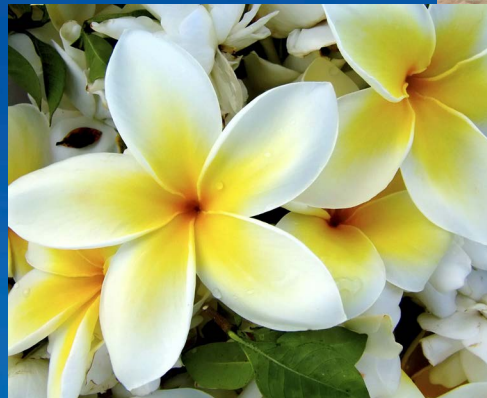


Top Five Romantic Island Getaways



By Melissa Shoup

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A Bora Bora infinity pool in the evening. Photo courtesy of hdlatestwallpapers.com

The Benefits of Choosing All Inclusive Resorts for Your Honeymoon or Vacation Getaway

By Melissa Shoup

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The Great Barrier Reef

One of the world's most remarkable natural wonders, the Great Barrier Reef lies just off Queensland's coastline. Home to countless species of marine wildlife, stunning natural scenery and world-class experiences, the Great Barrier Reef is a national treasure that everyone should experience first-hand. Want to learn more about the Reef? Let's dive in...

The World's Largest & Most Extensive Coral Reef System

The Great Barrier Reef spans hundreds of the north eastern coastline of Australia extending north from **Bundaberg** on Queensland's coast to **Cape York**, the northern tip of Australia.

- 2900 Coral Reefs
- 600 Continental Islands
- 300 Coral Cays

The Great Barrier Reef is the largest and most extensive coral reef system in the world comprising about 2900 individual coral reefs, 600 continental islands and 300 coral cays.

It is the largest natural feature on earth and its impressive size makes it the only living structure that can be seen from space.

It is 2300 km long and approximately 300,000 km² in size. That's about 70 million football fields or the size of **Spain**.

It represents 10% of all coral reefs in the world.

A large of "above water" systems are also available for visitors to experience the Great Barrier Reef without getting wet. These include air-based activities such as scuba diving and hydrology scenic flights over coral cays and islands or coral viewing from glass bottom boats.

The most popular way to experience the Great Barrier Reef is by boat. Snorkelling and swimming, sailing, boating, fishing, diving and expedition cruising are just some of the world class water-based activities on offer.

Other great experiences of the Great Barrier Reef include helicopter tours of an 8000-hectare island where you can stay in a tropical island mansion or visit the planet's oldest living rain forest, take in spectacular views, meet the world's largest sea slug and see palm forest swimming.

The Great Barrier Reef is recognised internationally as one of the world's greatest natural wonders.

It became the first coral reef system in the world to be awarded World Heritage status.

The Great Barrier Reef meets all four of the natural criteria for World Heritage listing.

The Great Barrier Reef is recognised as one of the world's best natural reef systems.

A Rich Underwater World

The Great Barrier Reef is home to:

- More than 30 species of whales and dolphins
- 125 species of fish
- All species of hard coral and over 500 species of soft coral, together 10% of the world's soft coral
- As many as 3000 species of molluscs
- 8 of the world's 7 species of marine turtles
- Coral cays over 100 years old
- Millions of nesting seabirds

Dinosaurs of the Reef

Turtles, crocodiles and sharks are the marine "dinosaurs" of the Reef. Turtles have been on the Reef for 150 million years, crocodiles for 200 million years and sharks for around 400 million years.

Konik creatures of the Great Barrier Reef

Whales, Turtles, Sharks, Clownfish, Giant Clam, Rays, Giant Wrasse, Potato Cod

Fascinating Coral Reef Formations

Coral reefs have been growing in the Great Barrier Reef region for over 20 million years however they did not form the large reef system that we can see today until about 5000 to 6000 years ago.

Coral reefs are formed when tiny animals called **Coral Polyps** extract minerals from the ocean and convert it into hard skeleton homes. When Coral Polyps die the limestone skeletons remain. This forms the building blocks of a coral reef system.

Some coral reefs grow above the surface. They live inside the coral's cells and provide it with food and also its rich and vibrant colours.

Coral cays are formed when coral skeletons, algae and other reef creatures, sand and rubble are pushed by currents, wind and waves. Over time the environment stabilises and a coral cays is established.

About one third of the coral cays on the Great Barrier Reef support some form of vegetation.

Queensland Where Australia Shines

Infographic by Melissa Shoup