

January 20, 2024

Great Barrier Reef Drive opens today

The iconic Great Barrier Reef Drive opened at 8am today (Saturday January 20) providing a coastal route to Port Douglas and Daintree in addition the daily ferry service from Cairns and the scenic inland route via Mareeba and Mount Molloy.

Tourism Tropical North Queensland Chief Executive Officer Mark Olsen said the reopening was a significant milestone in the recovery for tourism operators north of Palm Cove and would help to increase the number of visitors in the region.

"Many tourism staff travel north for work, so the opening of the Great Barrier Reef Drive on the Captain Cook Highway also reconnects businesses in Port Douglas with their staff," he said.

"Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre has reopened giving visitors access to the southern section of Daintree National Park to see one of the world's oldest rainforests on a Ngadiku Dreamtime Walk with a Kuku Yalanji guide.

"Daintree village is a popular touring option with lunch available at the Daintree Village Hotel while wildlife cruises on the Daintree River are operated by Solar Whisper and Croc Express."

Kuku Yalanji Elder Uncle Roy Gibson, 67, whose dream led to the creation of the Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre said the recent flooding had covered the Mosman River's rocky bed in sand reminding him of his childhood days growing up in the Gorge.

"When I was about seven years old every time we had a big rain and flood, the river always had sand in it," he said.

"As the years go by the floods change the Gorge all the time and take away a lot of sand. It really came back with this big flood now, like it did 60 years ago.

"I heard a lot of rocks moving at night like thunder which makes your heart beat more and it feels like the flood is right next to your bed because I sleep beside the Gorge. I could hear rumbling, boom, bang. I heard that a long time ago and I think, wow, I'll never forget this. It's unbelievable. The rocks have been moved.

"The story we were told was about the serpent that comes along the river. Up in the mountain when it gets darker, that is the time the serpent comes out and that's when the old people said don't go to the river now, he is going to come along and take you. That story tells us not to go down there because there is going to be a flash flood."

Tour buses have been bringing visitors into Daintree village where they are tucking into burgers and fish and chips at the Daintree Village Hotel. Che and Trent Mulley took over the lease of the restaurant on the day Cyclone Jasper hit.

"We managed to open immediately after the severe flooding to give the locals somewhere to go and then the self-drive tourists started to trickle through," Che Mulley said.

"Within a week the tour buses arrived and we have been getting more than 100 tour bus passengers from the Cairns Adventure Group and Billy Tea Safaris a day for lunch."

Chris and Kun-ry Fah from Adelaide took advantage of the airline sales to take their children Iverson, 9, and Preston, 7, on a Cairns holiday. The family joined Billy Tea Safaris on January 18 to see the Daintree at

MEDIA RELEASE



Mossman Gorge and visit the Barron Falls Lookout and were enjoying their lunch at the Daintree Village Hotel. "We wanted to take the kids to see the Great Barrier Reef for the first time and they loved seeing a colourful giant clam and a shark. We did that with Evolution yesterday and now we have come to see the rainforest," Mr Fah said.

Honeymooners Melissa and Sean Stefani from the New South Wales Central coast were married on January 13 and arrived in Cairns on January 16 for a week-long holiday to see the reef and rainforest. The couple travelled on Quicksilver's daily boat service to Port Douglas on Thursday (January 18) to board a Wavepiercer to Quicksilver's Agincourt Reef pontoon. They were looking forward to exploring the rainforest on Friday and Saturday on a waterfall tour and river tubing with the Cairns Adventure Group.

The Clifford family from Melbourne had planned their Tropical North Queensland holiday earlier in the year and hired a car to drive the scenic inland route via Mareeba and Julatten to Port Douglas for a week's vacation. Andrew, Sarah and their children Max, 7, and Chloe, 9, are looking forward to returning to Cairns Airport via the Great Barrier Reef Drive on Monday.

There are three single lane closures on the Great Barrier Reef Drive with the drive from Cairns Airport to Port Douglas estimated to take 1.5 hours.

Visit the Daintree with the following tour operators:

Back Country Bliss
Billy Tea Safaris
Cairns Adventure Group
Daintree Discovery Tours
Down Under Tours
FNQ Nature Tours
Reef Unlimited
Tony' Tropical Tours
Tropic Wings
Uncle Brian's Tours
Walkabout Cultural Adventures

ENDS

Images: Credit Brian Cassey

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/k77oq9pxeb6ha1vts66l5/h?rlkey=lqaoer1o9cx09gj29bqqlw86&dl=0>

TTNQ Contact: Liz Inglis | liz.inglis@ttnq.org.au | 0419 643 494