

WHITSUNDAYS FACTS AND FIGURES

- In geological time perhaps 110 million years ago, the Whitsunday islands were born out of a series of raging volcanoes and a violent realignment of the earth's plate tectonics. They are not coral atolls but 'continental' islands, part of the so-called Great Escarpment of the Great Dividing Range drowned by the waters of the Coral Sea after the most recent ice age.
- Captain Cook first sailed through the Whitsundays on the 4th of June 1770. Cook named the area after the day he sailed through, 'Whitsunday', the seventh Sunday after Easter, though he failed to account for the international date line, so it really should have been 'Whit-Monday'! Each year the residents of Airlie Beach celebrate The Blessing of the Fleet on Whit Sunday.
- There are 74 Islands in the Whitsundays. Of the 74, only two currently have operating resorts - Hamilton Island and Palm Bay, on Long Island, which has self-contained beach bures. Most of the islands are completely uninhabited.
- The Whitsundays is the largest group of offshore islands in Australia.
- The Whitsundays is 70 per cent National Park.
- Even geologists cannot be sure where the silica sand on Whitehaven Beach comes from although there are several unproven theories. One theory even includes a sunken volcano.
- Whitehaven Beach is classed as one of the top five beaches in the world. The fine sand particles are also great for polishing jewellery (not so great for cameras though!).
- The Whitsundays are situated on the same latitude as Rio de Janeiro and Tahiti, and therefore the Whitsundays enjoys a tropical climate with daily temperatures varying little from month to month. The days are warm year-round and evenings are sultry in summer but cooler in the winter, requiring only a light jacket or sweater. The region enjoys an average of 274 sunny days per year.
- The average water temperature in the Whitsundays is 26°C.
- The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is the largest coral reef system in the world, covering 344,000 km² in area. It is approx. 2,300 km in length and varies from 60km to 230km wide.
 - There are 2,900 reefs, 600 continental islands and 300 coral cays
 - Only 6 per cent of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park consists of coral reefs – the rest is made up of sea grass, mangroves, sand, algal and sponge gardens, inter-reefal communities and other habitats
 - It is home to approx. 1,500 species of fish, 360 species of hard coral, one third of the world's soft corals, 5,000 – 8,000 species of molluscs, 400-500 species of marine algae, 600 species of echinoderm (eg. Starfish), 17 species of sea snakes, 22 species of sea birds, 13,000 dugong, 6 species of marine turtles (all listed as threatened), 30 species of cetaceans (eg. whales and dolphins)
 - Heart Reef off the Whitsunday coast in the Great Barrier Reef is a natural formation of coral

And some random facts...

- Colonies of the endangered Proserpine Rock Wallaby have settled on Hayman Island & Daydream Island.
- Whitsunday Ferry Services (Cruise Whitsundays) travel 341,400km per year = 8.5 times round the earth's circumference.
- The Proserpine River has the highest density of crocodiles on the east coast of Australia.
- The tide range in the Whitsundays averages 4 metres, about 60 per cent of Broad Sound, which is the highest on the Australian East Coast.
- The blue colour of the water in the Whitsundays is caused by fine particles of suspended siliceous sediment reflecting light.
- Our Whitsunday Island should not be confused with Pinaki in the Tuamotu group, also named "Whitsunday Island" by Samuel Wallis in 1767.
- The Whitsunday islands are an important calving ground for humpback whales between June and September each year.
- Over 1,500 couples get married in the Whitsundays every year.

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FOR MEDIA ENQUIRIES, CONTACT:

Deborah Friend – PR & Communications Specialist

PH: (07) 4948 5917 M: 0417 765 736 E: pr@tourismwhitsundays.com.au