

A most relaxing weekend with Captain Cook Cruises



We were able to check-in and drop our luggage at the Captain Cook office and then look around the Cairns city area or just take it easy until it was time to board the ship just after 1.00pm.

Cruise Director, Bruce Moffatt, a veteran of ten years with the ship, was at the top of the gangway to welcome all passengers before the crew escorted you to your cabin, where your luggage



was waiting. Our cabin was spacious with good hanging space and a workable bathroom.

We were advised a light luncheon buffet and welcome aboard cocktail was awaiting in the Captain Cook Saloon.

Shortly after two all passengers were on deck to farewell Cairns as the Reef Endeavour sailed for Fitzroy Island. It was the old fashioned farewell departure with streamers available for everyone. After we sailed there was the compulsory safety briefing. The Chief Officer was on hand to brief passengers regarding safety aboard Reef Endeavour. This was followed by an introduction to the ship and the cruise by the Cruise Director.

The sky was overcast and the sea a little rough as we arrived at Fitzroy Island just after four for a two hour stop. Most of the passengers joined the marine naturalist for an escorted walk for which footwear for walking was required for the uneven and slippery surface. Fitzroy Island is a large continental island lying 29kms east of Cairns and is the third most northerly resort island within the Great Barrier Reef. Most of the island's 339 hectares, coral beaches and fringing reefs are protected as Marine or National Park. The island holds special significance for the Aboriginal people of the Gungandji tribe who live on the mainland and call the island "Gahar".

Captain Cook renamed the island on 10 June 1770, after the family name of the influential third Duke of Grafton (Prime Minister of England when the Endeavour sailed). Fitzroy Island is especially noted for its large and colourful butterflies as well as at least 35 different species of birds. The beaches of Fitzroy are formed from broken coral. Snorkelling in Welcome Bay and Nudey Beach offers the chance to explore a fringing reef which supports many species of fish (poisonous jellyfish may be present October to May). The resort on the island caters for all ages and budgets.

Back on board pre-dinner canapés were served before the Welcome Dinner. The cocktail of the day was a Mud Crab - a tempting mix of Tia Maria, Kahlua, Baileys and Milk. The Dinner told us we were in for a great food experience over the coming days. After dinner the marine naturalist gave an entertaining presentation on the Great Barrier Reef. Following that for those who wanted to stay up, there were musical requests as Rhett played the baby grand piano.



Next morning we awoke at anchor at Hedley Reef where we had the whole day to explore these coral gardens. After a plentiful breakfast some passengers went snorkelling whilst many opted for a ride in the glass

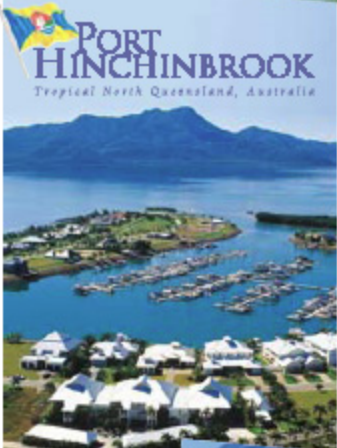


described life amongst the coral bombores of the reef. Lunch today was a mouth watering seafood buffet, need I say more!

During the day there were tours of the bridge. Passengers on the afternoon visit were escorted by Captain Robert Buchanan, another veteran of sailing these waters with Captain Cook. Later Shipboard Bingo was on offer.

Dinner was another memorable event, especially with the new found friends at the table. It's amazing how quickly you get to know your table mates. Immediately following dinner the crew staged Racing on the Reef, a fun time as passengers had a fling. Rhett then entertained the Late Night & Insomniacs Club members.

Sunday bought us some breathtaking views as we cruised through the Hinchinbrook Channel. Our marine naturalist explains the channel's diverse habitats that shelter species from dugongs and dolphins to migrating whales.



Hinchinbrook is the largest island national park in the world, being 35kms long and 24kms wide. It has rugged mountains - including Mount Bowen, Queensland's third highest peak, dense jungle, waterfalls, over 30 species of mangroves, secluded coves and sandy beaches. In the centre of the island a jagged



chain of granite peaks form the backbone of the island. Hinchinbrook's mangrove forests are second in intensity only to those found in the Amazon Delta and research has revealed that certain varieties are over 20 million years old. It is truly a nature lovers' paradise.

Located 4kms offshore from Cardwell, this rugged, densely vegetated island is separated from the mainland by the scenic Hinchinbrook Channel - a unique geological and environmental feature of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. We sailed by the Port Hinchinbrook development.

After lunch we reached Dunk Island. This island had only recently reopened after being devastated by Cyclone Larry.

Dunk Island is undoubtedly one of Australia's best known islands. Captain James Cook named it on 8 June 1770 and it has been much publicised through articles and books written by Edward Banfield who lived a secluded life there between 1897 and 1923. He wrote four books about his life, the most famous being "Confessions of a Beachcomber". Of

all the continental islands within the Great Barrier Reef, Dunk Island is one of the most tropical. Wet areas are covered in dense jungle, eucalypt forests, grassy areas and mangrove flats.

It is classified as a National Park and visitors are able to explore much of the beautiful rainforests, on excellent walking trails maintained by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Over 90 different species of birds have been found and it is also the home of the brilliant blue Papilio Ulysses Butterfly, which has been adopted as the symbol for Dunk Island. In 1969 the movie "The Age of Consent" starring James Mason was filmed there and at nearby Bedarra Island.

On board we prepared for the Captain's Farewell Dinner and a crew and passenger show.

Our short visit to the Great Barrier Reef was almost over. It was farewells all around, although a number of passengers were staying on board for the four night northbound journey that included visits to Cooktown and Lizard Island.

On Monday morning the Reef Endeavour tied up at Trinity Wharf in Cairns for disembarkation shortly after breakfast.

The crew certainly makes this cruise - their friendliness and assistance is always on hand. Add to that, your fellow passengers, the food and the ship itself and places visited, you have the ingredients for a magnificent short holiday. For us the three nights were too short, next time it will be seven nights.

By John & Kerry Treacy

MV Reef Endeavour

Registry Cairns, Australia; Tonnage - 3125 tonnes, Length - 73 metres, Beam - 14 metres, Draft - 3.6 metres, Speed - 13.5 knots



MV Reef Endeavour is purpose-built for Great Barrier Reef cruises. A small ship, she caters to no more than 150 passengers, ensuring every guest receives personal attention in comfortable surroundings. At the same time, she is fully equipped to make the most of the reef and island experience. The informative, friendly and skilled crew includes a marine naturalist and a dive master.

Dining - Superb dining specialising in fresh local produce is central to life aboard. You will enjoy lavish buffet breakfasts, luncheons that feature fresh Barrier Reef seafood and a la carte dinner with a different menu every night.

Facilities - Swimming pool, two top deck spa pools, sun deck sauna and mini gym, glass-bottomed boat, snorkel and dive vessels; two bars, two lounges and a single sitting dining saloon; massage, gift shop, library and videos; guest laundry and 24 hour coffee and tea facilities, lift from D Deck to Sun Deck (limited access); marine telephone and fax communications.

Accommodation - The MV Reef Endeavour has 75 staterooms and cabins each with private bathroom en suite, air-conditioning, telephone, hair dryer, soaps, shampoo and towels; serviced daily each cabin is approximately 14 sq metres.