

Great Barrier Reef

Cairns and Tropical North Queensland, Australia



The Great Barrier Reef, a breathtaking world of intense colours. Inset: Colourful reef fish.

There are many curious facts about the Great Barrier Reef...

Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef is the only living organism on Earth which can be seen from Outer Space. Australia's Great Barrier Reef stretches for 2000 kilometres along the Queensland coast.

- Coral reefs have been present on earth for over 240 million years.
- Reefs are found where seawater temperatures range from 18-33°C.
- Coral reefs are made up of limestone cases, each surrounding the body of an anemonelike coral polys.
- The reef is made up of over 2500 individual coral reefs containing around 400 species of coral.
- More than 2000 species of fish live in reef waters.

■ Many coral reef fishes live in just one habitat. Some are territorial and defend their breeding, sleeping and feeding areas against other fish of the same species.

■ Most fishes are active during daytime but some groups are night feeders.

■ Giant clams shut too slowly and jerkily to trap a human foot.



Hastings Reef

■ This reef has an abundance of colourful tropical fish, small caves and tunnels to explore. Hastings is a popular reef for scuba divers.

Spur, Norman and Saxon Reefs

■ This group of reefs is almost opposite Port Douglas. As these three reefs are quite a distance they are usually dived with two or three-day outings from Cairns. The reefs feature caves decorated by huge sea fans and branches of black coral are found around the reefs. Millions of small tropical fish inhabit the shallow sandy areas of these reefs.

Elford, Moore, Milln & Thetford Reefs

■ Visited by one-day dive operators, these reefs feature a number of pretty coral gardens, small caves and drop-offs. Small tropical fish life is plentiful.

Sudbury Reef

■ The closest reef to Fitzroy Island, this reef has a sand cay on the northern end. Sudbury has numerous tropical fish, large sea fans, some black corals and drop-offs.

Upolu Cay

■ This cay is a naturally formed sand island and features crystal blue waters and pristine white coral sand. Coral reefs fringe the cay which is inhabited by myriad of sea creatures of every imaginable shade and size.

Agincourt, Crispin and Opal Reefs

■ The most popular reefs from Port Douglas due to their all - weather anchorage and abundance of colourful soft and hard corals and tropical fish. This area has shallow and deep water dropoffs along with coral gardens, tunnels and caves.



Pinnacle Reef

■ Located north off Green Island, this reef has a large variety of fish and coral formations. Some of the species of fish include black-tipped reef sharks, coral trout, spangled emperor, batfish and sweetlip.

Oyster and Arlington Reefs

■ Oyster and Arlington are shallow, clearwater reefs. Featuring an abundance of tropical marine life, both destinations cater for the novice snorkeller through to the experienced diver.



There are numerous operators who offer day trips to the Great Barrier Reef. For further information go to the tours and activities section and follow the links .

www.cairnsmagazine.com.au

