

MEDIA RELEASE



For immediate release
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The Cruise Whitsundays Great Barrier Reef Festival is Back for a Whale of a Time

The biggest annual celebration of the Great Barrier Reef and unique coastal lifestyle of The Whitsundays will be on again during 2023, with this year's Festival to especially spotlight whales.

The Cruise Whitsundays Great Barrier Reef Festival will be held at Airlie Beach from 3 – 6 August 2023, with a raft of FREE and ticketed family-friendly events scheduled across the four days.

This year's Festival theme is especially significant as The Whitsundays has been named a Candidate Whale Heritage Site by the World Cetacean Alliance. Many of the Festival events will centre on Humpback Whales, as thousands of humpbacks make their annual migration to The Whitsundays.

A balance of fun and education will be struck across the long weekend of celebrations. From environment-based learning workshops and interactive eco-education platforms, to carnival-style attractions, art, food, live music, fireworks and more, the Cruise Whitsundays Great Barrier Reef Festival is expected to attract thousands of visitors.

An immersive key education piece of the 2023 event is a full day cruise to Hardy Reef with Cruise Whitsundays hosted by 10 Master Reef Guides on Saturday 5 August.

Balancing these critical and fun educational pieces are family fun-focused events of fireworks on the foreshore, carnival rides, the Recyclable Regatta and the iconic Rotary Street Parade.

Cruise Whitsundays Sales and Marketing Manager Renee Branton-Brown is thrilled to sponsor the Festival again for a long weekend of reef fun.

"Cruise Whitsundays takes our role of reef custodians very seriously and are ecstatic to host our award-winning Great Barrier Reef Experience alongside the largest cohort of Master Reef Guides for the Festival this year.

"The Master Reef Guide Experience allows us the opportunity to showcase Hardy Reef in all its glory. With a plethora of marine life and an abundance of coral species, this immersive day tour will be a festival highlight.

"Reef education is imperative for everyone to understand the important role we all play in protecting this natural wonder, which is why we are exceptionally proud to be the naming sponsor of The Cruise Whitsundays Great Barrier Reef Festival," said Ms Branton-Brown.

The committee behind the Great Barrier Reef Festival has nurtured the event from '(fire)cracker night' established by local tourism business owner, David Hutchins in the 90s, to the full four-day showcase it is now.

Great Barrier Reef Festival Chair, Margie Murphy said:

"We are so excited to be bringing another action-packed Reef Festival to take over Airlie Beach again this year. This is a truly inclusive event, and we encourage the whole community to get involved."

Tourism Whitsundays CEO Rick Hamilton said:

"The Whitsundays is the Heart of the Great Barrier Reef, and this event is when the whole community gets together to celebrate that. The Great Barrier Reef is one of the compelling reasons people are choosing The Whitsundays as their holiday destination, with 40% of reef visitation being in The Whitsundays. As an area, we

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have Master Reef Guides on almost every marine tour experience, giving that large portion of reef visitors unparalleled education on reef health, protection and history.

“Bringing the celebration of the Great Barrier Reef to the mainland creates a connection and excitement in locals and visitors alike. It’s amazing how deep the connections to this festival are in The Whitsundays and how it has grown in the last 21 years,” Mr Hamilton said.

A full schedule of events can be found at www.greatbarrierreeffestival.com.au.

Tickets for the Reef Experience with Master Reef Guides are available to purchase [here](#).

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To view a Word Document of this release and supporting images, [click here](#).

To view The Whitsundays Heart of Events video, [click here](#).

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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