

5. ISLAND TOURIST RESORTS

Island resort tourism is the predominant reason for human occupation of islands in the Reef Region. However, only 2 percent of islands and cays of the Reef Region are involved. Twenty-four "resorts" are currently operating on 16 continental islands and three coral cays.

Resorts may be defined as self contained accommodation facilities where meals and a bar are provided for guests. Other facilities offered by individual resorts define their characteristics. One resort is world famous for game fishing, while others emphasise diving or general watersports. While one resort per island is the norm, some islands house a number of facilities. Private ownership of accommodation is available on some islands. Magnetic Island is an exception to all other resort islands in that in some respects it is a suburb of Townsville and has a considerable permanent population (around 2 000 people) as well as holiday accommodation and a number of resort facilities. The Australian Bureau of Statistics classifies five of the facilities on Magnetic Island as "resorts".

The standards and price of accommodation vary from commercial camping facilities to "international" standard establishments. To some extent, the resort market is segmented, though the low cost end of the market is less well catered for.

The list of activities available at island resorts is long and diverse, as marine based, island based and resort orientated activities are offered. Included are swimming, snorkelling, fishing, diving, sailing, windsurfing, boating, parafling, water skiing, reef walking, coral viewing, sunbaking, bushwalking, tennis, golf, horseback riding, eating, drinking, dancing, and relaxing.

Island resort tourism is perhaps the best documented of Reef Region uses, though gaps in statistical information exist. An estimate of the number of visitors to island resorts in 1947 put the number at 5 000 (Claringbold *et al.*, 1984). Current resort visitation is around 150 000 guests per annum (QTTC, 1986 b) and so a thirty-fold increase in resort visitation has occurred in just under forty years.

Reliable statistics have been collected and published by the ABS since 1976. Resort infrastructure has increased significantly since that year, with the number of rooms available more than doubling (Table 25).

In the two years from 1983 to 1985, the number of rooms has increased by 26 percent and the number of beds has increased by 27 percent (ABS, various years). The reduction in resort numbers in 1986 is due to closure of resorts for re-development.

Table 25. Island resort infrastructure.

Year*	Number of resorts	Number of rooms	Number of beds
1976	19	785	2175
1977	18	841	2421
1978	19	930	2660
1979	19	936	2655
1980	19	1030	3020
1981	19	1038	3172
1982	21	1143	3508
1983	22	1297	3971
1984	22	1403	4271
1985	24	1635	5057
1986	22	1536	4805

*June quarter figures
(Australian Bureau of Statistics, various years)

Tourism to island resorts has kept pace with expansion of facilities with a 101 percent increase in visitor nights from 1976/77 to 1985/86. Growth in visitor nights has accelerated in recent years with a 17.5 percent increase from 1983/84 to 1984/85. The year 1984/85 to 1985/86 saw more moderate growth with a 6.5 percent increase in visitor nights (ABS, various years).

Table 26. Visitor nights, island resorts.

Year	Visitor nights	Percentage change
1976/77	375 600	
1977/78	409 300	+ 8.9
1978/79	439 200	+ 7.3
1979/80	524 600	+19.5
1980/81	552 100	+ 5.2
1981/82	553 200	+ 0.2
1982/83	552 400	- 0.1
1983/84	604 300	+ 9.4
1984/85	709 800	+17.5
1985/86	756 100	+ 6.5

(Australian Bureau of Statistics, various years)

Currently, a considerable amount of investment is being made in building new island resorts and in the re-development and extension of existing resorts. Plans to build or extend resorts are reported to exist for 14 islands (Peat, Marwick, Mitchell Services, 1986). Current plans have been projected to lead to a doubling of rooms available from 1 440 to around 2 880 at a cost of \$650 million (Hogarth, 1986). This expansion is planned over a number of years and not all plans are certainties. Concrete examples of recent development include the Hamilton Island Resort which opened in 1983 and the re-development of the Hayman Island Resort in 1985/86.

Island resorts enjoy relatively high occupancy (over 50 percent of rooms) all year round, with peak season extending from July to January. Room occupancy in 1985 is shown on Table 27.

Table 27. Room occupancy, island resorts, 1985.

Month	Occupancy rate (percent)
January	76.3
February	53.6
March	57.0
April	56.7
May	59.5
June	51.1
July	66.1
August	79.5
September	80.0
October	75.9
November	71.4
December	67.5

(Australian Bureau of Statistics, various years)

A second source of statistics on people staying in island resorts has become available since 1982/83. This information is provided by the QTTC as part of their statewide survey of accommodation in commercial establishments (Cameron McNamara, 1983; QTTC, 1985c; 1986b, 1986c). The ABS quarterly survey of island resorts gathers information from resort operators while the QTTC survey relies on survey forms filled in by a sample of guests.

The QTTC survey covers "establishments offering hotel or motel type facilities". The ABS figures on the number of visitor nights spent at island resorts are generally lower than those from the QTTC but are reasonably close. The QTTC figures also show a significant increase in island resort tourism with a 36 percent increase from 1982/83 to 1985/86 being contributed to greatly by the growth between 1983/84 and 1984/85 of 20 percent.

Table 28. Visitor nights, island resorts.

Year	Australian Bureau of Statistics	Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation
1982/83	552 389	600 000
1983/84	604 266	660 000
1984/85	709 800	790 000
1985/86	756 100	820 000

(Australian Bureau of Statistics, various years; Cameron McNamara 1983; Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation 1985c, 1986b, 1986c).

To place these figures in perspective, it is useful to compare them with data on tourism in commercial accommodation for Queensland as a whole, and the mainland regions adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef.

Accommodation facilities in terms of rooms available in hotels/motels as recorded by the ABS are shown in Table 28. Great Barrier Reef island resorts are recorded with the adjacent mainland statistical divisions, so double counting does occur in this table.

Thus, the total Great Barrier Reef island resorts plus adjacent mainland provide 11 279 guest rooms, or 42.7 percent of Queensland's hotel and motel accommodation capacity.

Table 29. Rooms available, Queensland and selected regions, June 1986.

	Number of guest rooms	Percentage of state total
Great Barrier Reef Islands	1 536	5.8
Fitzroy Statistical Division	2 341	8.8
Mackay Statistical Division	2 480	9.4
Northern Statistical Division	2 028	7.7
Far North Statistical Division	2 894	11.0
Queensland	26 308	100.0

(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1986)

In terms of visits, the Great Barrier Reef and adjacent mainland regions attracted 26 percent of the Queensland total visitor numbers and 23 percent of visitor nights in 1985/86 (QTTC, 1986b). Once again, double counting occurs in Table 30 as the visitors to island resorts are also included in the totals for the mainland regions.

Table 30 . Visits to Queensland and selected regions, 1984/85.

	Visitor numbers	Visitor nights	Visitor nights as a percentage of the Queensland total
Great Barrier Reef Island Resorts	150 000	820 000	2.9
Rockhampton/Gladstone	510 000	1 220 000	4.3
Mackay/Proserpine	370 000	1 450 000	5.1
Townsville/Bowen	500 000	1 200 000	4.2
Cairns/Tablelands	410 000	2 860 000	10.1
Queensland	6 630 000	28 180 000	100.0

(Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation, 1986c)

The increases in visitors to Great Barrier Reef island resorts should be put into perspective. Visits to island resorts increased at a slightly slower rate over the last three years than did visits to Queensland. The increases for Queensland mean that at current rates, the number of people staying in commercial accommodation would double in less than eight years.

Table 31. Queensland and selected regions, change in visitor nights.

	Percentage change visitor nights			
	1982/83 to 1983/84	1983/84 to 1984/85	1984/85 to 1985/86	Three year average
Great Barrier Reef Island Resorts	+10	+19.6	+ 3.7	+11.1
Rockhampton/Gladstone	-10	+43	+ 5	+12.6
Mackay/Proserpine	-14	+11.6	+16	+ 4.5
Townsville/Bowen	-4	+10.4	+13.2	+ 6.5
Cairns/Tablelands	+15	+18.4	+23	+18.6
Queensland	+ 7.6	+21.3	+15.3	+14.7

(Cameron McNamara, 1983; Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation 1985c, 1986b, 1986c)

A considerable amount of information on people who visit island resorts may be gained from the OTTC survey. The majority of tourists, as would be expected, state the purpose of their visit as holiday/recreation. The main means of transport is by air and this may be compared with travel in Queensland in general which is overwhelmingly by car.

Table 32. Trip purpose.

Year	Holiday/recreation %	Business %	Other %
1982/83	94	1	5
1983/84	87	3	10
1984/85	93	1	6

(Cameron McNamara, 1983; Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation 1985c, 1986b)

Table 33. Main transport used.

Year	Air %	Bus %	Car %	Other %
1982/83	64	20	15	1
1983/84	62	7	27	5
1984/85	67	12	19	3

(Cameron McNamara, 1983; Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation 1985c, 1986b)

Island tourist resorts attract a greater proportion of overseas and interstate visitors than does Queensland as a whole. In 1984/85 the visitor composition was interstate 63 percent, Queensland 19 percent and overseas 18 percent.

Table 34. Origin of visitors.

Year	Queensland %	Interstate %	Overseas %
1982/83	21	58	21
1983/84	31	43	27
1984/85	19	63	18

(Cameron McNamara, 1983; Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation 1985c, 1986b, 1986c)

The attractions of island resorts include the climate, the reef, the scenery, the resort entertainment and the opportunity to relax. In answer to the question "what were the two most important features that attracted you to this island?" the following were given as the top five attractions.

Table 35. Attractions to island resorts.

Percentage of visitors nominating attractions					
1982/83		1983/84		1984/85	
%		%		%	
Barrier Reef	21	Warm sunny		Warm sunny	
Warm sunny		weather	19	weather	24
weather	15	Barrier Reef	16	Barrier Reef	16
Tropical scenery	15	Relaxing quiet		Relaxing quiet	
Entertainment	8	place	9	place	11
Beach, water		Beach, water		Beach, water	
activities	5	activities	8	activities	10
		Entertainment	7	Entertainment	7

(Cameron McNamara, 1983; Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation 1985c, 1986b)

Survey respondents were also asked to list the activities that they had participated in over the last 24 hours. The top five activities are listed along with the percentage of respondents who participated in these activities.

Table 36. Activities at island resorts.

Percentage of visitors participating in activities					
1982/83		1983/84		1984/85	
%		%		%	
Relaxing indoor/		Relaxing indoor/		Swimming/	
outdoor	75	outdoor	77	snorkelling	78
Swimming/		Swimming/		Relaxing indoor/	
snorkelling	69	snorkelling	74	outdoor	72
Walk/stroll	64	Walk/stroll	52	Walk/stroll	54
Boat trip	32	Boat trip	42	Boat trip	46
Sailing/		Tennis/golf	32	Sailing/skiing	31
Windsurfing/					
water skiing	20				

(Cameron McNamara, 1983; Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation 1985c, 1986b)

Evidence points to the Great Barrier Reef and marine based activities being important in attracting people to island resorts and keeping them occupied once there. However the above statistics also point to the importance of other factors in attracting visitors.

Economic characteristics

The economic contribution of island resort tourism has not been overlooked in the available statistics. The ABS gathers information from resort operators on takings from accommodation. The ABS survey covers only the accommodation component of takings and operators responding to the questionnaire are asked to separate out other components, for example, food and drinks. The QTTC survey, in recording visitors expenditure, includes a wider range of items and more correctly estimates the total outlays on island tourism.

The items on which data on spending is gathered are; accommodation including meals and drinks, hire charges, local excursion fares and shopping. Excluded is the cost of travel from the visitors home to the island. As most island resorts include meals in the tariff, the two surveys measure different items under the heading "accommodation". For 1984/85, the QTTC figure is twice that of the ABS and this is a reasonable outcome given the definitions adopted.

The ABS figures for annual accommodation takings since 1976/77 have been converted to 1984/85 dollars in Table 37, along with the percentage change in real terms. The 1985/86 takings from accommodation figure (not shown in Table 37) is \$35.9 million (in 1985/86 dollars), representing a 13 percent increase in real terms over 1984/85.

Table 37. Takings from accommodation.

Year	Takings \$	Percentage change
1976/77	10 543 000	
1977/78	12 740 000	+21
1978/79	13 879 000	+ 9
1979/80	15 216 000	+10
1980/81	17 673 000	+16
1981/82	19 173 000	+ 8.5
1982/83	19 266 000	+ 0.5
1983/84	21 703 000	+13
1984/85	29 217 000	+35

(in 1984/85 dollars)

(Australian Bureau of Statistics, various years)

Over the period 1976/77 to 1984/85, takings grew in real terms by 177 percent and this is double the rate of growth of visitor days (89 percent) for the same period. A significant period of growth in the island resort industry recently is confirmed by a 50 percent increase in real terms in takings over the two years 1982/83 to 1984/85.

The total visitor spending on island resort holidays estimated by the QTTC survey in 1984/85 was \$84 million. The increase in expenditure in real terms of 12 percent from 1982/83 to 1983/84 and 33 percent from 1983/84 to 1984/85 parallels visitor-night increases. Preliminary figures for 1985/86 put visitor spending at \$100 million (in 1985/86 dollars), representing a 9 percent increase in real terms over 1984/85 (QTTC, 1986c).

Table 38. Tourist expenditure*, inland resorts.

Year	Accommodation \$ M	Beverages \$ M	Hire \$ M	Excursions \$ M	Other \$ M	Total \$ M	Change %
1982/83	37	6.7	2.2	3.4	6.7	56.0	
1983/84	44	7.3	2.1	4.2	5.2	62.8	+12
1984/85	58	9.3	2.4	6.8	7.1	83.6	+33

*in 1984/85 dollars

(Cameron McNamara, 1983; Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation 1985c, 1986b)

The expenditure figures do give an indication of the relative size of the industry. They do not tell the whole story regarding net benefits generated, as costs of running island resorts are not included. Further research is required before the full economic picture is available.

Marine Park Sections

Table 39 lists island tourist resorts and accommodation facilities within the Reef Region, by Marine Park Section.

Those accommodation facilities which are cabin, camping or dormitory style or are flats (Magnetic Island) without bar and dining facilities are not included as resorts. Information is not publicly available on the number of visitor days provided by individual accommodation facilities. The Central Section encompasses the bulk of island accommodation, with almost three quarters (73%) of available rooms. Islands of the Capricorn/Capricornia Sections provide almost one quarter (23%) and the islands of Cairns/Cormorant Pass Sections contribute the remaining 4% of island resort rooms.

Table 39. Island resorts and accommodation facilities, 1986.

Resort Island	Rooms
Far Northern Section	
Nil	
Cairns/Cormorant Pass Sections	
Lizard Island	32
Green Island	30
Fitzroy Island	5 plus dormitory accommodation
Central Section	
Dunk Island	98
Bedarra Island	16
Hinchinbrook Island	23
Orpheus Island	25
Magnetic Island	
4 "Resorts"	157
total commercial accomm.	400
Hayman Island	under construction
Hamilton Island	290
Daydream Island	78
South Molle Island	202
Long Island	
Whitsunday 100	34
Palm Bay	9
Hook Island	cabins
Lindeman Island	86
Capricorn/Capricornia Sections	
Brampton Island	100
Newry Island	5
Great Keppel Island	
Great Keppel Island Resort	172
Wappaburra Haven	12 cabins plus tents
Youth Hostel	42 beds
Camping Connection	tent accommodation
North Keppel Island	cabins
Heron Island	85
Lady Elliott Island	30