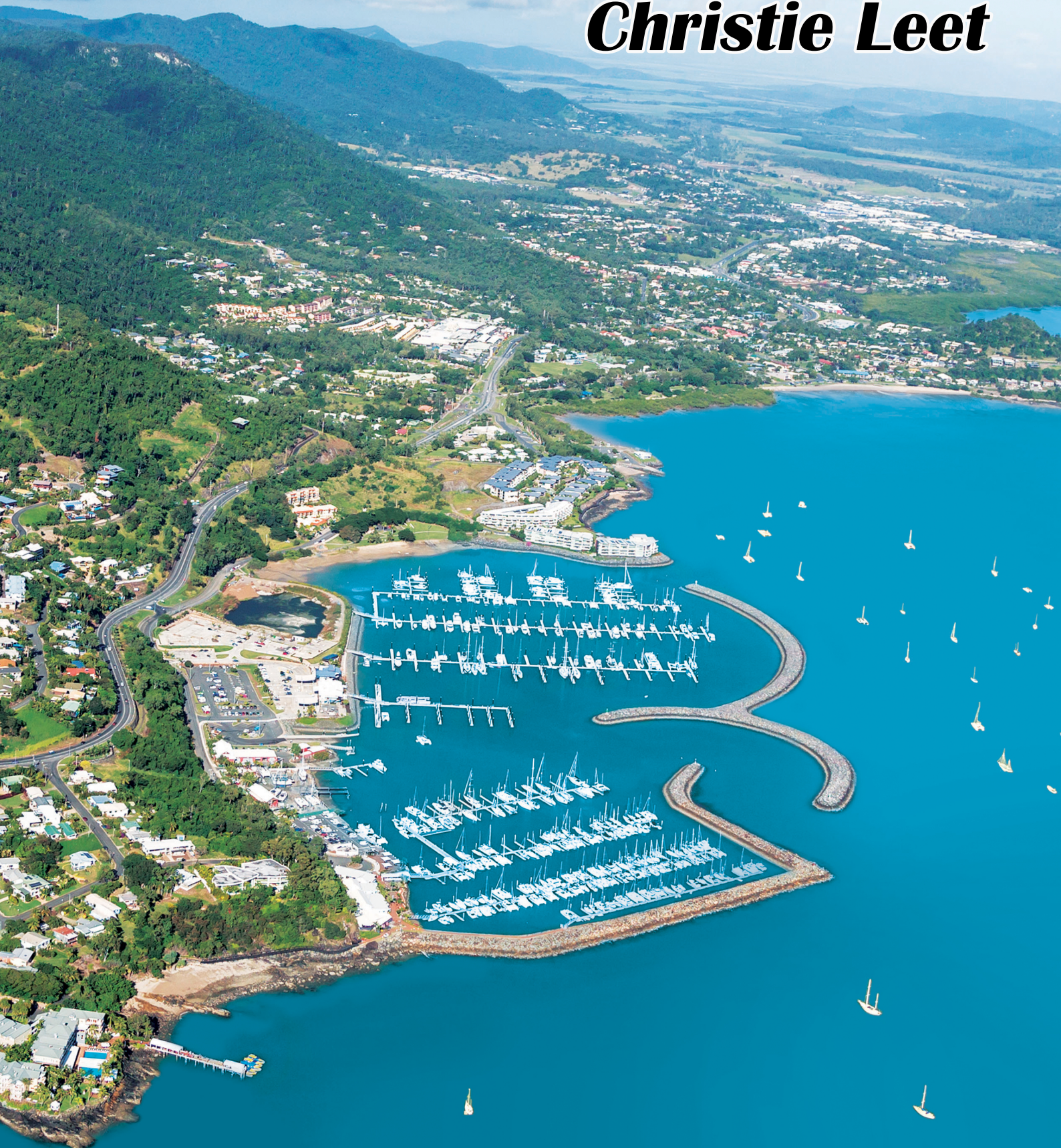


# IslandTime

**Christie Leet**





Island Time has been composed to bring you the very best of activities, while enjoying your time in the Whitsunday. Whether it is for a day or a lifetime, I want to make your stay in the Whitsundays fun, from a local's experience and perspective. My aim is to give you as many choices as possible to fill your time ranging from free activities like drag-netting for whiting with the kids, an adventure they will remember for a lifetime, to sipping champagne at the 6-star Qualia resort on Hamilton Island.

My name is Christie Leet and I have lived in the Whitsunday's all of my life. Starting with being born and raised in Proserpine on a cane farm through to now where I live on acreage with my children, Ethan, Erin, Ceyran and Kyle. We have seen the Whitsunday's develop and grow however it is delightful to see the way our area has been able to maintain it's charm and character. My business is real estate and with Rob Taylor I own PRDnationwide Whitsunday, Townsville and SPAR Whitsunday.

I have mainly focused on the places and activities you may not hear about from the travel agents and tourist operators. Don't take this to mean their information isn't valuable, quite the opposite, if used in conjunction with Island Time you can make an informed decision and truly experience all the Whitsundays has to offer.

You may be asking, "Isn't Airlie Beach on the mainland? What's with Island Time?"

Airlie Beach is on the mainland, but having lived and worked here all my life, to me the Whitsundays is one big tropical island experience. Integrating an amazing mainland hub Airlie Beach is protected by 22,000 hectares of national park and 74 tropical islands. I have strong real estate and property interest here and it never ceases to make me shiver, as I pick someone up from the airport when on their first visit to the Whitsundays. You see them convert from a stressful busy state of mind to Island Time, you can literally see their transformation, if Island Time helps you to achieve this, I will be happy.

To me, one of our key advantages is our friendliness and interaction with holiday makers from all walks of life. I deal with developers who have developed hundreds of millions of dollars worth of property. When in the Whitsundays it can be hard to tell them apart from the backpackers, although sometimes age does give them away. We are not a pretentious area, although there are plenty of 5 star experiences when you want them. Everyone will say "hi, how's your day" and don't be afraid to stop and ask for advice. My kids aren't shy and they often run up to someone, particularly when we are out at one of the islands and say something to the effect of "can I have a turn on your jet ski?", I tremor. However, the answer is generally yes and that's what we are all about, sharing the experience.

I have experienced, first hand, everything I have written about (and much more). It is from my perspective, which to a point, is influenced by my taste. I'm a simple person who enjoys the outdoors and making every day

count. My goal is simple, 'to help make your time with us, whether it is a day, a week or a lifetime as enjoyable and memorable as you choose. If you would like any further information or you may simply wish to inquire if we are going boating during your time here and if there is room for you, generally we are and there will be. Please feel free to contact me on my mobile, 0407 775 488 or by email at [christieleet@islandtime.com.au](mailto:christieleet@islandtime.com.au).

You may be wondering why there is a small charge for this information if my intent is to genuinely help you enjoy your time here. Please rest assured all proceeds (after publication expenses) are invested back into Island Time and enabling more people, world wide, to experience what my family and I are truly blessed to experience on a daily basis.



# Exercise

## Walking

If you are staying in Airlie, there are some fantastic easy foreshore walks. From the lagoon you can go left or right as you look at the ocean. Left offers a longer option, which will eventually take you to Cannonvale Beach via Abel Point marina and Shingley Beach. Cannonvale Beach is 3.25km from the lagoon; it's a very easy and predominately level, walk with spectacular views of the ocean the whole way.

On any of the foreshore walks, your distance travelled is marked every 250m by a timber post on the side of the walk. This is also very handy for those who enjoy jogging.

Along this walk, there are several nice places to stop. First is Coral Sea Resort - open to the public for a coffee or a drink. This is an absolute waterfront location with a bar and dining area (plus a 25m pool) set right on the water. At some stage, stop in at least for a drink. It is one of the best places to watch the sun go down from one of the tables right on the point. You may also notice the wedding area - not a bad place to be married either.



Next you will find Abel Point Marina. Here you will find a bar with restaurant, plus a couple of coffee shops. A lot of the tourist day boats leave from here so it's a fairly busy spot. The marina arms are generally open to the public, particularly at the northern end and it is nice to stroll along them and dream. A number of the boats have company flags flying, e.g. Cumberland Yacht Charters, their boats are available for hiring just like a resort room for as many days as you choose, to indulge yourself with. You don't need a boat licence or experience. There is a comprehensive briefing prior to your departure, assuming the weather is good (best time April to October), I guarantee you will have an amazing holiday. As you stroll along the arms looking at the boats, keep an eye out for the large mullet swimming near the hulls of the boats.

The next little stop is Shingley Beach. You will be captivated by its beauty. Again, there are a few tables and chairs and two barbecues and amenities. The local outrigger club trains from here early in the morning and late afternoon. Above the beach is Shingley Beach Resort, which has a bar and restaurant if you are hungry and thirsty.

As you continue toward Cannonvale, you will walk between two unit developments. The one on the right, Peninsula, was developed by Kevin Seymour, one of Queensland's richest men and largest private developers. There are 42 apartments and 41 of them sold within the first three months of being released to the market. This set a record at the time, with the average price achieved being \$1,400,000.

The next development is Whisper Bay, rumoured to have cost \$160 million, which caused the developer to fall into receivership. The entire 104 apartments were then sold to a developer for \$56 million and the apartments are now selling for less than half their original price. This is the development that Bob Hawke and Andrew Johns were rumoured to have bought in first time around. It was purchased from the receivers by David Marriner and a Chinese company - David's local interest also includes Hook Island Resort, Laguna Quays Resort and Island Air. David is an experienced Melbourne developer, owning four theatres (including Princess and Regent) and also the Sheraton Mirage in Port Douglas.

You will then enter another timber boardwalk and actually walk over the water toward Cannonvale. There is a lovely small sandy beach that's worth a stop. My kids play on the rocks here for hours. I used to live in Marina Shores, the apartments on the high side of the boardwalk and would often see turtles and dolphins from my

balcony. Another kilometre along the walk and you will reach Cannonvale after first going past the volunteer marine rescue and the newly established botanical gardens. At Cannonvale, you will find a stinger enclosure to enable us to swim all year round and again a number of tables and chairs and barbecues. There is also a children's play equipment area and near that a small creek my kids seem to love. Again, Cannonvale Beach is tidal and good fun focusing at low tide. At big low tides, you are able to walk out to Pigeon Island. As a family you could easily experience a great afternoon here.

If you would like to go a little further, either walking or jogging, following the path around on Beach Road and turn right when it meets Shute Harbour Road - it runs another couple of kilometres out to Centro Shopping Centre.

Let's go back to the Lagoon and see where it takes you if you turn right instead. To the right of the Lagoon, the walkway will take you across Airlie Creek out past the Sailing Club (past parkland that hosts the Airlie Beach Markets each Saturday morning) and to the Port of Airlie. On the northern end of the Port and the area's second marina is a man-made beach and stinger enclosure, which is open free of charge to the public. Located in this area is also arguably the area's most expensive real estate. The 15 lots known as the Beacons, which all sold for between \$2,250,000 and \$3,400,000 for an 800sqm allotment. At the southern end is the retail precinct of the Port, where you will find coffee shops and bars.

### **Whitsunday Great Walk**

The Whitsunday Great Walk, one of Queensland's eight Great Walks, has something for everyone and can either be accessed from the Airlie Beach end or the Brandy Creek end. The walk winds through the 22,000 hectares of the Conway National Park and is truly spectacular. If you intend to do the entire walk, which is termed a three-day walk, I would recommend starting from the Brandy Creek end as the gradient seems to be easier, having done it from both ways. Many have strolled the walk in a day so you don't necessarily have to set aside three days of your holiday unless you truly wish to fully experience this natural wonder. Should you decide to take your time, there are three camp grounds along the way and some rain water tanks for water. I have run through quite a few times and a number of friends have walked it in about seven hours. It is very undulating and can be hard work. However, I can assure you, very rewarding. The entire walk is 27km and each kilometre is marked so you can gauge where you are. Leaving from the Brandy Creek end, the first eight are all primarily down hill. Don't be fooled, though. Nature has a way of making up the difficulty. Conserve your energy as the hills are coming. I've been through the entire walk more than a dozen times. It is safe but I wouldn't recommend going by yourself. It is very hard to get lost and there is ample water along the way. You may see the odd wild pig but just observe and you will be fine. I have had to jump over a couple of carpet snakes (pythons) on the track, sunning themselves. However, I think that if this is as dangerous as it gets, we live in a pretty wonderful place.

If you're not prepared to invest that amount of time, you can still experience the National Park with shorter walks on this stretch. From the Airlie Beach end (access off Kara Crescent) there is an 8km round trip called Honeyeater Walk, which takes you to a lookout over Pioneer Bay that has to be seen to be believed. The Brandy Creek end has two shorter walks (or you can simply walk in as far as you choose and turn around). The first and shortest of these two is Kingfisher, a 2 km walk through spectacular rainforest, a real must do. The rainforest is dense, hence the walk cool and inviting. From this end, you find the first creek, which is usually flowing, just after the 4km mark and the first campsite, Repulse, at the 8km mark. Mobile phone service is patchy at best through the walk so ensure you are prepared and someone knows where you are.



There are several other mainland National Park walks. As you drive to Shute Harbour, the National Park office is located on the corner of Shute Harbour Road and Mandalay Road and they are a really helpful group. Just a couple of kilometres past the office on the right is a park and picnic area and there are a couple of short

30-minute easy walks from here. These walks are full of wildlife and we often see wild pigs and piglets on this walk.

Further toward Shute Harbour, you will see the parking for Mount Roper and Coral Beach walks. Both of these walks are a little more testing, however both are easily achievable. It's likely you will be the only person at Coral Beach, which is a lovely feeling - allow a couple of hours return for each of these.

When you get to Shute Harbour petrol station, take the left and drive to the top of the hill where, again, there is another park for walks. However, on the way up, stop at the lookout. It has magnificent views over Shute Harbour. There is a walk to Cane Cutters Beach, which is one of the area's best beaches in my opinion, particularly when you take into account its close proximity to Shute Harbour. The beach is called Cane Cutters because the local cane farmers over the years have camped there and built a number of huts just above the high tide mark. Again, this beach has ample shade, particularly in the afternoon as it is east-facing. If approaching by boat, it is best at mid to high tide as there is a fringing reef a couple of hundred metres out. We have spent lots of weekends and weeks camping here - it has a special place in our lives. The northern headland has a light marker and is called the beak, if you have a chance it is great snorkelling and spear fishing - we have enjoyed many crayfish and coral trout from this very spot.

## **Swimming**

### **Airlie Beach Lagoon**

This is open 24/7 free of charge to the public. There are lifeguards on duty and it is a lovely fun environment. In the eastern end, there are two lines that mark 50m, one up and one back. Best if you want to lap swim to go early in the morning or late afternoon, the lagoon gets pretty busy during the day. The western end is shallower and great for kids, with a toddler's pool at the far end. Kids play equipment is also at this end and the Variety Club has built a play swing.

### **Proserpine Swimming Pool**

Just a 20 minute drive into Proserpine and the local pool is a great place to visit. It is heated for winter months and also has a toddler's pool. Give them a call on 0749 455 790 as they also generally have on the weekend a large inflatable obstacle course, which my kids absolutely love. Take a good book because you won't get your kids out for many hours if it's up.

The ocean is magnificent to swim in but not between November and March, due to stingers. The stinger enclosure at the Port of Airlie beach is approx 100m long and ideal for combining laps and an ocean swim.

The Peter Faust Dam, 25km west of Proserpine is freshwater and approx 9km wide and therefore wide enough for all but the best of long distance swimmers to get a training session in.

## **Jogging**

See walking above.

## **Bike riding**

The local bike riders (have a look at the triathlon club website for group times, ([www.whitsundaytriclub.com.au](http://www.whitsundaytriclub.com.au)) ride from the beach back toward Proserpine. There are three main rides. The first is what we call the small loop, from Airlie to Proserpine and back, which is 50km. You can take the Strathdickie way to break it up. The second is the big loop, which is to Proserpine, north to the Gregory Cannon Valley turn-off (about 15km further up the highway) and then back to Airlie. This is 60km. Last, but not least, is the 100km dam ride, which is to Proserpine, ride through the main street and keep following that road to the dam. It's a great ride. On any of these rides, you will find a local bike rider, jump on the back and enjoy some local company courtesy of *Island Time*.

## Fitness Centres

There are three gyms, one in Airlie and two in Cannonvale.

*Fitness Venue Whitsunday*, adjoining the Cannonvale State School and opposite the Cannonvale Shopping Centre/Coles is where I go. It has great equipment and classes. The owner, Kerrin is a local and a real worker and her business is a credit to her. There are also two squash courts at this gym - contact 4946 7703.



*Airlie Fitness* is located at Reef Plaza near McDonald's.

*Extreme Fitness* in Waterson Way is open 24 hours – contact 4948 0340.

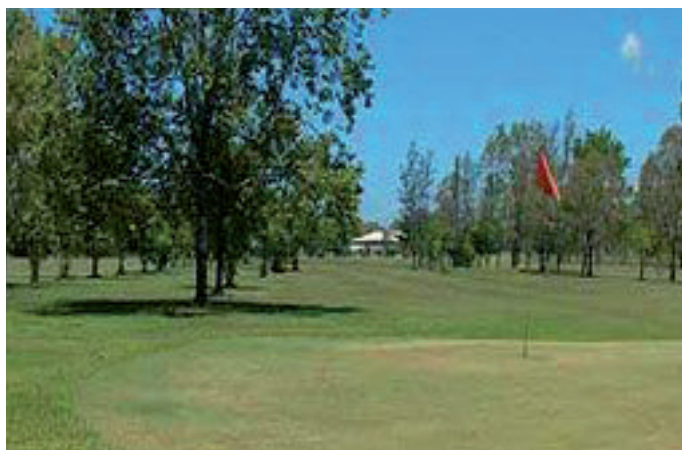
## Tennis

There are tennis courts at the Cannonvale Primary School that can be used and easily accessed via Coral Esplanade. Probably best to use these on the weekend as tennis lessons are usually on during the week. It may be worth checking here on a Thursday night to see if the social tennis is on.

## Bowls

The local bowls club adjoins the PCYC and is about 2km through Airlie Beach toward Shute Harbour. I'm not a bowler but have enjoyed several barefoot bowls nights with a great barbecue. A lovely bunch of locals who I am sure would make you feel most welcome.

## Golf



Our region has three golf courses for you to enjoy. The locals' course is at Proserpine and is an 18-hole venue. Laguna Quays a further 30 minutes south of Proserpine is a resort style course, 18 hole. Our newest course, and certainly an international standard course is the Turtle Point Golf course on Dent Island. This, as mentioned, is accessed easily via Hamilton Island and if you are a golfer a must do on your trip. Every golf course has a signature hole. Turtle Point has 18. The 19th hole, being a non golfer, is equally as spectacular with magical southerly views down the passage. A drink and a meal at the clubhouse

in itself are worth the trip to the island. For the serious golfers though, hole 14 was first holed in 1 by local Proserpine golfer Bernice Peterson (and more recently by cricketer Alan Border). See if you can equal her feat.

## Families

The Airlie Beach Lagoon is located right in the heart of Airlie Beach and provides a wonderful opportunity for every age to relax in the coolness of the Whitsundays, free of charge. The lagoon is separated by a bridge. The main lagoon to the east is about 70m long, complete with a beach and a 50m swimming line. The western end is more for the children with an area for children who can swim with varying depths and a separate toddler's pool. The lagoon is manned by a lifeguard 5am to 9pm.



The lagoon is also a fantastic place to sunbathe and read a book. It also hosts a number of complimentary barbecues and a large children's play area.

For those with teenage children, there are two skate parks for scooters and boards. One is at the PCYC, which is less than 2km through town, toward Shute Harbour on the left. More on the PCYC later. The other is just before Cannonvale on the walk mentioned earlier. This one has basketball courts next to it as well.

### **PCYC**

This fantastic facility is located approx 2km toward Shute Harbour from Airlie. It is open Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm and until lunchtime on the weekends. The PCYC has an indoor basketball court which is also used for soccer, netball and karate, A function hall capable of seating 280 together with stage and audio/visual is also available plus an art room, gym and small meeting rooms. Call (07)4948 1144.



# Day Trips

One of my favourite day trips is a drive north to the Dingo Beach, Hydeaway Bay, Montes and Cape Gloucester beaches. However, be careful as this may be expensive as you may well fall in love and never come back. The drive is about 40 minutes from Airlie - simply head toward Proserpine/Bruce Highway and 6km past Centro turn right on the Gregory/Cannonvale road - 6km later, take another right and, finally, another 6km and take another right onto the Dingo Beach road. If you get back onto the Bruce Highway you have gone 1km to far.

All beaches are lovely and all have some shopping/bar facilities, albeit modest. Dingo Beach was the first area settled and has more of an older charm to it. The long north-facing beach is simply magical. It has a stinger enclosure to enable swimming all year round. To me, sun safety and protection is critical and all of these beaches have wonderful shade trees. Dingo Beach has a number of shelter sheds and both gas and timber barbecues. Simply take an esky and enjoy your day.

Dingo Beach is very scenic at high tide, however, also comes alive at low tide. The sand goes for a long way when the tide recedes and hours can be spent for any age group, particularly kids, walking in the low tide areas. There's lots of small fish in tidal pools and crabs and other marine life under rocks.

The part closest to my heart at Dingo Beach is the Dingo Beach store and, in particular, Dooleys Bar named after my father, Dooley Leet. He was an amazing man (very active in the local Lions Club, starting both the Proserpine Harvest Fair and Dingo Beach Fun Day on the June long weekend) who spent a great deal of his spare time, like most locals, at the Dingo Beach store, talking to locals and visitors. The store has great weekend sessions in a true Whitsunday atmosphere. When you are at the bar, ask if Kev is around. He is a unique character who has lived on the beaches in this area for more than 30 years - ask him how to get a painted crayfish, you might be surprised how easy it is.

You should be able to hire a tinny (a 4m aluminium boat) at Dingo Beach - ask at the store - and this is a great fun thing to do if the weather is good. The bays to the east, Nellie's and Jonah Bay are equally beautiful and generally much more private, particularly Jonah, you may be the only person on the beach for the day. Nellie's can be accessed by car from the continuation of Pioneer Drive at Dingo Beach and is a lovely quiet alternative.

The next bay to the north is Hydeaway Bay. It is a similar beach but more of a residential suburb, although there is the Hydeaway Bay caravan park and store. Spend an extra 5 minutes and drive all of the roads in the subdivision, some of the views from the high roads are stunning. Hydeaway Bay is one of the area's few places where you can buy an absolute waterfront allotment, generally about 800sqm.

Montes is a 10 minute drive from the cul de sac at Hydeaway along a dirt road that is all vehicle accessible. Again the scenery is amazing and when you see a track to the right leading to the ocean it is worth stopping and having a look. Some of these areas are full of oysters at low tide - simply take a flat screwdriver and a butter knife, pick up a rock for a hammer and eat until your heart's content. It's legal to eat oysters picked off the rocks but not to take them home. Montes has a great bar and restaurant - ideal for lunches any day of the week and about eight cabins set right on the water. Take the time to have a fish off the beach, particularly the southern end in front of the last houses. We have caught some nice fish here.



Cape Gloucester - While this is at the end of the road it is well worth the trip. It has a beautiful beach and a great bar and restaurant to relax in. There are also (similar with Montes and Dingo Beach) a number of rooms/cabins you can stay in. Cape Gloucester has a nice pool and deck, which is great for the hot summer months with the stingers around. The locals in these areas are always up for a chat and it is a fun, friendly atmosphere. Take a walk along these beaches - you will feel like you are the first person to ever have done - so they are that natural. Cape Gloucester looks west over toward Bowen, which is 14 miles away and the lights can be seen clearly at night. Being a west-facing beach means it is also great for sunsets. You can walk along the beach to the left toward Sinclair Bay (remember hats, lotion and water). There are lots of rocky headlands to climb over.

When you are down this way on a good day, I think a must is to hire a tinny and go across to Gloucester Island and, in particular, Bona Bay, which I think is one of the best places in the Whitsundays. This is also a west-facing bay but has deep anchorage and is truly magnificent. There's lots of large overhanging trees for shade and the National Parks do a fantastic job with the camping areas (to camp, check out the national parks website [www.derm.qld.gov.au](http://www.derm.qld.gov.au)) so there are numerous tables chairs and bush toilets. At 4pm you will always find a couple of travelling yachties on the beach having a wine at sunset and are always up for a chat. You will probably also find some people skiing or tubing. Say hello and tell that Island Time suggested you ask for a go. There is a 10 minute walk from the back of the bush toilets over to the beach that faces Montes, you must do this. The track is marked by tape and beer caps. Persevere because when you get there and look back to the mainland you will think: "How good is this?"

### **Mandalay**

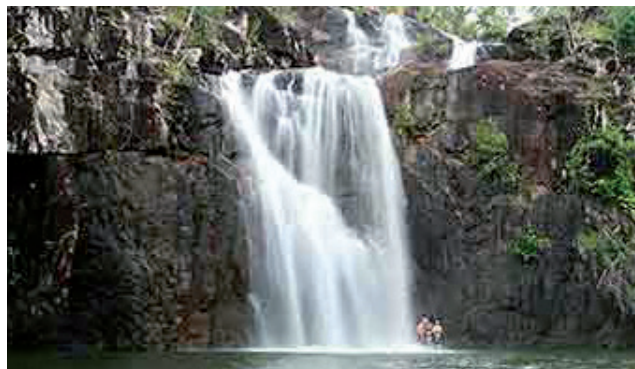
There is a lovely little beach at the end of the Mandalay area that looks straight back over Airlie Beach and to the west for the sunset, which is magical. You will find Mandalay road on the left before the big hill to Shute Harbour, approx 3km out of Airlie. Drive to the end and when you get to the roundabout you are there. It has the big pine trees on it. Just a great thing to do late afternoon. It's only five minutes away.

### **Funnel Bay**

This is our closest and easiest to access beach/bay and yet generally pretty secluded. Drive from Airlie toward Shute Harbour and when you go over the first big hill, take the first left to Jasinique Drive then the next left and drive to the beach. The road looks a little rough and daunting but you will be fine and the road and beach are for the public's use. There is a tidal creek on the eastern end of the bay, which is nice to fish in and the beach itself is 800m long. Take some insect repellent, particularly if you would like to explore the mangroves. Again, this is a tidal beach and just as much fun at low tide exploring as high tide taking in the vista. A couple of fold up chairs, beach towels and a wine would make for a magical sunset. If you have young kids and want to do a couple of outdoor days without investing a fortune I would go to one of the fishing tackle shops and buy a drag net and a couple of hand lines. On a near full incoming tide, in places like Funnel Bay, Dingo Beach, Hydeaway, Montes and Cape Gloucester, you can delight the kids by catching whiting and brim in the drag net. As locals, we get a bit complacent that these are just little fish but for many kids they may not have seen a fish this size and you can spend hours up and down the beach catching these and having the kids pull them out of the net. You can then throw them back or use them for bait on your hand lines.

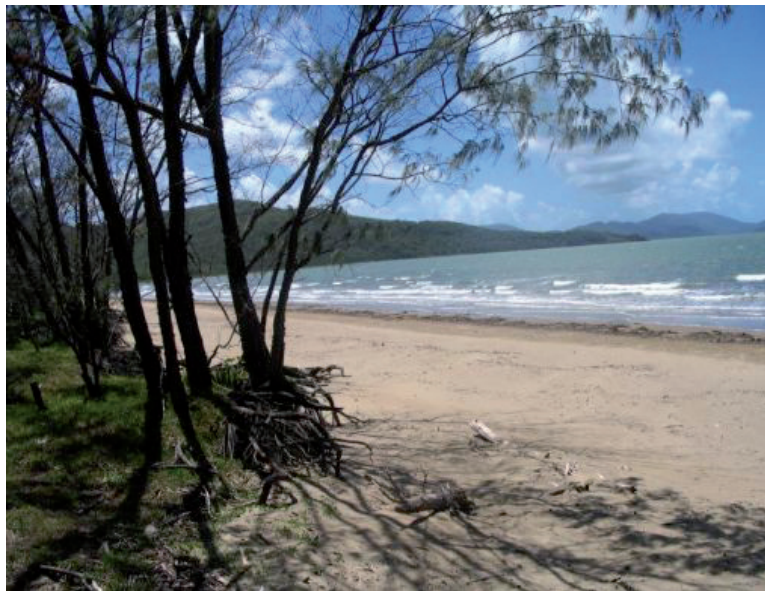
### **Cedar Creek Falls**

This is well worth a visit, particularly when the falls are flowing, which is likely between December and April, but beautiful all times of the year. Drive back toward Proserpine and take the Conway Beach turnoff at Mount Julian (the falls can be combined with a trip to Conway/Wilson's Beach for the entire day, which is quite nice and certainly a different experience). About 10km along the Conway Road, take the left to Cedar Creek Falls (it is really the only bitumen left turn) and then another 3km to a right gravel road to Cedar Creek Falls. Take plenty of water and some snacks and relax for the day. The falls can be swum in all year around and are generally nice and cool.



Please do not jump from the top as several people, including a guy I went to school with, have died doing this and others remain paralysed. You will probably see someone jumping and think it's safe. Believe me, it's not. Take the walk to the top of the falls, though, and then walk further up the creek as there are numerous rock pools and, when flowing, these become natural spas, which are beautiful. Kids love climbing the rocks and it is good safe fun. Downstream from the falls, (on the road on the way in) is also worth a look as it is often alive with small native fish and loobbies. As a family, we take a few pieces of string and meat to catch some loobbies, which the kids love.

Conway Beach is another 10 minute drive once you are back on the Conway Road and really a must do, particularly at low tide I think. There is a great little caravan park and bar called the Black Stump, which you will find if you need supplies or a chat with the easy-going locals. The beach is expansive and magnificent to walk on. As a kid, I spent most of my school holidays in this area, chasing soldier crabs (which your kids can do today) at low tide and walking for a couple of hours from Conway Beach to Wilson Beach and back. It just really is a lovely unchanged and uncommercialised part of the world and when combined with Cedar Creek Falls a great affordable (free) day for the family that you will all love. Please be sun-wise though. Nothing will spoil a holiday quicker than a bad sunburn or heat stroke - always wear a hat and carry plenty of water.



Proserpine Dam or the Peter Faust Dam is 25km west of Proserpine or a 40 minute drive from Airlie Beach. The dam is freshwater so available all year round and has a number of great activities available. The most used activity on the dam is water skiing and tubing. On the weekend, you will always find lots of people there enjoying themselves. Feel free to ask if you can have a ride. Again, the bank is improved by several shelter sheds, tables and barbecues - a great place for breakfast lunch or dinner. You will notice barramundi fishing signs throughout the region all leading back to this dam, it's alive with barramundi and catches above 1m long are reported regularly. If you don't have your own boat or experience, charters can be organised through the fishing stores in Airlie Beach and Proserpine. Another great activity is red claw fishing. Pots can be purchased from any of the fishing stores and grab some pilchards for bait and simply drop the pots near the bank in reedy areas (you will see others there) and catch yourself some great red claw for dinner or barra bait. There isn't any size or quantity restriction, so have fun.

To me, the best thing to do at the dam, either early morning or late afternoon is simply putt your boat along the bank - mainly to the south west of the boat ramp for a couple of kilometres and watch the bird life and wildlife - it is truly spectacular. Several species of birds can be found and if you drift along, you can experience these in their natural habitat. On the bank, you will see cattle and horses and sometimes wild pigs and kangaroos.

## **Proserpine River**

This is simply not to be missed and will provide the majority of holiday makers an experience they would not have come across before - it is quite unique. An organised crocodile watching tour is provided and this is a great way to see the river. If you have a little extra time and you have some limited boating experience, hire a tinny and combine crocodile spotting with mud crabbing and fishing - it's a great day. The boat ramp is found along the Conway Road, about 15km from the Mount Julian turn-off. Crab pots can be bought at the fishing stores for less than you think. Mud crabs are a real delicacy and great fun to catch. Don't worry if you don't know how to pick them up (and don't try if you don't as you may lose a finger) simply tip the males from your pot into an esky full of ice and in 10 minutes they will be asleep and easily handled. Crabs must be male (with a white v flap under their belly as opposed to a larger elongated darker flap for females) and at least 15cm across

the body. Crab measures are also available. Put the pots close to the bank and check every couple of hours. You will be surprised, there isn't any real science to it.

Now to fill in those couple of hours - why not a quiet slow cruise up the second most populated river in Queensland for crocodile spotting. It's best to see them at mid or low tide and in the cooler months when they come out to sun themselves. Just go slow as the river is tidal and you don't want to hit the bottom. There are literally hundreds of crocs in the river. You will see some and, when you do, turn your motor off and drift past them if possible. Whilst this is exhilarating, it is also quite safe and a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Take your cameras. I've watched the faces of first timers on the river on several occasions, to see a pot full of mud crabs or a 15-foot croc sliding down the bank is unique. Mud crabs are easy to cook - Google it. However, simply bring a large pot to the boil, add salt and tip the whole crab in for 15 minutes. I then put in very cold water otherwise the heat held in by the shell will overlook the meat. If this is too much trouble, call into my place and we will help cook and eat.

There is a daily sunset cruise that is a magical way to finish off your day and enjoy a glass of champagne. This leaves Abel Point Marina and is a nice treat.

## Proserpine

Take a 20 minute drive back into Proserpine and experience a beautiful country town. As you hit the highway, instead of turning left to go the 1km to Proserpine, turn right and drive about 500m to Trader Pete's Coffee plantation. Peter Phillips, or Trader as he was known, was one of the first businesspeople on Hamilton Island with Keith Williams back in the late 70s. Trader was sailing up the coast at the age of 38 after retiring in Melbourne from a successful career in retail shoe selling. He met his beautiful wife Niki, who survives him (and now does a great job of running the business) and called into Hamilton Island, the rest is history. Trader and Niki had the first charter yacht, Banjo Patterson, on the island, which later sold to Dave Hutchins and became the start of the now Fantasea Cruises. Trader Pete's is the general store on the island and several other businesses are also owned on the island now by Niki. Trader never lacked entrepreneurship and started the area's only coffee plantation, Whitsunday Gold. The processing plant is now open to the public and well worth a tour.



Proserpine is a great little town. There are several hotels with great counter meals and friendly locals. I worked for years at the Metropole hotel in the bottle shop after 5pm each day and worked at LJ Hooker Proserpine from 8am to 5pm. Business was tough so we had to make ends meet with a second job. There are a couple of really cool stores in town. Visit Colour Me Crazy down the laneway. Don't worry, you will find it - everyone knows it. I have a real soft spot for this store, perhaps because it's the only commercial property I have ever sold but more likely because Robyn is a great lady and has created a fantastic business that caters for a real niche in the marketplace.

# Clubs and organisations for visiting members and guests

## **Whitsunday Toastmasters**

Meet the second and fourth Tuesday of every month, affiliate members and/or guests most welcome [www.toastmasters69.org](http://www.toastmasters69.org)

## **Rotary club**

Meet every Monday night, affiliate members and/or guests most welcome. [www.rotaryairliebeach.com](http://www.rotaryairliebeach.com)

## **Lions Club**

There is a Lions Club in both Proserpine (meets at the RSL Club) and Cannonvale

## **Vapassna meditation**

A weekly sit every Monday night at the Neighbourhood Centre in Hazelwood Court, Cannonvale at 5.30pm - all welcome

# Local numbers of interest

Police – 4948 8888

Fire – 131 233

Ambulance – 4946 6442

# Camping

This really is still a work in progress. There are only a couple of mainland camping spots within close proximity to Airlie Beach. The Hydeaway Bay caravan park has a great camp area as does the Black Stump caravan park at Conway Beach (complete with jumping cushion and pool). There is a lovely cool camp site at Cathu National Park about an hour's drive south from Airlie Beach - it is a really different experience. It is set alongside a lovely creek and fires are allowed. It is worth driving to the top of the range, which is about another 8km (I have run it once and wouldn't recommend it as this is the only time I have been able to feel my pulse through my ears) and strolling to the lookout on the left hand side. The views are expansive and spectacular. Whenever we camp, my kids always grab a couple of packets of marshmallows and cook them over the fire with a stick - it may not be the healthiest but they have lots of fun.

There are several camping spots on the islands - most are mentioned elsewhere. Remember my favourite is Bona Bay on Gloucester Island or Henning Island near Hamilton.



# Boating

If you have your own boat or want to hire/charter one I would highly recommend purchasing 100 magic miles from the news agency. I think this is a fantastic book. The detail is amazingly accurate and you can plan a good safe time out on the water. It even goes to the extent of showing each bay and what wind direction and speed it is safe to anchor in for the night and, as boaties, we all know safe anchoring is paramount.

There is a regular weather forecast on channel 16.

If you have Internet, I get my forecast from [www.whitsunday.net.au](http://www.whitsunday.net.au). Go to weather at the top and then coastal on the right hand side, at the bottom of that page will be a three-day forecast for Bowen to St Laurence (that's us) that I find really accurate. This forecast is updated early morning (like 4.30am) and each afternoon at about 3 05.

The tidal movements are important in the Whitsundays as they make a big difference to the size of the waves/chop, particularly in the Whitsunday Passage. The tide runs out to the north and back in from the north. This means that if there is a south easterly blowing, which is our predominant breeze and the tide is going out, the tide will help reduce the chop, however as soon as it turns the chop will rise. Additionally, there can be quite a variance in the size of the tide (local tide information can be found in either of the two local newspapers - Whitsunday Times or Whitsunday Coast Guardian or (<http://www.bom.gov.au/oceanography/tides/MAPS/qld.shtml>). During small or neap tides, the passage is usually pleasant to cross up to 15 to 20knots. However, in times of larger tides and wind against tide, it can be very unpleasant. Plan your trips on the water around the tides.

Also don't forget the rule of the 12s. 1/12 of the tidal movement (e.g. not much) occurs in the hour before and the hour after the change of the tide. 2/12 occurs two hours before and two hours after. The most tidal movement, half occurs in the middle two hours and this is the time to be mindful of, particularly in times of large tides with wind against tide.

The boating options are too numerous to go through in detail and the commercial ones are probably best accessed through the local helpful travel agents. Some that you may not come across though are:

Wednesday night twilight sailing - don't stress you generally don't need your own yacht - just go to either the Whitsunday Sailing Club or Abel Point Club and ask if there are any places going for crew. A six-pack of beer and your chances are pretty good. Depending on the time of the year, the race starts from 4pm onward so probably ask after 2pm. It is a great social atmosphere and the race is in Pioneer Bay with great views of both the sunset and back over the town of Airlie Beach. I can't stress enough how great and friendly the sailors are - you must give this a go. There are several famous yachts in the Whitsundays - Hamilton Island race week in August sees many more added, including Wild Oates (Four times winner of the Sydney to Hobart, owned by the Oatley family who own Hamilton Island). Several America's Cup boats, such as Hammer of Queensland.

Be a little adventurous, weather dependent, and hire yourself a tinny and explore the Whitsundays yourself. These can be hired from Abel Point Marina, Dingo Beach and Hamilton Island. You can fish, snorkel or just go to a secluded beach to have all to yourself for the day.



# A couple of other amazing trips and experiences are:

Hire a helicopter for as little as 15 minutes and fly over Airlie, Cannonvale, the national park and Shute Harbour, this will give you a wonderful perspective of the uniqueness of our area. Stay up a little longer and ask the pilot to go down the Proserpine River and see the crocs sunning themselves on the banks.



Take a sea plane to Whitehaven Beach. It is a magnificent sense of arrival, flying over the island, seeing Hill Inlet and the white silica sands of Whitehaven. The pilot lands in the water and noses the plane up on the beach and organises you a lovely picnic.

As part of the Whitehaven flight or separately, go a little further to the world renowned heart reef and fly down the “river” over the Fantasea pontoon and see one of the seven natural wonders of the world clearly from the air.

Don't miss whale watching in the winter months - the humpback whales and their calves are generally plentiful in our waters and you would be unlucky not to see one. We have stopped for hours and watched them frolicking. We have come back from the reef fishing on a glass out calm day and had to take the boat off autopilot because there were too many whales on the surface.

## Some of the places I would recommend within close proximity:

Pioneer Rocks - can be seen from Airlie Beach and is well worth a fish. There is good fringing reef for coral trout and a lot of the areas mackerel are caught here.

The next little island around is Almora Rock, once again good for mackerel or trout. I have done lots of snorkelling from the rock south to Coral Beach - there are coral bommies every 50m or so all the way to Coral Beach.

If you go to the left when leaving Abel Point Marina, the first headland is Bluff Point and at the bottom right hand side there is a tidal creek that is well worth a look and worth dropping a couple of crab pots. The crabs aren't usually plentiful but they are big. It is tidal so access slowly and only at mid tide and above and make sure you are out in time.

Double Cones are the islands due north from Airlie Beach and are also a great trip on a nice day. Lots of mackerel are caught on the southern tip.

There is some good fishing from the mainland though. Lots of big barra have been caught from the Abel Point Marina wall - lots. The public pontoon next to the boat ramp is also worth a fish with the kids, as is the fishing pontoon at Shute Harbour.

In the wetter months, prawning is also good fun. Most of the locals go to New Beach, which is a short boat trip across the bay from Conway Beach. Ask around for one of my favourite fishing mates, Mayor Marco (officially

known as Mario Demartini, the ex-mayor). Marco has fished, crabbed and prawned the area more than most and is a delightful guy. When we originally launched the Whisper Bay development, Bob Hawke came up and spoke at the opening and introduced Mario as Marco - Marco has sort of stuck with me ever since. Mario is from a long established local family and his wife Gloria has been an amazing contributor to the community, including decades at the local kindergarten and community organisations. Ask Mario about his reddie hole at Pinnacle Point - you never know, you might have more luck than I do with him sharing his spots.

For some really good fishing tips, go and see Kevin Collins at Fish Divine at the bottom end of town or Bob Spears at the boating and tackle shop next to BP.

A popular yet different way to visit the islands is by kayak. These are either for hire or you can do a group tour. If you hire one yourself, you can camp on the island. The camping equipment can also be hired. Call Salty Dog Kayaks 4946 2388.

## What's on in the Whitsundays

Most months there is a major event in the Whitsunday's and there is nothing more frustrating than holidaying somewhere and missing something special. I remember being in Sydney on the weekend of the City to Surf, which I only found out about when the race started. At the time (I have since enjoyed a run in it) it was on my list of 100 things to do. The best way to keep track in the Whitsundays is to visit [www.tourismwhitsundays.com.au](http://www.tourismwhitsundays.com.au) and click on the events calendar.

### Triathlon

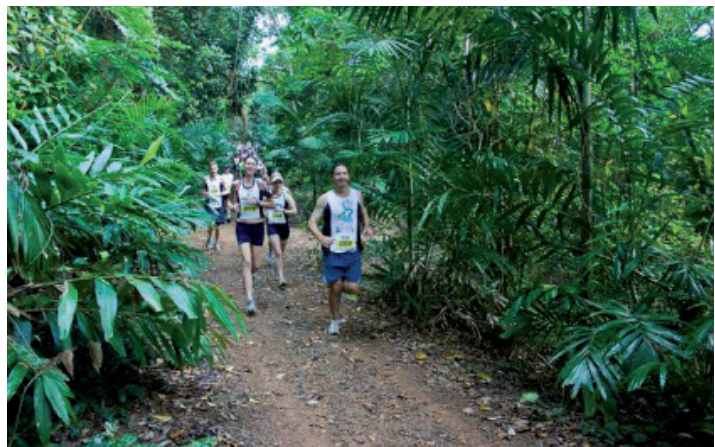
The local triathletes run two triathlons each year plus there are also several regional races in Mackay and Bowen. The Airlie Beach triathlon is usually on late August-early September on a Sunday. It is a sprint distance triathlon (750m/20km/5km) great scenic course and well supported by a strong local cheer squad. There is a junior triathlon on the day before with the kids swimming in the lagoon.

### Hamilton Island triathlon

Another world class event. Also a sprint distance but the hills make it a little more challenging. The upside is that we swim along Catseye Beach in front of the resort and part of the three-lap cycle course is approx 4km on the airport runway. There is often training and coaching attached to the event in November and a fabulous Whitehaven swim on one of the world's most picturesque beaches. There is a 750m and 2km race - come along and see if you can beat Ky Hurst's record.

Hamilton Island also runs a half marathon in May, which, if you are a runner, must be done. Fantasea offers a great rate for the transfers for the day. The course is a mixture of road running and track running and tough. The views are outstanding - wait until you get to the top of Passage Peak or down to South Head - as good as anywhere in the world. I usually take an hour and 40 minutes for a half marathon but have to add almost another hour for the Hammo half.

The Mackay road runners also open the Great Walk in September for a spectacular trail run. It is tough but really well organised. Steve Jackson won the race the first four years but his record was broken in 2011 and a chap from Sydney won in under two hours. My record is 3:05.





# News

There are two local weekly newspapers, the *Whitsunday Coast Guardian*, which comes out on a Wednesday morning and the *Whitsunday Times* on Thursday morning. Both can be found in the newsagents and most general stores.

# Markets

Each Saturday morning from about 7am on the foreshore and near the sailing club are the Airlie Beach Markets. Generally, more than 100 stalls are full of fresh local produce and local knick knacks. For something special, treat yourself to a camel ride along the beach and make sure you have a happy shot taken with Double Cones in the background.



# Library



There is a great Council library in the Centro Shopping Centre complex, just next to the front service station. Temporary membership is available. And also a library in Proserpine, located behind the Entertainment Centre.

There is also a great little second hand book store near the lagoon called Leah's book exchange with literally thousands of books at really good prices and the ability to take them back and exchange for a small cost.

# Our islands

Wow where to start?

There is an island experience for everyone - from a secluded area where you are unlikely to see another person for a week to the 6-star luxury experience at Qualia on Hamilton Island.

Eight islands are inhabited and on these there are 10 island resorts. Their websites are following - this is the easiest way for you to obtain information. We could fill 10 of these magazines just on the island resorts alone.

## **Hayman Island – [www.hayman.com.au](http://www.hayman.com.au)**

Make sure you go to Blue Pearl Bay - it boasts some of the best diving and snorkelling in the Whitsundays. There are also a number of walks on the island, including one to Blue Pearl. Also a trip to Bali Hi - an amazing sand spit island, particularly for sunset, is a must. Hayman is surrounded by quality coral so snorkel, snorkel, snorkel. This island resort is consistently recognised as one of the top island resorts in the world - usually in the top four.



## **Hook Island Resort – [www.hookislandresort.com](http://www.hookislandresort.com)**

The island resort is approx 14 acres on an island of thousands of acres of national park. Again, the island has quality coral everywhere. In fact, the next bay to the north is the start of amazing snorkelling, which really runs around the island to Stonehaven Bay (about 25 km away). Jump in anywhere on this coastal strip for amazing coral.

## **South Molle Island Resort – [www.southmolleisland.com.au](http://www.southmolleisland.com.au)**

This is a north-facing bay so usually totally calm for 10 months of the year and very beautiful. Growing up, we spent most of our island time at South Molle and I believe it has kept its character today. The island has a great central 25m pool and a nice nine-hole golf course.

## **Daydream Island Resort - [www.daydreamisland.com](http://www.daydreamisland.com)**

The area's closest island and known for its spa and relaxation centres. It also has a really cool outdoor movie theatre.

## **Club Crocodile Long Island Resort - [www.clubcroc.com.au](http://www.clubcroc.com.au)**

This is the first of three resorts on Long Island. This is the sister resort to Club Crocodile resort on the mainland (which has a really cool pool for the kids). The walk along the jetty from the boat drop-off is fantastic, with a beautiful sandy beach and a great tropical resort atmosphere. There is a 2km walk over to Palm Bay to fill in some time through the rainforest.

## **Peppers Palm Bay.**

The resort is currently closed, which is a real shame as it is a quality piece of Whitsunday paradise. There are 21 privately owned bures, mostly on the waterfront and 15 privately owned blocks of land.

## **Paradise Bay – [www.paradisebay.com.au](http://www.paradisebay.com.au)**

This resort has won numerous environmental and eco resort awards. It has recently changed hands and boasts 10 exclusive cabins on the water.

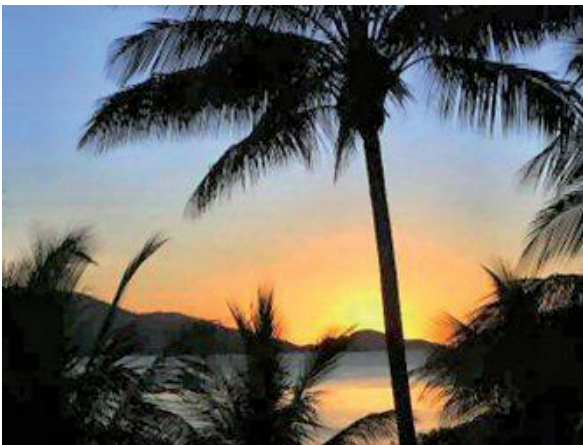
## **Hamilton Island – [www.hamiltonisland.com.au](http://www.hamiltonisland.com.au)**

The website is comprehensive so visit and see the activities. When you arrive, go to the main resort area and get a copy of the weekly activities guide - it is full of great daily activities almost every hour, the majority of which

are complementary. Make sure at least one day to enjoy a cocktail at sunset at One Tree Hill, it will be in the guide and not to be missed. Personally, I think you must walk to Passage Point - simply look up, it's the highest point on the island and the views are amazing. It is a couple of hours hard walk in total but stopping at the top will make the journey worthwhile. Call in to the gymnasium, they are a great bunch of guys and girls and will tell you all about the outdoor activities, including the extensive walks on



the island. They also do really cool stuff like social tennis and social running and a buggy rally - they are good people. If you have children (or to satisfy the little child on the inside) go to the main resort building and take a ride in one of the elevators - the glass elevator enables you to see the entire passage on the way up and down and is certainly a view not to be missed. Opposite the gym, there is a great tropical pool with waterfall, which my kids love. It is great as there is a nice bar on the pool and the beach is right there. The main resort pool is one of the largest in the southern hemisphere and has a really cool wet bar in the middle. The Island was developed in the early 80s by Keith Williams (who developed Sea World on the Gold Coast and later Port Hinchinbrook at Cardwell). One of the earliest buyers was George Harrison of the Beatles, with a spectacular 5 acre home site. In the Harbour you can hire a tinny and explore yourself. An absolute must is a visit to Henning Island, described below.



#### **Club Med Lindeman Island.**

Unfortunately this lovely resort has been closed but it has recently sold for \$12million and we would expect it to reopen in 2012.

In addition to these, there are only three other islands with any type of residential improvements. In total, we boast 74 Islands so that leaves an awful lot of Islands in their National Park status for your quiet exploration. The other three are Titan Island, a small island of approx 1 acre located between Hamilton Island and Dent Island which is improved by a single home that almost occupies the entire island. Dent Island boasts the Hamilton Island

Golf Course, which is truly spectacular on the eastern side of the island (even if you're not a golfer, take time to visit - have a drink at the club house - it is amazing, you won't be disappointed - a transfer leaves Hamilton Island hourly). Last, but not least, is Farrier Island - again a small island located at the southern end of the Whitsundays so geographically isolated but truly magnificent. Farrier has a large, privately owned home and seven units on a company share arrangement.

# Now for the rest

Whitehaven Beach is a must - it's the beach you see in all of our marketing with that beautiful white sand and consistently recognised as one of the top beaches in the world. You can camp at the southern end of Whitehaven and if you have the opportunity, you should - waking up on one of the best beaches in the world is pretty cool, particularly as it is east-facing and you experience one of the best sunrises in the world. From the camping area, there are a couple of nice walks - one to a southern lookout, the other a little longer to Chance Bay, which



is also beautiful, particularly when a northerly is blowing as it is a south-facing bay and in those times dead calm. I have seen lots of whales in the winter months while sitting on the beach at Chance Bay. There is a lookout at the northern end of Whitehaven Beach. If possible, walk up (about 15 minutes each way) at low tide, this is the time to see the sands of Hill Inlet, which are amazing. As you walk along the beach, look into the water as it is alive with marine life. The dark shapes you will generally see everywhere are stingrays. My kids love watching them from

the nose of our boat as we cruise along the beach. If you have your own boat, a slow trip up Hill Inlet (take your crab pots if you can) is beautiful - there is a channel to follow and best on a rising tide as it can be shallow. There is also a little rock off the middle of Whitehaven, worth dropping a line or trolling for a mackerel.

Across Solway Passage is another famous beach, Chalky's, as the sand is as white as chalk. It's every bit as nice as Whitehaven, we think, with a couple of extra benefits. It is generally less populated so you can find a quiet tree to yourself and it has a good fringing reef for snorkelling off the beach. Also, it is the place to be for sunset. We often go here in the morning to get the shade then across to Whitehaven later in the day for the afternoon shade.

There are lots of commercial boats to take you to these and lots more - simply check with your travel agent. There are also a couple of operators who will drop you on a beach (mainly of your choice, however, listen to their recommendations) for camping. And if you have your own boat, don't forget to get 100 Magic Miles.

Other really nice places to visit are Sid Harbour on the opposite side of Whitsunday Island to Whitehaven. It still takes my breath away each time I enter this natural Harbour, particularly from the Hamilton Island end, it's amazing. There are a number of beaches in the Harbour all west-facing so beautiful for happy hour sunset drink (this is one of the area's safest anchorages so lots of yachties on the beach from 4pm onward who are always happy for you to say hello), all of which are connected by really nice walking tracks. There is also a lovely (generally unoccupied) beach on the southern tip of Cid Island itself.

Henning Island is found just off the northern tip of Dent Island and the beach on the north-western end has to be visited. Approach from the west near the rocks as this is where it is deepest. It is a beautiful beach - so close to Hamilton yet a million miles away. Camping with a permit is allowed, which is great because Hamilton is only five minutes away if you need some supplies or a splash of civilisation.

There are two islands close to the mainland, North Molle and Mid Molle, that have lovely isolated beaches and are definitely worth visiting. The beach on North Molle, in particular, is tidal. We have been carried away

having fun on the beach and our boat has gone aground - I was complaining to a friend who then rightfully said that there were probably 7billion other people in the world who would be delighted to be stuck for six hours on a Whitsunday island – it's all about perspective.

A trip down Long Island sound has to also be on your list if you have a boat or if you hire a tinny. You can call in to Club Croc or Peppers. There are two bays on the mainland side that have creeks that not many visit - if you had the opportunity to, with your crab pots, it would be worthwhile.

To be honest, you don't even have to go that far for a bit of fun in your hired tinny. The three Islands off Shute are all worth a fish, particularly the southern most one. You will easily find the passage in the reef between it and the mainland - it's close to the island, simply anchor in the channel and catch a few lippers.

## Things to watch out for

I don't think much can go wrong for you in Island Time. Perhaps I'm too casual, the crime rate is very low so I seldom lock my car or house and I'm generally comfortable letting the kids play mostly unsupervised while I enjoy a book.

Be careful with the sun, particularly in summer. A bad dose of sunburn will spoil your time with us. Wear a hat and use plenty of lotion and sit under a tree. Drink plenty of water and don't get heat stroke.

Marine stingers can be prevalent November to April, particularly January to March - we mostly still swim particularly if the tide is going out and there isn't a wind rolling waves (and therefore stingers) onto the beach. There is an element of risk in this, though, so be your own judge. Stinger suits are readily available for hire and protect against stingers and the sun - not a bad combination.

Sand flies really get me - I usually don't notice them until the next day when I'm covered in bites. When you're on the beach, use some repellent, particularly in the morning, late afternoon and if it is raining. March flies can be bad (and that's an understatement) generally only November/December but on the odd other occasion. I have found Bushman repellent to be best for these - if you don't have this, sit in the water.

### Who's house is that?

The most talked about and asked about house is the Tuscany house on the point at Mandalay. The house sits on one acre and is rumoured to have cost north of \$20 million to build. It is owned by Neil and Denise Murray, who are now more passive investors, however played a significant part in the Australian boating industry with their ownership of both Princess Yacht and later Sunseeker yachts. The home has its own marina. This house forms part of the old Mandalay Coral Gardens - previously five acre waterfront property where dive training was available (this is where I got my ticket) and where my ex real estate partner Bruce Goddard, started the area's first bareboat charter business with a 23-foot Hood in the late 70s.



Looking up and in the same direction you may see the home on top of the hill. This belongs to Boss Hog, Don Algie, the founder of Hog's Breath restaurants in Australia and, more recently, Jamaica Joes in Australia. Don has been very successful with both chains and the first restaurants of each in Australia opened here in Airlie Beach.

Above Coral Sea is Airlie Beach's most expensive home owned by John Longhurst. John paid \$10.3 million for the land and then was rumoured to have spent something similar on the home. John developed Dreamworld and has held an interest in the Logan Hyperdome during most of his business career. His son Tony is known for his racing car ability.

One of the area's largest residential properties is a 3000-acre parcel just north of Airlie Beach known as Woodwark Bay. This site was owned by Japanese development company Kumigiami and had a previous approval for approximately 10,000 houses and units. In the late 90s, it was purchased by Jodi Rich of Onetel and now has a magnificent home and a small number of waterfront bungalows, which are available for holiday stays.

Many of you may remember the wonderful gift of life Kerry Packer's helicopter pilot Nick Ross gave to Kerry by donating one of his kidneys. Nick lives in the hinterland.

Another really interesting property is Australia's only airpark - Wave. This is the mainland's coastal airport and is improved with about 80 residential lots accessed off the runway where an owner can land their plane and drive straight into their hanger and go upstairs to their home. The Whitsundays is an area of diversity - either a beautiful waterfront apartment with your boat at the front on your own marina finger or your home with your jet below.

## If you are wishing to go just a little further

**Bowen** is a fantastic day trip, less than an hour from the Whitsundays. You will notice the wide street as you enter the town. Rumour has it that Bowen was once set to be the capital of North Queensland. The beaches at Bowen on the mainland are spectacular, they are a real must. There is a lovely cafe at Horseshoe Bay that is just opposite the beach. The rocks on this headland are great for the kids to climb on and you can walk around to Queens Beach but be careful with the kids as there is a nudist beach halfway around.



As you enter Bowen, you will see the big hill and again there is a lovely cafe up on top called 360 Degrees. The Summer Garden movie theatre is also in Bowen and has two screens and is usually playing the latest movies.

We have business interests in Townsville so have spent time there recreating also. It's probably more than a day trip, just over three hours each way. The Strand is magnificent, it has approx 2.5km of foreshore walk, with a pool and water park at one end and a man-made rock pool all-tide swimming area at the other. The water park is fantastic for kids - lots of water activities and a great big water bucket.

High above the Strand is Castle Hill. At night, the views are spectacular over all of Townsville. During the day, the road and the track, commonly known as the goat track, are really popular with bike riders (road only) runners and walkers.

Palmer Street is known by the locals as the dining and coffee set of Townsville. It has a great feel. A must do with kids, I think, is a visit to the barra farm out past Kirwan. Just arrive mid morning or late afternoon – admission, which is very reasonable, includes your rod and bait and just catch barra after barra. They skip across the water just like on TV. The hooks are barbless so the fish are easy to unhook and throw back in, I assure you your kids will have an amazing time.

On the way, you drive past the Thuringowa water park called Riverway. A lovely big pool and other activities for the kids to do.

**Magnetic Island** is also well worth a visit. You can either catch the ferry over or take your car on the barge. The island is completely different to the Whitsunday islands - less tropical but the natural rock formations and beaches are spectacular. You can hire a mini moke and explore the island at your leisure or enjoy a meal, at the opposite end of the scale, at a 5-star restaurant at one of the new resorts. There is a swim from Magnetic Island to Townsville/the Strand each July - a great test for you.

**Townsville** is also home to some really cool sporting events and teams. If the Cowboys are playing at Dairy Farmers Stadium, you just go - the atmosphere is amazing. Similar with the Townsville Crocs, the local basketball team, playing next to the casino. Cluden racecourse is also a great day, particularly if one of the teams are then playing that night.

### **Mackay and surrounds**

Mackay is closer, about one hour and 45 minutes, and has great shopping and movies. There is a great water park near Canelands in the centre of town. The Mackay hinterland, mainly Eungella National Park, is spectacular. It is at the top of the range so always cooler and home to the local platypus.



# For those wishing to stay a little longer

Many of the locals that you see and will meet started just like you, as a holiday maker who became captivated by our area's beauty and people and decided to stay a little longer. I have lived in the Whitsundays all of my life and I'm often asked why.

*Some of the reasons are:*

It is a magnificent place to raise a family. By this I mean the health system, either the local doctors or Proserpine Hospital are first rate and your child's entry into the world will be smooth. The schooling is grand and has several options. There are now a number of both public and private kindergartens. There are four primary schools to choose from and two, moving to three, high schools. Universities are in Mackay and Townsville plus other major centres. So health and education, critical to most, are catered for. To me, safety is also important - I rarely lock my car or my house, many say I am game and will get caught shortly but I'm not sure. I trust people and it just seems to work out for me. The kids can walk to school by themselves or play on the beach by themselves, it's a nice feeling.

The Whitsundays is also a great place to grow a career. While we may only have a small population, many of our population have come from the south, many after successful careers and bring those skill sets and attitudes with them. There is no doubt in my mind that if you do the right thing and do your best to exceed your customers' expectations - you will be rewarded.

We are accessible - I can be in Brisbane for the day or take a direct flight to either Sydney or Melbourne. We have three airports - Hamilton Island, Whitsunday Coast and Mackay. Air travel is convenient and inexpensive.

The shopping in the Whitsundays is considerably better than may first appear. All of the majors are here and most tastes catered for. If you would like a different retail experience, Mackay is less than two hours away.

Last, but not least, is the lifestyle, which really ties in to all of the above, particularly the first. There is little to no traffic - how much time in the day does that save you? Time better spent with your family. There isn't any hassles and bustle, pushing and shoving on the street, more of a pleasant hello. There is so much to do and experience with your friends and family - yes we have great coffee shops to spend a Sunday morning but many choose to go out and do things, creating memories that their children and loved ones will remember for a lifetime. I remember one Sunday morning picking up my friends Colin and Kim - we launched our boat, checked our crab pots, got three muddies on the way to South Molle Island to collect Colin's sister. We saw whales in the passage on our way to Mackerel Bay. We started a fire, or perhaps Colin did as fires weren't allowed on the beach and put a pot of salt water on to cook the crabs. I went for a quick spear fish and got a trout and a cray fish. So for lunch, on a beautiful deserted Whitsunday beach we had mud crab, fresh trout and crayfish. Colin and I have formed a lifelong friendship, quite possibly as a result of that typical Whitsunday day.





# The Whitsunday's future

A really topical issue, and rightfully so, is what will the Whitsunday mainland look like in 10 or 20 years. To my mind, not much different to how it is today. The Whitsundays are surrounded by two national parks - the 22 000 hectare Conway National Park at the rear and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park on the foreground. In between there is a thin slither of land capable of being developed. The coast, from the Centro Shopping Centre to Shute Harbour has a current population of 8,000 and our research shows there is a likely maximum of a further 8,000 properties can be developed within this area. At an average of 2.5 persons per house, this is another 20,000 people. Recent experience has shown that development sites are being developed with less density than the maximum possible, so this figure is very much the top end.

To really emphasise the point, look at the area from a helicopter, light plane or from the water. Particularly at night time, as I do, cruise along the coast, say from Hamilton Island back to Abel Point Marina - all that you notice is darkness.