

Whitsundays

Eguide

The Whitsundays, is a collection of 74 islands, most of them uninhabited. There are three areas, the town of Proserpine, Airlie Beach and the Whitsunday Islands.

The name Whitsunday was given by Captain Cook who named the Whitsunday Passage when he passed through on Whitsunday on the third June 1770.

Most of the islands are now part of a National Park, the prominent exceptions being Hamilton Island and Hayman Island, which are privately owned. Hamilton Island has an airport.

There are resort locations on various islands. Plenty of day trips to islands are available at moderate prices, or you can just get on one of the many ferries and spend the day where you wish. Boats leave from Shute Harbour, nine kilometres east of Airlie Beach.

The Coral Sea level rose after the last Ice Age and left a series of islands which formed into coral reefs.

The first inhabitants were the Ngaro and Giru tribes. Remnants of their life can be found on Hook Island and South Molle Island.

The Whitsunday islands vary from small rocks to large fertile islands. In amongst the islands are many places for boats to safely anchor and so make the Whitsundays an excellent area for sailing and cruising. Resort developments are limited and many islands have no accommodation on them.

Airlie Beach

Airlie Beach owes its popularity, gradually increasing over the years, to its proximity to the Whitsunday Islands.

Airlie Beach being cheaper encourages many visitors to stay at Airlie Beach and travel by ferry to one of the islands for the day, or take a cruise around the various islands. None of the islands is more than an hour away by boat.

The main street is Shute Harbour Road with lots of cafes, restaurants, shops and more. There is no beach in Airlie Beach but there is a swimming lagoon. Airlie Beach has an active nightlife with many pubs and bars.

Daydream Island

Daydream Island is not part of the National Park and is the site of Daydream Island Resort. On the central hill of this small island is dense tropical vegetation which provides a home for colourful tropical birds, especially parrots and sunbirds. Daydream Island is 15 minutes ferry ride from Shute Harbour with Blue Ferries.



Long Island

There are twenty kilometres of walking tracks on the island, including some of the best walking in the Whitsundays. Long Island is close to Airlie Beach and water taxis link the Long Island resorts to the mainland. Most of the island is a national park.



Hamilton Island

Level with Long Island, but on the outside of the Whitsunday Passage is Hamilton Island, the most famous of the Whitsunday Islands. This is a privately owned island with an airport offering commercial flights to and from Brisbane, Townsville, Cairns, Brampton Island, Sydney and Melbourne.

Hamilton Island has a number of accommodation options for different budgets.

Hayman Island

Hayman Island is a small island at the northern tip of the group, and is privately owned with a five star resort.

Hook Island

Just south of Hayman Island is the much larger Hook Island. This is one of the few islands upon which camping is permitted. There are walking trails and two substantial peaks, of which the higher is Hook Peak at 459 metres. At Nara Inlet, at the south of the island, there are aboriginal cave paintings. There is also an underwater observatory nine metres beneath the surface of the sea off the island. This is a popular island for day visits.

Lindeman Island

Home of Club Med resort. There is an airstrip for light aircraft. The island has some pleasant walks, but is a little too far away from Shute Harbour to be popular for day trips.

South Molle Island

South Molle Island is also near the mainland. South Molle Island Resort is situated here.

There are a number of walking trails to the peak of the Island which rises to 195 metres. Blue Ferries operate the transfer service.

North Molle Island

North Molle is not much visited.





Prosperine

Prosperine is the administrative centre for the Whitsundays. The town has some art deco buildings. Upstream from the town is Prosperine Lake .



Shute Harbour

10 kms east of Airlie Beach an inlet with lots of boats. Shute harbour is where most of the island transfer departs from. Secure parking is available at the harbour.

Whitehaven Beach

Whitehaven Beach is seven kilometres of fine white sand and contrasts with the blue sea to make for classical brochure shots.

Whitsunday Island

This is the largest of the islands and is not developed. Whitehaven beach is found on the island and a very popular day trip. Camping is allowed at the south end of Whitehaven Beach but has no facilities.



Whitsunday Island

Famous for the six-kilometre Whitehaven Beach on the eastern side of the island and popular for day trips. The island is uninhabited, though, and camping is not permitted.



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