

General Tourism Operators



The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) released the *Hinchinbrook Plan of Management 2004* (the Plan) on 15 April 2004. The Plan is designed to protect the outstanding natural values of the Hinchinbrook region and to provide for the long-term sustainable use of this world famous area.

The Plan applies only to Commonwealth waters, which do not include the Hinchinbrook Channel. The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) is currently finalising a complementary management plan that will cover waters within the State Marine Park such as the Hinchinbrook Channel and intertidal waters.

This Information Sheet provides a brief overview of the concepts and strategies contained in the Plan, relating to tourism. You are encouraged to familiarise yourself with the relevant aspects of the Plan that relate to your activities or style of operation. This may be done by referring to the Plan or one of the specific Information Sheets listed below:

- Aircraft operators (recreational and commercial pilots)
- Cruise ship operators
- Boutique cruise operators
- Bareboat and hire operators
- Passenger transport and support service operators
- Guided tour operators (vessels less than 6 metres)
- Motorised water sports
- Hinchinbrook maps

Providing Tourism Opportunities

The Plan supports those tourism operators who have made a commitment to the Hinchinbrook Area. These operators provide a broad range of activities that meet community needs and present the outstanding values of the Hinchinbrook Area. Those operators have also made an investment that relies on the Area being managed in an ecologically sustainable way.



Growth in tourism is also encouraged throughout the Plan by:

- Providing for new guided tour and fishing guide operations using vessels 6 metres or less in length
- Providing for six new tourism permits for vessels up to 35 metres
- Removing closures that currently apply to certain locations
- Allowing cruise ships to visit the Area
- Allowing for an increase in the nature and scale of permitted tourism operations.

Although in excess of 420 tourism operators have permitted access to the Planning Area, the vast majority of those operations are based outside the Hinchinbrook Planning Area and do not access the Area regularly.

The Plan seeks to reduce this latency, as follows:

- In September 2004 the GBRMPA, in conjunction with the QPWS, will commence an eligibility determination process to identify those operators who have a history of operating in the Area.
- Permittees will be notified in writing when this process is to commence and be given sufficient time to prepare.
- Operators who meet these requirements, will be classed as an **Open Tour Operator**.
- Operators who **do not** meet these requirements are classed as a **Limited Tourism Operator**.

Open Tour Operator

*If you have a permit that allows more than 50 days access to the Hinchinbrook Planning Area, you should continue operating in accordance with your permit until you are invited to apply for recognition as an **Open Tour Operator** and a decision is made on your application.*

Limited Tour Operations and Long Range Roving Operations

If you have a permit that only allows entry into the Hinchinbrook Planning Area for a maximum of 50 days per year, you are classed as a **Limited Tour Operator**. Your permit is designed to allow you to visit the Hinchinbrook Planning Area from time to time, but it is not intended to provide for the establishment of a permanent tourism operation based in the Area. *From now on, you must:*

- *Make a booking before accessing the Hinchinbrook Planning Area*
- *Make a booking before accessing a Sensitive Location*
- *Comply with management settings (vessel and group size limits) in each Location.*

Vessel and aircraft operators who are limited to 50 days per year may still **transit** the Hinchinbrook Planning Area an unlimited amount of times.

Transiting means to travel by the most direct and reasonable route without deviating or stopping.

If you hold a permit as a **Long Range Roving Operator**, you may now apply to access the Area up to 100 days per year without a booking.

Cruise ship operations should refer to the CRUISE SHIP OPERATORS Information Sheet for specific management arrangements.

*To book, please call the "Hinchinbrook Bookings Hotline" on **0427 374979**.*

Vessel and Group Size Limits

Management Settings have been applied to "**Locations**" within the Hinchinbrook Planning Area reflecting their conservation or aesthetic values. Some Locations have an exceptional combination of natural, scientific, cultural and World Heritage values and have been classed as **Sensitive Locations**.

Management Settings

- Each Location has been assigned one of three management settings, which include assigning maximum vessels length and group size limits (see Table 1).
- Maps showing Locations and management settings are available in the HINCHINBROOK MAPS Information Sheet.

Table 1: Vessel and group size limits for Locations in the Hinchinbrook Planning Area

MANAGEMENT SETTING	DESCRIPTION	MAX GROUP SIZE ** (tourism operations only)	MAX VESSEL LENGTH (all vessels)
Intensive Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immediately adjacent to resorts Intensive tourism and recreational use e.g. Dunk Island Spit Location	No limit	35 metres
Moderate Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural setting; moderate level of visitation High nature conservation e.g. Goold Island	30	35 metres
Low Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural setting; low levels of visitation High nature conservation e.g. Ramsay Bay	15	35 metres

**The maximum group size limits include both passengers and crew.

All vessels (recreational and tourism) must:

- Use the vessel transit lanes when accessing Missionary Bay if the vessel is longer than 20 metres
- Remain outside specific Locations unless specifically endorsed to do so if the vessel is longer than 35 metres (boutique cruise vessels may enter the Dunk Island Spit Location).

Access arrangements for Sensitive Locations

To protect the special values associated with Sensitive Locations and still allow these areas to be experienced, access for vessel tour operators is managed through a booking system.

- You can visit Sensitive Locations for up to 50 days per year providing you make a prior booking.
- There are limits to the amount of bookings that will be accepted to each Sensitive Location. These limits are listed at Schedule 4 of the Plan.
- Motorised water sports operators and vessels in excess of 35 metres (including cruise ships) must not access Sensitive Locations unless specifically endorsed.
- A number of sites that were once closed to tourism operators are now open under the Plan subject to a booking - you may need to apply to amend your permit to allow access to these locations.
- Some styles of operation may be exempted from the booking requirement (see Table 2 and Information Sheets).

To book, please call the "Hinchinbrook Bookings Hotline" on **0427 374979**.

Table 2: Tourism operations that may be exempt from 50-day access and the booking requirement to Sensitive Locations

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> non-motorised craft operations (e.g. guided kayak tours) passenger transport operations (e.g. camper and ferry transfers) guided interpretive tours (e.g. fishing tours with <6m vessel) an operation that has obtained an exemption through the eligibility determination process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> hire operations (e.g. dinghies, sail boards) craftless operations (e.g. piggy-back operations) support service operations (e.g. chase boats) bareboats (e.g. rent-a-yachts)
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Sensitive Locations in the Hinchinbrook Planning Area are: Bowden (Budg-Joo) Island, Brook Islands, Coombe Island, East coast of Hinchinbrook Island, Eva Island, Hudson (Coolah) Island, Macushla, Missionary Bay, Mound (Purtaboi) Island, Mulligan Bay, Picnic Beach Location, Ramsay Bay, Shepherd Bay, Smith Island, Wheeler (Toolgbar) Island and Zoe Bay.



Certain Permit Restrictions Lifted

For the past few years, the issuing of permits for conduct of tourism activities in the Hinchinbrook Planning Area was bound by Interim Arrangements agreed by the Australian and Queensland governments. With the introduction of the Plan, these Interim Arrangements no longer apply. This means that some styles of operation may now apply to increase the nature or scale of their operation, or to be exempted from their current 50-day limit on access to the Area (see Table 3 and Information Sheets).

Table 3: Tourism operations that may be exempt from 50-day access and the booking requirement to the Planning Area

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• non-motorised craft operations (e.g. guided kayak tours)• passenger transport operations (e.g. camper and ferry transfers)• guided interpretive tours (e.g. fishing tours with <6m vessel)• an operation that has obtained an exemption through the eligibility determination process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• hire operations (e.g. dinghies, sail boards)• craftless operations (e.g. piggy-back operations)• support service operations (e.g. chase boats)• motorised water sports (e.g. jet ski tours)• bareboats (eg. rent-a-yachts)
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Moorings and other installations such as pontoons

Recognising that installations such as moorings and pontoons may lead to displacement of other users in the area - the Plan will allow the installation of these structures:

- In intensive use locations
- Outside the Locations
- At Cape Richards as a service mooring.

The Plan also allows for the installation of public moorings to manage anchor damage in high use areas, or areas susceptible to anchor damage.

Additional permits

The GBRMPA is committed to fostering a sustainable and vibrant tourism industry in the Hinchinbrook Planning Area. The Plan allows issue of up to six new tourism permits for vessels up to 35 metres that will have all year access to the Area. Three of these permits will be reserved for Traditional Indigenous inhabitants who can demonstrate affiliations with the area. Expressions of interest will be called for once an allocation system has been prepared.

Further Information

The Plan and Information Sheets can be downloaded free from the GBRMPA web site at www.gbrmpa.gov.au. Alternatively, you may obtain a copy of the Plan (\$10 charge will apply) or any Information Sheet (no charge) by contacting the GBRMPA or the Rainforest and Reef Information Centre in Cardwell (07 4066 8601).

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