

MEDIA RELEASE

A WHALE OF A TIME ON THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

Port Douglas, August 14, 2019 – It's not too late to catch some last-minute whale action on the Great Barrier Reef with a just few weeks left of their annual migration to the warmer northern waters of the Coral Sea.

Thousands of visitors have been wowed already by the wondrous white whale Migaloo along with other humpbacks and dwarf minke since early July.

The sightings have been as close as Low Isles, just off the coast of Port Douglas, along with the outer Reef's of Agincourt, Opal and McKay.

The winter months are the best time of year to see both Migaloo and other humpback whales at the termination of their annual migration from the cold of Antarctica to the warmth of Tropical North Queensland. It is here they mate and give birth.

Called everything from a ghost to an iceberg, Migaloo is not hard to miss if you know where – or how - to look. He's a 40 tonne, 15-metre white mammal in a blue sea.

But he can be elusive and the best chance of seeing Migaloo (White Fulla) is going out with an experienced cruise and dive operator such as Divers Den (AquaQuest), Poseidon, and Silversonic.

Dwarf minke whales are also off Port Douglas, and these curious cousins of humpbacks will often approach snorkellers in the water.

Tourism Port Douglas and Daintree executive officer Tara Bennett said catching sight of any whale, especially Migaloo, is a true pinch-me moment.

“Those who have seen Migaloo, who celebrates his 30th birthday this year, are incredibly lucky.

“More than 35,000 humpbacks migrate up the East Coast of Australia every year so now is the best time to get out on the water in the hope of seeing one.”

Charlotte Barbosa, scuba diving training instructor with Divers Den (AquaQuest), said the whale season came as a complete surprise for many visitors to the Great Barrier Reef.

“The acrobatic displays of humpbacks as we move to and from the reef are very exciting for all, with breaching and tail dives.

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“We rarely see these huge creatures under water- but it always draws customers to the bow or upper sundecks to view these animals passing through this area.

“They are delighted when we have a whale encounter on the way to and from the reef – it’s a special addition to an already amazing day.”

Ms Barbosa said the dwarf minke whales provided an interaction in the water, approaching divers and snorkelers during these months.

“They are not predicable but we see them on many days, where they seem to appear from nowhere.

“No one knows why they are drawn to people and boats, but it makes an exciting interaction for us – and a one of kind experience in Australia.”

Ms Barbosa said not much is known about the migration of the dwarf minke whale through the Great Barrier Reef each year, but it is well known that during winter months they gather around the Northern Great Barrier reef, especially in the Port Douglas to Lizard island region.

“Most of our guests want to know more about them and why they are here – as most have never heard of a dwarf minke whale.”

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