Queensland’s Great Barrier Reef (GBR) is Australia’s largest and most valuable natural asset, a World Heritage Listed wonder with an inspiring array of marine wildlife and biodiversity.

Tourism in the Great Barrier Reef contributes $A5.7 billion in economic value, supporting almost 59,000 full time jobs and attracting more than two million visitors each year. Around 80 per cent of all tourism activity occurs within seven per cent of the marine park.

Through sharing stories to inspire visitors and supporting initiatives that promote the Reef’s resilience, our tourism industry collectively plays a positive role in the long-term future of our greatest natural wonder.

Tourism and Events Queensland’s role

Tourism and Events Queensland collaborates with industry partners and GBR stakeholders. The GBR is positioned front and centre in TEQ’s marketing strategy as a must do experience and has featured in significant global promotion including:

- partnerships with trade, media and influencers;
- creation of content and tools for industry and stakeholders to convey the depth and breadth of the GBR story;
- leveraging the world’s attention during the airing of the BBC Great Barrier Reef Series with Sir David Attenborough, and during the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games; and
- proactive promotion of GBR stories worldwide.

TEQ’s strategic approach for 2018-2025 is to:

- Lead delivery of consumer marketing to key markets to grow positive awareness of tourism’s experiences and contribution to the world’s best managed reef
- Differentiate the GBR from competitors, and make it relevant to our High Value Travellers (HVTs) to drive visitation to Queensland resulting in overnight visitor expenditure (OVE) growth
- Strengthen partnerships with strategic GBR Stakeholders
- Enrich industry engagement to improve experience delivery and the visitor experience

ASPIRATIONAL GOAL

BY 2025 QUEENSLAND’S GREAT BARRIER REEF TOURISM INDUSTRY WILL BE RECOGNISED AS A WORLD LEADER IN RESPONSIBLE REEF TOURISM AND BEST PRACTICE REEF INTERPRETATION

Introduction
The Great Barrier Reef’s tourism advantage

The Great Barrier Reef’s (GBR) credentials as the best managed reef in the world and home to diverse and unique marine wildlife are a significant platform for the tourism industry to position itself as world leaders in responsible tourism and best practice interpretation. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority’s most recent outlook report concluded that tourism is effectively managed and a very low risk.

The tourism industry has the power to amplify a GBR message via visitors, media and travel trade. Tourism is a significant avenue through which to raise awareness of the cultural and environmental values of the GBR and tourism operators play a key role in helping visitors to learn about the GBR and the variety of threats to it, its resilience and recovery mechanisms – and how its management and diversity contribute to its status as a World Heritage Area.

Where the Rainforest meets the Reef

Declared a World Heritage Area in 1988, The Wet Tropics of Queensland is one of the world’s oldest continuous surviving rainforests containing an unparalleled record of the major stages in the evolution of plant life on earth. Many species here originated when Australia was still part of Gondwana. Spectacular scenery and rugged topography with rivers, gorges, waterfalls, and mountains combine with fringing coral reefs and rainforest coastline. A priceless natural area of global significance, it has been described by Sir David Attenborough as "the most extraordinary place on earth."
In consultation with industry stakeholders, Tourism and Events Queensland has identified three common themes - size and use, wildlife diversity and conservation – which reflect the unique selling propositions when compared to other reef’s around the world, underpinned by the GBR’s World Heritage Area designation.

Diversity of wildlife and ecosystems
The stories of the wildlife and the incredible diversity of species of habitats are just some of the reasons that the Great Barrier Reef is so inspirational to visitors. Comprised of 2900 coral reefs and 1,950 islands and coral cays, the GBR is home to:
- One third of the world’s coral species
- Six of the world’s seven species of marine turtle,
- Giant clams more than 120 years old,
- One of the world’s most important dugong populations,
- More than 3,000 species of molluscs (shells),
- 630 species of echinoderm (starfish and sea urchins),
- 14 breeding species of sea snakes,
- 215 species of birds, including 22 species of seabirds and 32 species of shorebirds
- 30 species of whales and dolphins, and
- 133 species of sharks and rays.

Visitors can experience the wonder of swimming with shoals of fish, ancient turtles, minkle whales, majestic manta rays, or witness nesting and hatching turtles, giant clams, or migrating humpback whales.

A Great Barrier Reef visitor experience is not just restricted to the water: it can also be enjoyed from the air, islands and the coast of mainland Australia.
- Scuba diving
- Snorkelling
- Cruising
- Sailing
- Island and mainland resorts
- Coastal land and waterways tours
- Scenic flights
- Day tours
- Multi-day expeditions and cruises

Unique Selling Propositions

Size and use
At approximately 350,000km² in size, and stretching 2,300km along the Queensland coast, the Great Barrier Reef is the only living ecosystem on earth that can be seen from outer space. There are seven Queensland destinations along the marine park, Tropical North Queensland, Townsville, Mackay, The Whitsundays, and the Southern Great Barrier Reef (Capricorn, Gladstone, and Bundaberg regions). Visitors can also access the Great Barrier Reef via direct tours and transport from Brisbane, the Gold Coast and Hervey Bay.

Great Barrier Reef: Wildlife and Natural Events Calendar

Year round
- Corals are the very building blocks of the reef
- Six of the world’s seven species of marine turtle (green, hawksbill, loggerhead, flathead, Olive Ridley and leatherback) are residents of the Great Barrier Reef
- Blue-spotted ribbon tail and lagoon rays can be found shuffling in the coral sand all year
- Giant clams are abundant.
- Dolphins and some small whale species can be encountered at any time of the year in the open water or close to coral reefs.
- Clown anemone fish can be found at any time of the year.
- Whitetips and black-tip reef sharks are present all year round.

Summer (Dec-Jan-Feb)
- Turtle nesting and hatching.
- Fish spawning reaches maximum with clouds of damselfish, wrasse, surgeonfish and parrot fish either laying eggs or broadcast spawning
- Jellyfish, sea squirts, salps and siphonophores fill the water column and are fed upon by fish and turtles.
- Whale sharks are seen more often particularly in the far north feeding on plankton-rich waters.
- Peak breeding activity for most seabird species occurs.

Autumn (Mar-Apr-May)
- Humpback whales arrive in the southern Great Barrier Reef on their winter migration north to calve, mate and socialise.
- The annual coral spawning event is when mass synchronised coral reproduction occurs over just a few nights, sometime between October and November depending on water temperature and moon phases.
- Breeding activity begins for most seabird species in October.

Winter (Jun-Jul-Aug)
- The best time to see migrating humpback whales, Calving takes place from June to August.
- Dwarf minkie whales can be seen in the northern Great Barrier Reef.
- Dugong mating starts.
- Manta rays gather at feeding locations near the surface.

Spring (Sep-Oct-Nov)
- September is the best time to see humpback whales in the southern Great Barrier Reef as they migrate south to Antarctica with calves.
- Some fish species spawning.
- The annual coral spawning event is when mass synchronised coral reproduction occurs over just a few nights, sometime between October and December depending on water temperature and moon phases.
- Breeding activity begins for most seabird species in October.

UNESCO World Heritage Area Status
In 1981, the World Heritage Committee listed the Great Barrier Reef as a World Heritage Area based on all four natural criteria:
1. Be outstanding examples representing the major stages of the earth’s evolutionary history.
2. Be outstanding examples representing significant ongoing geological processes, biogeological evolution and man’s interaction with his natural environment.
3. Contain unique, rare or superlative natural phenomena, formations or features or areas of exceptional natural beauty, such as superlative examples of the most important ecosystems to man, and
4. Be habitats where populations of rare or endangered species of plants and animals still survive.
Conservation

Queensland’s tourism operators play an important role in presenting the reef’s story to visitors. While tourism undoubtedly needs a protected and healthy Great Barrier Reef, the GBR also needs a prosperous and sustainable tourism industry to generate global community support and funding for its protection.

For decades our tourism industry has been proudly protecting and advocating for the GBR through a range of significant environmental, educational, research related and tourism initiatives. Tourism dollars make an important contribution towards reef protection and management. Tour operators provide regular, daily access to reef sites in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Many reef tourism operators are accredited with Ecotourism Australia’s Eco Certification Program which requires them to adhere to the highest environmental standards and deliver world-class visitor experiences.

Tourism access is regulated through a permitting system. $6.50 of every full-day ticket, and $3.25 of every half-day ticket sold to visit the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park goes back into marine park management. Marine tourism operators who take visitors above the high tide mark also contribute a Commercial Activity Permit (CAP) fee of $2.04 per person.

These funds assist the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) with management arrangements including those that monitor and improve the resilience of the Reef such as ranger patrols, site planning, public moorings, reef protection markers and information signs and maps.

In 2018, GBRMPA in partnership with TEQ and the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators (AMPTO) launched the Master Reef Guides Program. This aims to create world-leading reef guides, interpreters and storytellers who share the wonders of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area through engaging, entertaining and educational experiences that exceed visitor expectations.

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Target markets

The Great Barrier Reef continues to rank highly as a desirable holiday destination in Queensland’s target markets. On average, 60 per cent of visitors are from international markets and 40 per cent domestic.

TEQ targets high value travellers (HVT’s) who will generate a greater share of overnight visitor expenditure for Queensland. These travellers spend more than the average traveller on leisure trips and are interested in having the types of leisure experiences Queensland has to offer.

Visiting Australia’s natural landmarks is a significant driver of visitation from key Western Markets. The Great Barrier Reef is often considered a holiday of a lifetime for long-haul visitors and there is interest in high quality experiences, particularly those that are distinctive. However, it is important to acknowledge the impact that perceptions of the Reef can have internationally, and the importance placed in understanding what protection and conservation efforts are underway.

Queensland’s experiences, particularly with respect to Reef, Islands and Beaches and Natural Encounters, strongly align and have great appeal with visitors from Eastern Markets, including China, Japan, India and Hong Kong. While China is the single largest market to the GBR, traditional Western markets are also of great importance and generate greater dispersal and length of stay, particularly visitors from the USA, United Kingdom, New Zealand and Europe.
Tourism and Events Queensland's Great Barrier Reef Framework 2018-2025 articulates how TEQ will build on achievements to date, grow positive awareness and drive overnight visitor expenditure.

**Great Barrier Reef Tourism Messaging:** Foster a united voice in the positioning, promotion and preservation of the GBR and its visitor experiences by collaborating with the tourism industry and key stakeholders.

- Leadership through the GBR stakeholder network to ensure ongoing alignment of key reef messages;
- Proactively drive communications, including leveraging stories of resilience, recovery and restoration year-round to build balance and credibility across international and domestic markets;
- Ensure crisis communications plans are geared to rapidly respond to issues as they arise; and
- Work with key stakeholders to develop coordinated proactive forward content plans to heighten media demand for reef stories.

**Marketing (Demand Generation):** Grow positive awareness of tourism’s experiences and contribution to the world’s best managed reef and grow equity in the GBR brand by leading the delivery of consumer marketing to key markets.

- Drive awareness and conversion;
- Respond to evolving consumer preferences;
- Maintain an ‘always on’ approach to promotion of GBR content; and
- Upweight domestic activity under the Beautiful One Day, Perfect the Next’ platform to ensure the GBR is front of mind for domestic holiday makers and amplify GBR content in international markets; and
- Leverage social media influencers to support balance and authenticity.

**Strategic Partnerships: Strengthen/leverage partnerships with commercial, strategic and government stakeholders to drive the best results for the tourism industry and build resilience.**

- Work with Tourism Australia to elevate the GBR brand to drive awareness and intention in key international source markets;
- Facilitate industry accessible trade events with key trade partners to support product development and growth;
- Enhance representation of the GBR in the Aussie Specialist Program and associated activities;
- Develop multi-day itineraries to communicate the size and diversity of the GBR and build a focus on repeat visitation and dispersal; and
- Support improved air access including development and maintenance of routes and capacity to GBR regions through major international gateways to the GBR.

**Industry Engagement and Experience Development:** Support industry through education and stewardship, to deliver visitor experiences that leverage the GBR’s defining attributes and reaffirm the destination as a must-do Australian nature experience.

- Lead the tourism experience development and storytelling agenda;
- Develop benchmarking to ensure GBR interpretation is world’s best practice;
- Develop tools to increase industry alignment to experience promise of the GBR;
- Partner with GBRMPA and AMPTO to deliver the Master Reef Guides Program;
- Strengthen the association between the GBR and adjacent Wet Tropics World Heritage Area;
- Foster innovation in new visitor experiences that demonstrate best practice service delivery, interpretation, visitor management and responsible tourism practices; and
- Advocate for and support programs which build resilience of GBR destinations and businesses.

**Events:** Where possible, seek opportunities to leverage relevant events within the Major, Destination and Business event portfolios to deliver against the Great Barrier Reef Framework.

- Atract and secure major events in the GBR region which align with destination positioning to grow the Queensland economy and support jobs;
- Develop and maintain a high value and sustainable events calendar that is an asset for the GBR region Queensland, driving visitation in identified locations and peak/shoulder and off-peak periods;
- Use events to profile the GBR to a national and international audience;
- Support the GBR region through the Queensland Destination Events Program (QDEP); and
- Support business events in the GBR region sector through the Business Events Program.

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**Tourism checklist:**

- Through the cumulative effect of individual choices, we can achieve large scale positive change. Here is what operators and stakeholders can do.

- Download the key messages, FAQs tool and GBR infographic from the TEQ website; use as part of your own marketing, on your website, in your onboard presentations and in your staff training.
- Embrace the concept of the Great 8 in your experience; home in on the species that your guests can interact with.
- Use beautiful, inspirational imagery that is authentic, realistic and current.
- Support or become a high standard operator; have your staff undertake GBRMPA’s Online Reef Discovery Course; and become a Master Reef Guide.
- Demonstrate and encourage responsible reef practices.
- Reduce the use of plastic on marine vessels, including the removal of straws, water bottles, cups, plates and cutlery.
- Encourage your guests to download the app and get involved in the Eye on the Reef program to record and relay observations, including photos, back to GBRMPA.
- Maximize social media to generate positive word of mouth and credibility for tourism on the Reef year-round. Up to date and credible images will help consumers understand the current state of the reef.
- Tag your content with @Queensland #itsqueensland @Australia #seaaustralia.
- Share your images and short videos with Tourism & Events Queensland media gallery www.teqqueensland.com/imagegallery.
- Encourage your guests to become a Citizen of the Great Barrier Reef citizensgbr.org.
- Use beautiful, inspirational imagery that is authentic, realistic and current.
- Say no to single use coffee cups.
- #BYOB (bring your own bottle) — start by reducing your use of bottled water to reduce waste.
- #banishthebag — bring your own reusable bags, say no to unnecessary bagging.
- Say no to single use coffee cups.
- #NoStraw — bring your own bottle — start by reducing your use of bottled water to reduce wasteful bottle consumption.
- Sponsor a Crown of Thorns Starfish (CoTS) Diver — make a donation, learn about the CoTS control program.
- Send your positive tourism news and stories to media@queensland.com.
- Respond to evolving consumer preferences.
- #holdthestraw and say ‘no thanks’ to plastic straws.
To experience the wonder of a Queensland Great Barrier Reef holiday, visit queensland.com/greatbarrierreef.


The National Education Centre for the GBRMPA is the Reef HQ Great Barrier Reef Aquarium in Townsville and is open to visitors daily reefhq.com.au.

For more information:

teq.queensland.com/industry-resources/the-great-barrier-reef

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