



Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

GREAT BARRIER REEF Outlook Report 2019

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TOURISM

Given the extensive size of the Reef, its condition is variable. While there has been widespread deterioration of coral reef habitat, many areas support beautiful corals and abundant marine life and the Reef remains an extraordinary experience for visitors.

As Reef waters around the world continue to heat, reefs will become less diverse, and the fishes seen while snorkeling, will also change. Tourism operators and visitors need to prepare for this change.

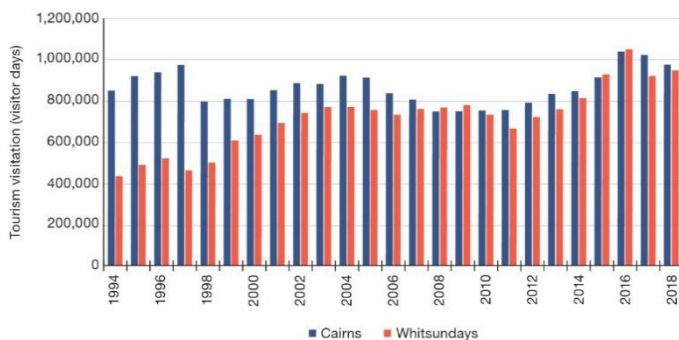
What the Outlook Report 2019 says about marine tourism

Commercial marine tourism is the largest Reef-dependent industry within the Region, contributing significantly to the economy and providing access for more than two million visitors each year.

Tourism is concentrated in about seven per cent of the Region. On average, 86 per cent of tourism visits occur within waters adjacent to Cairns, Port Douglas and the Whitsundays.

Between 2016–2018 tourism visitation in the Cairns area slightly decreased (five per cent). Tourism visitation also declined (by 12 per cent), in the Whitsundays in 2017 (following cyclone Debbie) but increased again in 2018.

Cruise ships are getting larger, carrying more passengers, and increasing in number. Superyachts (some of which are recreational) are also likely to increase in the future, underpinned by a growing number based in the Asia–Pacific region.



Total visitation to the two high-use plan of management areas, Cairns and the Whitsundays, 1994–2018. Source: GBRMPA 2019

Benefits of marine tourism

The Reef continues to be Australia's greatest natural attraction, recognised as an iconic experience, locally, nationally and internationally.

Tourism operators have increased stewardship through; contributing to Reef monitoring, adhering to responsible reef practices, trialling small-scale reef restoration initiatives, and supporting delivery of quality interpretation and education by accredited Master Reef Guides.

International visitation to Queensland reached ~2.8 million (end 2018), with approximately 51 per cent (1.43 million) in tourism regions adjacent to the Reef. While most tourists (~80 per cent) rated their Reef experience in the high satisfaction category, a subset of tourists interviewed in 2017 thought the condition of the Reef had deteriorated since 2013.

Impacts from marine tourism

The Great Barrier Reef is widely regarded as the best-managed coral reef in the world. While marine tourism extends throughout the Region, its impacts are generally localised to a few intensively managed areas. Impacts from cumulative use will amplify as natural values deteriorate. Sewage discharge facilities for vessels along the Region's coastline remain limited.

Effectiveness of management for marine tourism

A comprehensive suite of management tools contributes to the management of sustainable tourism activities. Independent reviewers found management effectiveness for tourism in the Region was *very good to good*.