

Title:

The Great Barrier Reef: Australia's Tropical Paradise

Word Count:

469

Summary:

The Great Barrier Reef is located off the north-east coast of Australia, and is undoubtedly one of the most outstanding natural wonders of the world. It is a World Heritage listed park and is one of the foremost holiday destinations in Australia and the world.

Keywords:

great, barrier, reef, tour, travel, holiday, vacation, australia, tropical

Article Body:

The Great Barrier Reef is located off the north-east coast of Australia, and is undoubtedly one of the most outstanding natural wonders of the world. It is a World Heritage listed park and is one of the foremost holiday destinations in Australia and the world. It combines a fantastic climate, pristine native rainforests, white sandy beaches, and a shimmering turquoise green ocean, ensuring its reputation as a premier location in which to lie on the beach, swim, surf, snorkel and sail.

The Great Barrier Reef is scattered with beautiful islands and idyllic coral reefs and covers more than 300,000 square kilometres. The area abounds with wildlife, including dolphins, whales, dugong, green turtles, 1500 fish species, 200 bird species and 4000 types of mollusc. The reef system consists of around 3000 reefs ranging from 1 hectare to over 10,000 hectares in area.

The ideal conditions for coral are shallow warm water, plenty of water movement and light, and salty water low in nutrients. There are many different types of coral, some slow growing and living for hundreds of years, others faster growing. The colours of coral are created by algae. Only living coral is coloured. Dead coral is white.

The Great Barrier Reef's popularity is demonstrated by the fact that more than 2 million people visit the area each year, making tourism a major earner for the state of Queensland. More than 500 commercial vessels are available to transport tourists to the reef system, and tourism is permitted through nearly all the Park. A majority of the Reef forms part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Various parts of the Reef are protected: fishing is restricted in some areas, while particular animals including whales, dolphins, green turtles and dugong are all protected.

Coral reefs are sensitive to climate change, changes in water movement patterns, and physical damage. Problems such as global warming, the building of structures such as breakwaters, and excess nutrients from human settlements can have a negative effect on the reef system and the wildlife which depends upon it for survival. Tourism may also have a negative impact, with fragile corals broken by reef walking, dropped anchors or by boats dropping fuel and other sorts of pollution. Even large numbers of people in the water, with the associated run-off of sweat and suntan lotions, can have a negative impact on the reef's fragile environment.

Most visitors value the reef's beauty and diversity, which is after all why they visit. Tour operators and tourists as well as government agencies cooperate to develop sustainable tourism approaches over the medium to long term. Despite the challenges, the Great Barrier Reef remains one of the natural wonders of the world, a rich environment of extraordinary beauty with a diverse ecosystem, which makes its conservation essential. This will maintain the Reef as fantastic place to relax and enjoy Australia's natural heritage.