

BOUTIQUE CRUISE 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 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 boutique cruise ships. 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
- GENERAL TOURISM OPERATORS
- BAREBOAT AND HIRE OPERATORS
- PASSENGER TRANSPORT AND SUPPORT SERVICE OPERATORS
- GUIDED TOUR OPERATORS (vessels less than 6 metres)
- MOTORISED WATER SPORTS
- HINCHINBROOK MAPS

Access Arrangements for boutique cruise vessels

The Hinchinbrook area provides a unique, natural experience for passengers on boutique cruise ships. The Plan provides for this style of operation to visit the area and for the passengers to experience these distinctive qualities.

The Plan refers to boutique cruise vessels as 'crewed large vessel operations'. These are tourist operations that use vessels between 35 metres and 70 metres in overall length. Tourist operations that use vessels in excess of 70 metres are classed as 'cruise ship operations'.

Crewed large vessel operations are split into Limited Tour Operations and Open Tour Operations.

Limited Tour Operations

- All new permitted crewed large vessel operations will be classed as Limited Tour Operations.
- Existing permitted crewed large vessel operations with no more than 50-days access to the Hinchinbrook Planning Area are also classed as Limited Tour Operations.
- Crewed large vessel operations must make a prior booking to visit the Hinchinbrook Planning Area; and
- A crewed large vessel operation may transit the Hinchinbrook Planning Area without making a booking, providing they do not transit through any designated Locations, (i.e. approach closer than 500 metres to any island or reef).

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

- A crewed large vessel operation may not access any designated Location except the Dunk Island Spit Intensive use Location. Maps showing Locations and management settings are available in the HINCHINBROOK MAPS Information Sheet.



- Boutique cruise vessels may transit a designated Location on the way to or from a cruise ship anchorage for which a booking has been made. For instance, a boutique cruise vessel may wish to transit through the Missionary Bay transit lanes on its way to the Hecate Point cruise ship anchorage.

Note: Missionary Bay, outside the transit lanes, has a 20-metre vessel length restriction.

Open Tour Operations

The Plan acknowledges historical use and therefore some existing crewed large vessel operators may be eligible for exemptions to some of the above-mentioned provisions. 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.

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 exemptions and a decision is made on your application. Operators who meet these requirements will be classed as Open Tour Operators, operators who do not, will be classed as Limited Tour Operators.

Anchoring

On a visit to the Hinchinbrook Planning Area, you may anchor at one of two designated anchorages or outside any of the designated Locations. Maps showing Locations and management settings are available in the HINCHINBROOK MAPS Information Sheet.

Both the Cape Richards and the Hecate Point anchorages have been identified as safe and appropriate positions for cruise ships to anchor (refer to Map 1).

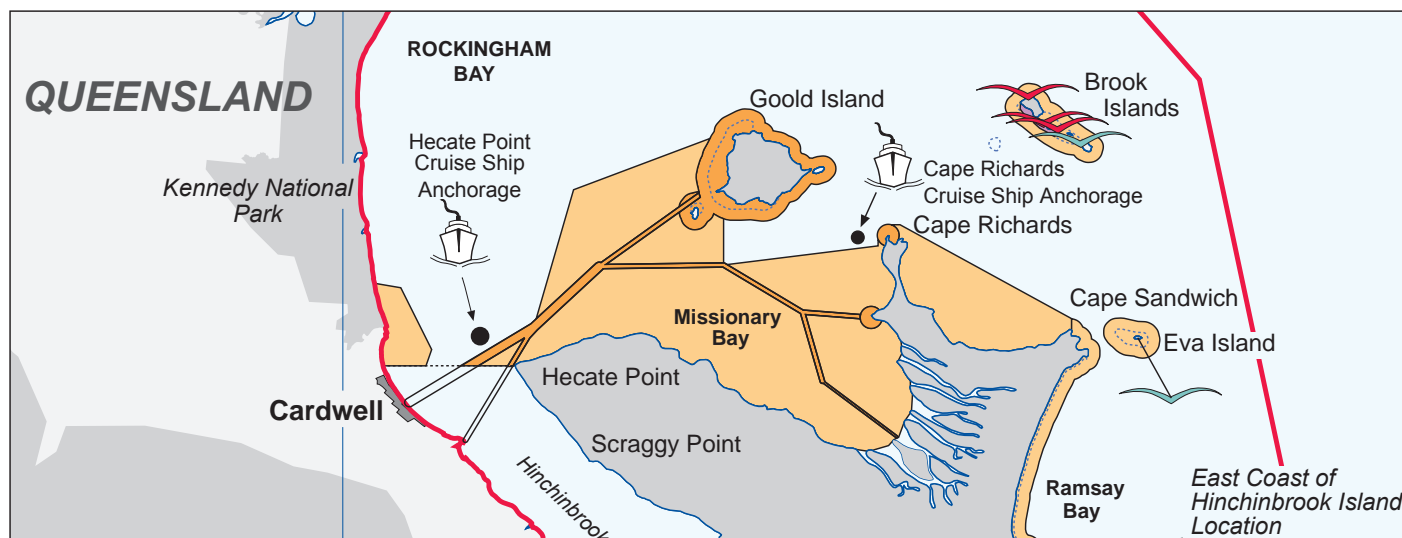
Cape Richards Cruise Ship Anchorage:

Within a 250 metre radius around the point 18° 11.70'S, 146° 12.70' E.

Hecate Point Cruise Ship Anchorage:

Within a 500 metre radius around the point 18° 14.00'S, 146° 3.50'E.

MAP 1: POSITION OF CRUISE SHIP ANCHORAGES



Two other cruise ship anchorages were proposed in the draft management plans that are no longer in the final management plans:

- due to insufficient depth, the proposed position for the Dunk Island anchorage was moved westerly, resulting in its new position falling outside the Hinchinbrook Planning Area. Operators may still apply to access this anchorage as part of a reef wide permit; and
- the proposed position of Goold Island anchorage underwent an environmental assessment and was deemed not suitable due to the presence of seagrass meadows in the vicinity.



To make a booking please email the GBRMPA at cruise.bookings@gbrmpa.gov.au or phone **(07) 4750 0775**.

Tenders

You may only use tenders to transport passengers between the vessel and an island, the mainland, a tourist facility in the Planning Area (e.g. a jetty) or elsewhere outside the Planning Area. Local permitted operators are available to conduct any additional tourist activities.

Commercial access to National Parks adjacent to the Planning Area (eg Lumholtz National Park and Island National Parks) requires a Commercial Activity Permit from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

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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