

Marine Conservation Program

We have teamed up with leading scuba diving and outer reef operators in Cairns with a high commitment to environmental sustainability. Together we are offering our Marine Conservation Program run on the Great Barrier Reef combining firstly the adventure of scuba diving with education and the opportunity to help the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) monitor and identify reef health indicators on the Great Barrier Reef.

Our Marine Conservation Program was developed to allow people of all skill levels and experience to learn about and be involved in the marine conservation effort. Assisting us with an established GBRMPA monitoring program using rapid monitoring, your hands-on involvement will help a dedicated team of Marine Biologists and other industry professionals in monitoring long term coral health on the Great Barrier Reef.

We and our partners will be working together to ensure each program participant walks away educated on the ongoing conservation efforts on the reef along with a great deal of self-fulfillment from hands-on participation. Enjoy scuba diving, adventure and citizen science on the Great Barrier Reef in Cairns. Your involvement will contribute to the reef's long-term protection and provide GBRMPA with additional data helping to identify and monitor reef health indicators.

"The Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest coral reef ecosystem and includes over 3000 separate coral reefs and supports an immense variety of life!"

Become part of our dedicated team and make a genuine contribution to marine conservation and care for the Great Barrier Reef. Your efforts will make not only a positive impact, but also a difference for future generations.



Day 1 Welcome to Cairns (Sunday)

Welcome to tropical Cairns. Enjoy your day discovering Cairns. Points of interest include a stroll along the Esplanade, the Botanic Gardens, a swim in the Lagoon and the CBD. A group briefing will be arranged on this day after midday at a time TBA.

Note: Participants should arrive in Cairns by midday in time for the briefing. Briefing time & place to be confirmed by your local host.

Day 2 – 3 Open Water Course – Training Center (Open Water Students only)

Over the next 2 days you will do the first part of your scuba diving adventure. Get picked up by the dive school early morning and transfer to the training center, where you will commence your theory on scuba diving with your qualified instructor. Put all the theory into use in the pool during your practical sessions where all your underwater skills are honed under the watchful eyes of your instructors. After lunch on day 3 it is time for your theory test and a briefing of the upcoming days out on the Great Barrier Reef. Transfer back to the hostel late afternoon each day. Participants doing the AOWD or recreational dives on the live aboard (Certified Divers) can enjoy free days. There are a lot of optional activities to choose from in Cairns (see list below). We recommend you check in at the Pro Dive Shop to fit your equipment on day 3.

Note: activities on days 2 - 3 for Open Water students only.

Rescue Divers: your course commences on day 3 at the training centre with the theory component. Travel to the Great Barrier Reef on day 4 and complete your course over the next 3 days.



Day 4 – 6 Great Barrier Reef (Open Water, Advanced Open Water, Nitrox, Rescue courses *)

Depart early morning on day 4 on your Great Barrier Reef diving adventure. All participants will complete their respective courses over the next three days and Certified Divers will enjoy up to 11 recreational dives on the GBR. Once you arrive on the Great Barrier Reef begin exploring the underwater world on this magnificent natural wonder. Return to Cairns late afternoon on day 6. Transfer back to your accommodation and free time. (B,L,D*)

Note: Advanced Open Water, Nitrox and Rescue students will do their respective courses during this trip.
Certified divers will enjoy 11 recreational dives during the live aboard trip.
*No dinner on day 6.

OPEN WATER STUDENTS – ONCE YOU COMPLETE YOUR DIVE COURSE PLEASE ASK YOUR INSTRUCTOR TO REGISTER YOUR PAPERWORK WITH PADI AS YOU WILL BE DIVING A FEW DAYS LATER. ALTERNATIVELY PLEASE ENSURE YOUR LOGBOOK IS CLEARLY STAMPED AND SIGNED BY YOUR INSTRUCTOR INDICATING YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR OPEN WATER DIVE COURSE.

Day 7 – 8 Cairns/ Fitzroy Island & Turtles

Your conservation adventure continues with a day trip to the turtle hospital on Fitzroy Island (either day 7 or 8 – TBA. **See Note.**). You will meet a Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre rep at the Reef Fleet Terminal in the morning in time for your ferry transfer to Fitzroy Island in the morning, 45 minutes from Cairns, where you will meet other volunteers working at the turtle hospital on the day. You will learn about the work done by this organization, meet some of the patients and, possibly, go behind the scenes to lend a helping hand. Tasks may include feeding turtles, cleaning tanks and other task associated with the centre. Return to Cairns at midday or alternatively stay on the island for the afternoon. If the latter enjoy free time. Do one of the walks on the island, relax on the beach or swim and snorkel. The afternoon ferry returns to Cairns approx. 17:45.

Note: The experience at CTRC will take place either on day 7 or 8. The maximum number of our participants at CTRC at one time is 4 persons. Should the Marine Conservation group size exceed 4 persons we will be splitting the group into two, with one group visiting CTRC on day 7, the second group on day 8. This is at the request of CTRC and is to keep the turtles' stress to a minimum, limit the number of people behind the scenes and in turn allow you to have the best possible and most fulfilling experience on the day.

Too many people = stressed turtles and we do not want that 😊

No snorkeling equipment provided on the island. You can hire equipment or bring your own.



Day 9 – 11 Great Barrier Reef Day trip – Reef Education, Awareness & Conservation tasks

Over the next 3 days you will enjoy the Great Barrier Reef onboard Passions of Paradise, a locally owned, award-winning operator promoting sustainable day trips to the Great Barrier Reef. The experience on Passions will enhance your understanding of citizen science and marine conservation while immersing you in the beauty of the reef. Under the guidance of your designated Master Reef Guide you will undertake a selection of reef conservation activities each day while diving & snorkeling. On days 9 and 10, you will enjoy two dives per day (four total), followed by a snorkeling-focused day on day 11. While out on the reef you will learn about reef health surveys and take part in citizen science. These surveys include fish counts and entering iconic and endangered animals into the Sightings Network, contributing valuable data on reef health. Further you will learn about the Coral Nurture program which Passions of Paradise is actively involved in. The Coral Nurture program is an initiative aimed at researching, creating coral nurseries and planting corals at various locations across the Great Barrier Reef, to ensure the ongoing health of the ecosystem. Another effort you will also take part in (depending on the season) is the Great Reef Census, a citizen science initiative to photograph and survey the GBR and enter photos into the Citizens of the Great Barrier Reef AI.

Over the 3 days on the reef your dedicated Master Reef Guide will tailor the program and choose the best activities for the group depending on prevailing sea conditions, for the best possible experience.

Each day you will need to check in at the Reef Fleet Terminal by 0730am and return to Cairns late afternoon. Free time each afternoon.

Overnight in Cairns each day. (L)

OPEN WATER STUDENTS – PLEASE ENSURE YOU HAVE YOUR TEMPORARY OPEN WATER CARD, EMAIL FROM PADI CONFIRMING YOUR OPEN WATER CERTIFICATION OR LOG BOOK WITH YOU ON DAY 9. NO LOG BOOK/ EMAIL/ TEMPORARY CARD = NO DIVING. PLEASE ENSURE YOUR FOUR (4) OPEN WATER DIVES ARE SIGNED OFF BY YOUR INSTRUCTOR.



Day 12 Cairns

Today is your departure day and the end of your marine conservation experience on the Great Barrier Reef. Check out and transfer to the airport for your onward or homeward journey. Safe Travels!

Group size: minimum 3 / maximum 8 participants.

Inclusions:

- Accommodation at Gilligans Backpacker Resort in 4 or 6-share dorms with ensuite or similar (YHA Cairns)
    - Hotel upgrade available or OPT OUT of included accommodation – **SEE NOTE**
- Meals as noted in the program (B,L,D)
- Open Water OR Advanced Open Water Dive courses. Dive courses include 3 day/ 2 night live aboard reef trip on the Great Barrier Reef. Certified divers have recreational dives. Transfers to/ from the dive school are provided.
- 3 x day trips on Passions of Paradise with a dedicated reef conservation guide doing Rapid Monitoring and other Marine Conservation tasks incl. total 4 dives & snorkeling activities
- Number of dives included:
    - Open Water Course + Passions of Paradise: 13 dives on the Great Barrier Reef (pending weather conditions)
    - Advanced Open Water Course + Passions of Paradise: 15 dives on the Great Barrier Reef (pending weather conditions)
    - Certified Divers + Passions of Paradise: 15 dives on the Great Barrier Reef (pending weather conditions)
- 1 x return ferry transfer to Fitzroy Island and visit at the turtle hospital, with hands-on activities (subject to availability on the day) – **SEE NOTE** under Day 7 & 8.
- Conservation program participant t-shirt
- Tour coordination and assistance

Exclusions:

- International and domestic flights
- Visa fees to Australia (if applicable)
- Airport transfers & other transport
- Reef taxes and levies for the 3D/2N reef trip onboard Pro Dive
- Dive medical costs (if required)
- First Aid and CPR Certificate cost (only required by participants doing Rescue Dive Course)
- Costs of personal nature
- Optional activities

Notes:

- This program takes place in tropical Far North Queensland where you may experience **various weather conditions** such as **extreme heat, high humidity, strong winds and rainy weather**. Weather conditions may in some cases influence the conditions out at sea. The majority of activities in this program happen out in the Coral Sea while on dive boats. Sea conditions can be rough, there may be big swells and **you may experience sea sickness**. If you are prone to motion sickness we highly recommend to take precautionary measures ahead of time**.**
- **Dive Course Students only** – Prior to commencing your dive course you are required to complete a self-assessment Student Diver Medical Declaration (Open Water Students). A positive response to any question means that there is a pre-existing condition that may affect your safety while diving and you must consult a medical practitioner preferably with experience in diving medicine to obtain a dive medical certificate that states that you are fit to undertake recreational diver training. Participants doing their Advanced Open Water course (or above) please complete the self-assessment medical here.
- Dive medicals and medical clearance to dive are the responsibility of the participant. We strongly recommend all dive medicals be carried out by your family doctor before traveling to Australia.
- **Rescue Diver** course is subject to availability and on request only.
  Please confirm this option is available before booking.
- Current First Aid and CPR Certificate is required by participants doing Rescue Dive Course prior to starting their course.
- **Persons doing their Open Water Dive course must have their logbooks OR email confirmation from PADI that they are Open water Certified OR a temporary Open Water card with them on day 9. No logbook, email confirmation or temporary dive card = NO DIVING. Please ensure your instructor has signed off your Open Water Certification dives (4) in your logbook.**
- The program includes accommodation Gilligans Backpacker Resort in 4 or 6-share dorms. Where possible rooms will be exclusive to program participants, however this is subject to availability. The hostel is centrally located in close proximity to shops, cafes and the starting points to your activities. It is a lively hostel, so if you prefer your own space and privacy you can choose to stay at one of the local hotels. In some instances, depending on season and availability, another quality hostel may be used in Cairns as an alternative.
- Would you like a hotel upgrade? We recommend The Abbott Boutique Hotel.
  Hotel upgrades are subject to availability.
- Participants are responsible for their own airport transfers, transport to any group meetings as well as scheduled activities during the program unless transfers are specified as provided.
- Program and activities are subject to change at any time, without notice, even during the duration of the 12-day program. Changes may occur due to weather, unavailability of our partners (3rd party suppliers) or other forces of nature, beyond our control. We will aim to suggest a suitable alternative for any activities affected by such unforeseen changes, but no guarantees can be made.

Frequently asked questions:

Q. Are airport transfers included?
A. No. Airport transfers are at the discretion of participants.

Q. What is the name of the included hostel?
A. Gilligan's Backpacker Resort, 57-89 Grafton St, Cairns City QLD 4870, **Phone:** (07) 4041 6566

Q. What facilities does the hostel offer?
A. The hostel has a 24h reception, a pool, a café, a kitchen area, a laundry and a big common area. Gilligans is also the number one bar & nightclub in Cairns. We include 4 or 6-share dorms with ensuite, which may be shared with guests from outside of the program.

Q. Are single sex dorms available during the program?
A. The included dorms are co-shared. Single sex dorms are available on request and subject to availability.

Q. Can I upgrade to a hotel if I don't want to stay in hostel?
A. Yes, pending availability. We can recommend the Abbott Boutique Hotel.

Q. Are single sex cabins available during the live aboard trip?
A. Cabins on the boat are twin-share. Where possible we will request you be matched with someone of the same sex.

Q. Can I upgrade to a private room on the boat?
A. No. There are no options to upgrade on the live aboard boat.

Q. Can you help me book other accommodation?
A. Yes, we can assist with arranging or recommending other accommodation in Cairns including hostels or hotels, depending on your budget.

Q. Is transport and transfers included during the program?
A. Transfers on days 2, 3, 4 and 6 are included. The transfers are provided by the dive school. Transfers on days 7 - 11 are not included. Participants are required to be at the Reef Fleet Terminal on those days by 7.30am, which is a short walk from the hostel.

Q. What dive equipment is included?
A. All necessary dive equipment is included such as mask, fins and snorkel, BCD, tanks, weights, regulator and wet suits or stinger suits.

Q. How many dives total will I do during the 12-day program?
A. Participants doing the Open Water Dive course will do 13 dives total. Participants doing Advanced Open Water (or another course) as well as Certified Divers doing recreational dives on the live aboard will do a total of 15 dives. Dives are subject to prevailing weather conditions. If conditions are deemed too dangerous a dive can be cancelled.

Q. Where will I dive and how deep?
A. There are various dive sites the boats travel to. Locations are chosen each day pending weather, swell and tidal conditions. All of the sites are on the outer Great Barrier Reef. Dive depths depend on your dive level and the dive site, but will generally be no more than 18m.

Q. Are special dietary requirements catered for?
A. Yes. In case of any special dietary needs or requirements we ask prior notice is given. The boats always offer a meat and non-meat menu to cater for vegans and vegetarians. In case of allergies or intolerances, we will do our best to to make sure your needs are looked after where possible.

Q. When should I arrive in Cairns?
A. You should arrive in Cairns on day 1, which is a Sunday. It is recommended to arrive by around midday to allow for a briefing that afternoon. Your activities start the following day.

Q. What can I do on my free days?
A. Cairns offers a lot of fun, optional activities. Here are some highlights:

- Visit the Botanic Gardens & Centenary Lakes
- Walk the Red, Yellow, Blue or Green Arrow tracks on Mount Whitfield
- Visit Crystal Cascades or Stoneys Creek (transport required)
- Day trip to the Daintree National Park – the oldest rainforest in the world;
- Day trip to the Atherton Tablelands – nature, waterfalls and local food;
- Visit Kuranda including the Kuranda Scenic Train and Skyrail Cableway;
- Hartley's Creek Crocodile Farm
- Cairns Brewery & Distillery Tours
- Jump on the Ultimate Party Bus
- Ask us for more recommendations…