

Reef and Rainforest Cruise

Dates:

Monday 2nd November to Tuesday, 10th November 2009

9 days

Cost: \$4,200 plus *

Style: Live aboard

Start and Finish: Cairns

Explore the rainforest clad islands and reefs of the Great Barrier Reef between Cairns and Townsville. Enjoy the adventure of a lifetime - cruising in one of the world's most attractive and biodiverse regions. Discover the magic of this wild, remote and minimally disturbed region by boat when the Coral Sea is usually calmest. See beautiful fascinating places missed by passengers on the bigger boats and by those who are confined to wheeled transport including the wild and rugged Hinchinbrook Island. It meets all four natural World Heritage criteria. Encounter a diversity of rainforest types, hundreds of species of fish, coral and birdlife, as well as fruit bats, turtles and crocodiles. Snorkel in clear azure seas. It is timed to coincide with the coral spawning (5 nights after the November Full Moon) and the peak breeding season.

* Cost: The list price is for passengers in the bunk cabins. There will be an additional charge for the deluxe stateroom cabins, (+ \$300 pp) and (+ \$150 pp) for the other staterooms.

This will be the last **GO BUSH** safari led by **John Sinclair and Ian Morris** before John Sinclair's retirement. They have led similar safaris in the Far Northern Section of the Great Barrier Reef as well as Papua New Guinea and have chosen this area because of the outstanding qualities of this very rich and diverse section of the Great Barrier Reef including areas with the greatest diversity of mangroves in Australia as well as some of the oldest and most complex rainforest on Earth. John Sinclair has been exploring this area for almost 50 years. Ian, an outstanding naturalist, specializes in all tropical wildlife.

This cruise allows up to 40 passengers to live aboard **Coral Princess**, a large catamaran with twin share air-conditioned ensuite cabins (without bunks). Excursions to explore the reef, shore or the adjacent rainforest will be made by runabouts. This safari offers a unique opportunity to explore this dramatic reef-rainforest interface. This is particularly demonstrable at Hinchinbrook Island and the surrounding areas that are the main focus of this cruise.

Draft Itinerary

Day 1; Monday, 2nd November: GO BUSH Safaris will collect safarists from their Cairns accommodation at starting from the airport and working south from 8.30 am. We hope to be joined by some guests who have special rainforest expertise in the Wet Tropics and who will show you aspects of this region few are privileged to know. After morning tea and a swim at Babinda Boulders we will proceed via Innisfail and up the Palmerston Highway to Ma Mu. This is a new facility has magnificent canopy top boardwalk cantilevered out across the spectacular Johnstone River Gorge and viewing platforms traversing the canopy of the World Heritage Wooroonooren National overlooking the Johnston River Gorge. After lunch and exploring some waterfalls near Millaa Millaa proceed to motel accommodation at Atherton.

Day 2; Tuesday, 3rd November (Full Moon): We plan to return to Cairns via the Gillies Highway to Cairns stopping at some magnificent rainforest features including the famous Curtain and Cathedral figs and Lake Barrine. Depending on the time and weather we may anticipate exploring a special area of private rainforest to get a fuller appreciation of why the Wet Tropics have World Heritage listing. We plan to board the "Coral Princess" at Cairns at 4.30 pm and after settling into the comfortable cabins watch the sun go down over Cape Grafton and simultaneously watch the full-moon rise out of the sea (with a glass of champagne in hand) while we head out to anchor near the rainforest covered Fitzroy Island.

Lucinda: High Tide 3.12m @ 9.04 am — Low tide 1.20m @ 3.04 pm

Day 3; Wednesday, 4th November: As the sun rises we will start motoring down one of the most beautiful sections of coast in Australia lined by the Graham Range and other ranges as we head to Dunk Island. This will be a day for exploring the wonderful coral gardens of the Great Barrier Reef with both morning and afternoon opportunities to explore above and below the water. The "Coral Princess" has snorkelling and SCUBA equipment as well as a glass bottom boat and instructors to help safarists really appreciate this great natural wonder of the world.

Lucinda: High Tide 3.12m @ 9.47 am — Low tide 1.32m @ 3.53 pm

Day 4; Thursday 5th November: Move on to Dunk Island. There will be some time to go shore here before moving on to anchor overnight near the uninhabited Wheeler Island with its pleasant coral free beach. This will allow the more adventurous to make a nocturnal foray in the glass bottom boats up the nearby wild Hull River after dinner to spotlight for crocodiles. The disastrous Edmund Kennedy expedition of 1848 landed near here and were unable to move either around the rugged headlands or through the rainforest and mangrove estuaries for weeks. This ultimately contributed to their tragedy of most dying of starvation. The Hull River is one of the least appreciated gems of the Wet Tropics.

Lucinda: High Tide 3.04m @ 10.38 am - Low tide 1.47m @ 4.59 pm

Day 5; Friday, 6th November: If conditions allow we will explore some of the eastern side of Hinchinbrook prior to going ashore at Cape Richards to walk to Macushla passing through the rainforest featuring some endemic palms and along North Shepherd Beach. Spend some time exploring the mangroves of Missionary Bay. Special management strategies apply to areas around Hinchinbrook Island to protect natural, cultural and socio-economic values. In the afternoon we plan to take up a position adjacent to a nearby coral reef to snorkel and to watch the sunset and to prepare for possible coral spawning.

Coral may spawn on this night but more likely the next night.

Lucinda: High Tide 2.93m @ 11.40 am - Low tide 1.55 @ 6.58 pm

Day 6; Saturday 7th November: As we make our way out to explore more coral reefs we will pass the Brook Islands the nesting ground for tens of thousands of Torresian Pigeons that daily commute to dine on the fruits of the rich rfs on the adjacent mainland. The posupation of pigeons here has made a remarkable recovery following the efforts of the indefatigable conservationists Margaret and Arthur Thorsborne who stopped the hunting parties that had decimated the pigeon population up to the 1970s. The "Coral Princess" will anchor to allow a couple of opportunities for safarists to explore coral reefs off the Cassowary Coast. **Coral should spawn on this night.** After dinner witness the amazing coral spawning.

Lucinda: High Tide 2.84m @ 1.01 pm - Low tide 1.00m @ 5.32am

Day 7; Sunday 8th November: Cruise down the spectacular Hinchinbrook Channel flanked by the Cardwell Ranges to the west and island's rugged granite mountains to the east. In beautiful Deluge Inlet the scenery changes from dense mangrove forests to lush rainforest as one progresses deeper into this wonderland. Many freshwater fish can be seen while crocodile may laze on the sandy banks. Also while progressing down the channel there may be an opportunity to explore other side inlets including Paluma Creek. Anchor near the south of Hinchinbrook. This area has the Great Barrier Reef's greatest diversity of coral species. We aim to explore Britomart or Trunk Reef and anchor there overnight. **Coral may spawn on this night.** During the 2008 GO BUSH safari to Lady Musgrave Island most spawning occurred on the 6th night after the full moon.

Lucinda: High Tide 2.85m @ 2.34 pm - Low tide 1.16m @ 7.15am

Day 8; 9th November: There will be more opportunities to explore reefs at the southern end of Hinchinbrook and in the Palm Group. It is planned to explore Trunk or Rib Reef or Orpheus Island before moving to Pelorus, the Coral Princess's favourite tropical island. Admire the colourful corals from the glass bottom boat with the Marine Biologist. After lunch, explore the surrounding rainforest on a guided nature walk. Pelorus' fringing reef, in the shallow waters just metres off the beach. It offers some fantastic snorkelling opportunities. Pelorus offers a calm anchorage for our traditional GO BUSH last night party on an "islander" theme.

Lucinda: High Tide 2.94m @ 3.49 pm — Low tide 1.18m @ 9.02 am

Day 9; Tuesday, 10th November: Cross Halifax Bay, passing close to Magnetic Island before arriving in Townsville at 10:00am. After allowing time to explore the spectacular reef HQ aquarium one of Townsville's great attractions GO BUSH will provide a bus to the Garbutt Airport via Castle Hill to enable passengers to catch flights afternoon south. Qantas flights to Brisbane and points south leave in the early afternoon.

Lucinda: High Tide 3.02m @ 4.45 pm - Low tide 1.11m @ 10.20 am

Summary of Hinchinbrook Island's World Heritage Values

- * geological and geomorphologic process and features of Hinchinbrook Island and Channel
- * the high diversity of Brook Island coral reefs and their outstanding scenic properties
- * the visual splendour and outstanding diversity of the mangrove communities of Hinchinbrook Island and Channel
- * the extremely high floristic diversity of Hinchinbrook Island lowlands
- * the critical habitat of seagrasses and associated threatened marine animals
- * the present high levels of integrity associated with the site

NOTE: This itinerary is a guide only. It has to be flexible and is subject to variation due to tides, weather conditions and any limitations imposed by the managers of the Great Barrier Reef and its islands.



The Coral Princess



6 Cabins



5 Staterooms



8 Upper Deck Staterooms



6 Deluxe Staterooms

