

6. PRIVATE BOATS

Privately owned boats are a means of access to the Reef Region for people living on the adjacent coast. Both day and extended trips are made, and the majority of trips involve recreational fishing.

This recreational activity has been described in detail in a Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority publication on fisheries of the Great Barrier Reef (Hundloe, 1985) and so only a brief description is presented here.

The availability of small fiberglass and aluminium boats and outboard motors since the 1960's has contributed to growing numbers of people owning pleasure boats. Registrations of private motor boats increased by 337 percent from 1968 to 1986 in the towns and cities adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef, and this is close to the growth rate for Queensland as a whole (343 percent) (QDHM 1981, 1984, 1986). In the six years from 1980 to 1986, registration of private boats in cities and towns adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef exhibited an average increase of 5 percent per annum. In 1986, approximately 33 600 private motor boats were registered in the coastal towns and cities from Bundaberg to Cooktown.

Surveys carried out in 1980 found that around 60 percent of these boats are used for recreational fishing within the Reef Region. A further 18 percent of boats were used for fishing elsewhere (rivers, lakes etc) and 22 percent of boats were not used for fishing at all. This 22 percent includes boats used to travel to the Reef Region but where no fishing was undertaken. Thus over 60 percent of private motor boats or over 20 200 boats in 1986 travel to the Reef Region.

The number of private boats visiting the Reef Region is boosted by boats from elsewhere. A small number of boats are towed to places adjacent to the Reef Region whilst others, mainly yachts, travel by sea from ports outside the region.

Other than recreational fishing activities undertaken include boating, sailing, snorkelling, diving, shell collecting and island camping.

Not all boats that enter the Reef Region travel far from the coast. Over a third of trips from all ports south of Cairns are made to within 5 km of the coast. Only from north of Townsville, where the reef is closer to the coast, do small boats travel to the outer reef.

Boats which travel to the Reef Region range in length from 3 to 20 metres, with motor power ranging from 2.2 kw to twin motors with a total of 224 kw.

The average number of fishing trips undertaken each year was found from the survey to be 13.2 trips. When this number of trips is undertaken by 20 200 boats a total of 266 000 trips to the Reef Region are made per year. To calculate total visitor days the unlikely figure of 2.6 passengers per trip is used as this is the average number of people on each boat. Total visitor days per annum approximate 690 000.

Economic characteristics

Unlike resort guests or charter boat passengers, people visiting the reef in privately owned boats do not have to pay a fee to a commercial operator. Monetary outlays are required to purchase boats, fishing gear, fuel etc. Information on these costs was collected and the average outlays are listed in Table 40. The figures collected in the 1980 survey have been updated by inflating to 1985/86 dollars and multiplying average annual expenditure by the higher number of registered boats. The number of boats visiting the Reef Region in 1980 was estimated at 15 000 boats. This has grown to 20 200 boats in 1986.

The total annual expenditure on boats and equipment is estimated at \$71 million in 1985/86 dollars or \$68 million in 1984/85 dollars.

Table 40. Annual expenditure, private boats.

	Average*	Fleet cost**
	\$	\$
Boats, motors, trailer	1815	36 663 000
Boat equipment	77	1 555 400
Boat maintenance	416	8 403 200
Fishing gear	102	2 060 400
Boat insurance	94	1 898 800
Boat licence fees	77	1 555 400
Vehicle fuel	247	4 989 400
Boat fuel	531	10 726 200
Bait	113	2 282 600
Ice	48	969 600
Incidentals	26	525 200
Total	3546	71 629 200

*Inflated from 1980 prices to 1985/86.

** Based on a fleet of 20 200 boats.

Marine Park Sections

An estimation of private motor boat usage of sections of the Marine Park is based on the number of boats registered in home ports adjacent to the Marine Park sections and the information that generally 60 percent of these boats are used in the Marine Park.

Table 41. Private motor boat usage of Marine Park Sections.

Marine Park Section	Number of boats using Section	Visitor days number	Visitor days percentage
Far Northern	minimal		
Cairns/Cormorant Pass	4 255	145 100	21
Central	6 380	221 100	32
Capricorn/Capricornia	9 574	324 800	47
Total	20 209	691 000	100

Private motor boat usage, though maybe not usually thought of as "tourism", is a significant recreational use of the Reef Region. Local residents are the main users of this type of access to the Reef Region and recreational fishing is the major activity.