



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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New festival of sailing for the Whitsundays

The Whitsundays' reputation as a world-class sailing destination is riding high with Airlie Beach to be a host port for the Clipper Round the World Yacht Race in 2018.

Tourism and Major Events Minister Kate Jones said the carnival was expected to attract more than 4000 visitors to the Whitsundays and generate more than \$3 million for the local economy.

"The Whitsundays is a jewel in our tourism crown so for it to be confirmed as a host port for the Clipper Round the World Yacht Race is another significant achievement," she said.

"We all know the impact of Tropical Cyclone Debbie on this community but we also know the resilience and determination of the people and businesses in the Whitsundays."

Airlie Beach will host the 12 yachts, their skippers and their international crew and supporters as the final stop of the Australian leg of the race, but the stopover will be complemented by a festival set to include a large scale welcome event, a regional rodeo and a spectacular lunch on the iconic Whitehaven Beach.

Under the deal, which has been signed off in England by the event's legendary founder Sir Robin Knox-Johnson, the entire fleet of the Clipper Race will stopover in the Whitsundays in January for the week-long Whitsunday Clipper Race Carnival.

Ms Jones said the carnival was supported by Tourism and Events Queensland.

"The Whitsunday Clipper Race Carnival is an ideal way to remind the world that the region is open for business and will continue to be a favourite destination for sailing enthusiasts and nature lovers.

"We look forward to hosting the skippers and their crew, as well as family, friends and supporters of the race in Airlie Beach, providing some welcome respite and showing off the best of what Queensland has to offer."

Tourism Whitsundays CEO Craig Turner said the region would embrace the carnival.

"Tourism Whitsundays, in conjunction with Whitsunday Regional Council and Tourism and Events Queensland, is pleased to be able to announce the welcome return of the Clipper Round the World Yacht Race to the Whitsundays," Mr Turner said.

“The economic contribution to the region, as a result of the sailors and their families coming here, will be significant and it will be a great opportunity to showcase the Whitsundays as a sailing destination to the whole world.”

Legendary yachtsman and founder of the Clipper Race, Sir Robin Knox-Johnston, who was the first person to sail solo, non-stop around the world in 1968-69, said the Whitsundays was the perfect host port for the race.

“The Whitsundays was an extremely popular stopover port during our last race, for the crew, supporters, and the Clipper Race team alike,” he said.

“A truly stunning location for our crew members and partners, and a perfect place to really relax and unwind midway through our intense race route.

“Being a Clipper 2017-18 Race Host Port will not only enable the Whitsundays region to host our international crew members but also to continue to promote itself and its beautiful surroundings to our global race community as a leading sailing and tourism destination in the Southern Hemisphere.”

Whitsunday Regional Council Mayor Andrew Wilcox said the carnival would showcase the diversity of experiences on offer in the region.

“Hosting the Whitsunday Clipper Race Carnival presents an ideal opportunity for us to highlight and promote the regions many attractions and encourage visitors beyond just the headline locations of Hamilton Island and Airlie Beach for authentic Australian experiences,” he said.

The Whitsunday Clipper Race Carnival was secured through a partnership between Tourism and Events Queensland and the Whitsunday Regional Council together with Tourism Whitsundays and Abell Point Marina, where the fleet will be docked during the stopover.

The Clipper Round the World Yacht Race is held every two years and features 12 yachts sailed by more than 700 amateur crew in a 40,000 nautical mile race around the globe.

For more information visit www.whitsundayclipperrace.com.au

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