

October 8, 2024

Cruise sector booms in Tropical North Queensland

The cruise season is underway in Tropical North Queensland with 14 scheduled visits in October including the Pacific Encounter today (October 8) with 2600 passengers ahead of a very busy November.

Tourism Tropical North Queensland Chief Executive Officer Mark Olsen said cruise ship visits to Cairns had increased by 90 per cent from 2019 to 2024 with 87 ships scheduled to arrive in the city.

"These ships will bring in around 140,000 passengers and 40,000 crew with an anticipated visitor spend of \$68 million," he said.

"Four of the ships are on their maiden voyage to Cairns and there were 22 days when we enjoyed the spectacle of having two ships in port.

"This year Cairns hosted 11 turnaround ships which have the potential to bring an even greater economic return to the region with passengers flying in or out of Cairns Airport and adding extra days to their holiday to explore the region.

"The crew also spend time in the region and most importantly the ships utilise local businesses to reprovision.

"The cruise market is a great boost to Tropical North Queensland during our low season with passengers dispersing on tours to Kuranda, the Atherton Tablelands, Port Douglas, the Daintree and the Great Barrier Reef.

"It is a great opportunity to showcase Tropical North Queensland to a different market and brings a boost to Port Douglas, Cooktown and Thursday Island with some ships also visiting those ports.

"Cruising is taking off globally with the Cruise Lines International Association predicting that an extra 460,000 people will cruise over the next four years. That's the equivalent of 153 new sailings of a 3000-passenger cruise ship.

"The cruise market has grown rapidly in Cairns since the completion of the Cairns Shipping Development project in 2020 which allowed vessels of up to 300m to be accommodated in the city.

"These vessels, such as the Pacific Encounter in Cairns today, can carry around 3000 passengers bringing a welcome boost to the 2500 tours that depart Cairns daily.

"TTNQ enjoys a strong partnership with Ports North and has undertaken much supporting work in the cruise space in recent years including publishing a cruise map promoting local businesses which volunteers give to passengers as they disembark.

"We are also helping our industry to connect with the sector and earlier this year hosted the TNQ Cruise Conference with seven cruise industry specialists from cruise lines and ground handling companies attending to speak with members."

Cairns Aquarium was ranked the favourite experience for shore excursions worldwide by passengers on Viking Cruises in 2024 after they created a cruise-specific tour for the market.

Owner Daniel Leipnik said wildlife educators escorted passengers from the boat on a bus to the Aquarium so they could talk about the Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics before touring its 71 exhibits.

MEDIA RELEASE



"Cruising is a significant part of the Cairns Aquarium business, accounting for roughly 10 per cent of our customers," he said.

"We have seen a 50 per cent increase in revenue from this sector largely due to the increased number of ships and the greater number overnighing in Cairns.

"Our Night at the Aquarium tours are perfect for cruise passengers wanting a late tour before they return to their ship for dinner, and we are also seeing bookings for private evening functions.

"The cruise sector is contributing to a noticeable growth in the international market for the Cairns Aquarium with many North American and European visitors flying into Sydney and arriving in Cairns via an east coast cruise.

"As a sign of confidence in the future growth of the cruise sector Cairns Aquarium is investing in a multi-million new product called The Tomb of the Pharoah that will open in June 2028 specifically targeting the cruise market."

ENDS

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