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Fishing Port Douglas News

with Heff



Welcome the inside word from the street of our wonderful part of paradise. The word paradise does paint a pretty picture and that is completely true. However the month of April has been mainly disappointing for visitors and businesses are hurting, particularly in the marine industry. You could count on one hand when it was idyllic conditions to be venturing offshore for the blue water experience. We've been pestered by strong winds and a solid tail end to the wet season for the majority. It has been tough considering a lot of people visited the region and could not complete their ideal program, which categorically includes the Reef & Rainforest activities.

The positives to be taken out of this is that quite a few people started to visit the Daintree Rainforest north of the river. It seems they are truly back for operation following the mess that Cyclone Jasper left behind. The people visiting still got a solid read as to what a rainforest actually means these last few weeks during the wet season. In saying this the Daintree River system fished extremely well for barramundi this month despite the hiccups.

The local reef fishing scene had some really bright moments but was often cut short for an extended period due to weather conditions. It was a let down because most were hoping for a premium month on the

water in regards to fishing. You'll read more in the skipper's reports.

The locals despite a bit of a rough patch turned out in force for the traditional Anzac Memorials across the shire, as well as attend the traditional Two Up session in Port Douglas at a local pub. Australian values are truly an integral fabric of the community up here in Port Douglas despite the circumstances.

Looking forward we still have a really strong period of fishing opportunity on the calendar with a change of the seasons. Water temperatures will suit both inshore and offshore for all prime target species for this time of year. We just need a reprieve from the winds to truly explore the many fishing opportunities we have on offer up in tropical FNQ.

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Fishing On the Daintree

with Jamie Beitzel



Hi to all from the magical Daintree...

To be honest a lot of the April days weren't as magical as one was hoping for. We did receive a lot of rain in the catchment area and at times compromised the fishing ability of the river itself. We had to postpone one particular trip but other than this we forged ahead and I even surprised myself with the positive outcomes.

For a bulk of time the river was running orange or otherwise brown with a lot of fresh coming off the ranges. First and foremost I assess whether it is safe or not to travel with floating logs and debris particularly when the river is raging at 6 knots of flow. That does become the cut off point in offering a safe and genuine service.

So besides the one off cancellation we pushed ahead and as already mentioned I pulled some rabbits out of the hat. The barramundi run continued and we caught quite a few bonafide sized fish around 80cm plus. Live baiting was a rare occasion due to conditions but trolling lures and casting soft plastics did provide adequately. It's all about timing and where to be. I have pretty much worked out where the rendezvous holding office is for them in a few spots. I'm going to keep my cards close to my chest but the turn of the tides are the active times which is no surprise for most forms of fishing in general.

My other favourite, the fingermark species did look after me but

the lack of live baiting opportunities did limit and they seem to prefer hanging deep which live baiting ideal for. As soon as the water starts to clear up they will be back on the true running track of the river map.

I did do some fresh dead baiting and it was reasonable enough snaring the bottom dwelling species such as javelin fish and some stingray strains which for first timers enjoy the tussle they provide.

Overall the river needs to settle and clean up a bit and when it does the coastal fishing will also fire up big time. Weather and water temperatures are still at an optimum level and we have a few weeks still left up our sleeve for some great fishing.

Traffic on the water was quite busy especially during the school holidays so it did deter me from going to a few secret spots when there dozens of boats zipping around. Being a guide I always feel there are sets of eyes watching my every move. In saying, this things are already to returning to normal and I have a good run at things moving forward with confidence I have the river to myself.

In finishing it has been pleasing to see a lot more traffic on the ferry heading towards Cape Tribulation which is pleasing for the area which has had a horrendous time since the Cyclone Jasper in December. There are a lot of people doing it really tough over here and any increased trade will help enormously.



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Akula Sportfishing



with Jason Knack

The month of April didn't quite go to schedule as planned or hoped for. There were as many cancellations as booking completed due to a persistent south east wind. We experienced a few glamour days on the water and the others trips required some seasoned sea legs. On these rougher days I had to pull on the 'big boy' pants and put the old bones to work. At times it felt like the lower back was joined to the neck region. Anyway it can't be all ideal and we still managed to secure some pretty handy results.

On the rare calm days we went as far north and wide as possible. We had some days where I couldn't keep up with the amount of fish coming over the side. There was a variety including coral trout, large mouth nannygai and some big packs of trevally. These trevally schools went ballistic and offer a pure sportfishing experience. Along with some nice red fish to take home these trips ticked all the boxes.

On the rougher days, which were frequent, there was a bit quite a bit of tacking to navigate the chop on the water. For those reading from down south we don't experience swell like you would on the open water. The reef systems break up the swell from the Coral Sea and turn it into chop. The stronger the wind the more chop there is on the water which can make for a bumpy ride. A continuous run of wind will eventually build up



Great Barrier Reef Port Douglas



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what we call ground swell and can last for a day or two afterwards when the weather drops back down.

Anyway, getting back on track it was very strategic as to where we ventured and as per usual there's always something to hook into if you know what you're doing. Wonky holes and rubble patches produced their required numbers of nannygai and we had a good run of tank sized cod. We also started to see the first signs of mackerel schools inside of the reef so that is something to look forwards to in the next few months.

Looking forward we should be coming into a prime period with the changes of the season. The rains have subsided, water temperatures are improving, there's plenty of bait along the coast and on the outer reef. All we need is a good run of calmer weather to really tap into the best fishing we can offer.

Tourist numbers are a bit below par as to where we'd like to see them but we are happy with amount of interest out there with what we're doing. Give us a bell for genuine service and a great trip.

Saltaire Charters

with Craig Newbold



Overall it has been another frustrating month mainly to due to a lot of unfavourable wind conditions. Even in the first part of the month it was associated with quite a bit of rain which made things mentally tougher. But there's nothing we can do about the weather and we'll focus on the positives for the month.

Our 34ft Saltaire vessel conducted a handful of charters on the fishing front with good results produced despite the challenges. We came across quite a few spanish mackerel which helped to keep the reels ticking over. Once we honed into a patch of them we didn't travel too far away. The one's that made it to the vessel were mostly around 7-8kg but our best was 15kg which was a top notch model. We stuck to our program running a range of different range hard body lures from a few metres down to 8m. We weren't able to attempt any bottom fishing with persisting winds dragging us off our marks upon fishing.

Our good friends from Sydney and Geelong joined us for an extended charter aboard our Escapade Mothership for a 7 day trip which saw them venture up to Hope Island, Cairns Reef, across to Escape Reef on the shelf and then back through St. Crispins Reef. Accompanied by our 7.5m sportfishing vessel specialised for top water purposes the lads caught some great giant trevally, coral trout and red bass across the

reefs. This was mainly achieved in the first half of the trip when conditions were A1. Then the weather kicked into gear unfortunately and we scratched around for a couple of days mainly fishing from the mothership itself. This produced some nannygai and coral trout, however with a floating pilchard out the back the life time of a fish hooked up.

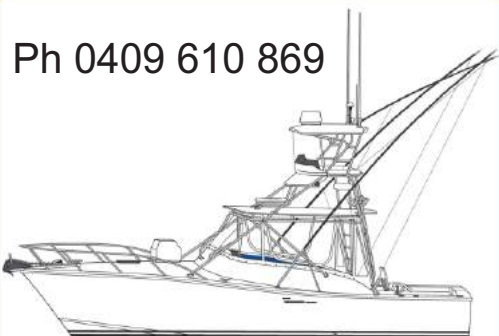
It was a 25.5kg Black Cobia which went like the clappers. Anyone who has caught a decent one would know they go as hard as nails. It eventuated into a 20 minute fight, towing lines in and under and around the main vessel as well as the sportfishing boat which was tied against the mothership. It was a 'reel' team effort to pull off but eventually accomplished and the highlight for the trip. It goes to show that the Great Barrier Reef fishing is full of big surprises that will be etched for a lifetime.

Moving forward we have re-located Saltaire up to Lizard Island for a short stint of work but this hasn't gone to plan with horrendous wind conditions. Our 7.5m vessel is back in Port Douglas ready and roaring to go but again there is no joy with the wind.

Anyway onwards and upwards and we are ready to fire on all cylinders if the weather can give us some reprieve.



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