



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

August 2, 2019

Take an exclusive tour to the Whitsundays' underwater art

Be a part of something unique – the first and only artist talks and tours to the Whitsundays' Ngaro Underwater Marine Sculpture Trail.

Just 40 people will be given this rare opportunity on Saturday, August 3, thanks to a one-off offer from the Great Barrier Reef Festival.

In partnership with Cruise Whitsundays and Reef Ecologic, the four-and-a-half-hour experience will take in three locations incorporating reef restoration and underwater art.

Tours will run at 7.30am and 12.30pm, with tickets costing \$160, on sale for 24 hours only or until sold out.

The tours will begin inside the Cruise Whitsundays Maritime Terminal at Port of Airlie, with a presentation from a representative of Reef Ecologic and a participating artist.

Guests will then board an exclusive 24-seat vessel, bound for a guided tour of sites at Manta Ray Bay on Hook Island, Blue Pearl Bay on Hayman Island, and Langford Reef.

Here they will see nurseries where coral gardening is taking place, and the first underwater artworks to ever be installed inside the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Speaking after today's unveiling of the sculptures by Queensland Tourism Minister Kate Jones, Reef Ecologic's Dr Adam Smith said he was proud to be introducing people to an Australian 'first'.

"The people on this first tour are going to not only experience the brand-new underwater artworks but also contribute to ongoing research and get a certificate for participating in an amazing project that'll make a difference for the Whitsundays, the tourism industry, local artists and future generations on the Great Barrier Reef," he said.

"I don't know of any other tour in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park that has this sort of content.

"The people who buy these tickets are going to be really quite privileged, getting to visit these sites with the amazing artists who've created the sculptures and enjoying this unique tourism experience for the first time."

Tourism Whitsundays CEO, Tash Wheeler believes this unique tour opportunity is not to be missed.

“Having a Great Barrier Reef first in our backyard is a huge coup for the Whitsunday region,” she said.

“Cruise Whitsundays and the Great Barrier Reef Festival are offering an exclusive opportunity for guests to get firsthand information into the artistic process behind these amazing artworks.

“There has been a huge amount of work that has gone into the creations – it has seen a strong collaboration at all levels of government through a partnership between Federal, State and Local government, as well as the incredible effort by Reef Ecologic and artists, and this collaboration has ensured this landmark project has been brought to fruition.”

Whitsunday Mayor, Andrew Willcox, said as the ultimate permit holders of the underwater sculptures, Whitsunday Regional Council was similarly proud to see the first tours get underway.

“Council stepped up to the plate and took the lead on this project when ‘red tape’ needed to be navigated, negotiating the underwater artwork permit with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority,” he said.

“This underwater art is an Australian first and another project that Council has collaborated with to deliver unique tourism product for our region.”

Great Barrier Reef Festival Vice President, Heather Batrick, who ran the world-famous Yongala Dive operation in Ayr for many years, said the festival was honoured to be a part of a ground-breaking project on the Great Barrier Reef and thrilled to be presenting an exclusive opportunity to interact.

“We encourage people to take advantage of this incredible offer and book now before this limited-edition experience sells out,” she said.

Tours include snorkelling equipment and morning or afternoon tea and can be booked at www.greatbarrierreeffestival.com.au from now until 4pm tomorrow (Friday, August 2), or when sold out.

The Great Barrier Reef Festival from August 1-4 is proudly supported by Cruise Whitsundays.

For more information follow the festival on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

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About Tourism Whitsundays: *Tourism Whitsundays (TW) is the organisation responsible for destination marketing and visitor attraction for the Whitsunday region. It is the lead agency recognised by Tourism and Events Queensland and the Whitsunday Regional Council to lead the promotion of the region as a tourism destination. Tourism Whitsundays markets all aspects of the region including the Great Barrier Reef, Whitsunday Islands and Coast, accommodation, boating and sailing, fishing, touring, recreational activities, adventure, dining, shopping, weddings and honeymoons, conferencing and business events.*

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