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Fishing Port Douglas

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While heat stress has eased across the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park from summer, sea surface temperatures remain slightly above average in some regions for this time of year.

Climate conditions remain neutral; however, there are increasing signs that an El Niño may develop later this year, bringing drier conditions to northern Queensland in the months ahead.

As winter settles across the Reef, seasonal wildlife sightings are increasing. The annual humpback whale migration is now underway, with thousands of whales expected to travel through the Marine Park on their journey from Antarctic feeding grounds to breeding and calving areas in tropical waters. Dwarf minke whales are also beginning to arrive in northern Reef waters, while manta ray sightings have increased during these cooler months.

The return of these iconic species is one of the Reef's great natural spectacles and a reminder of the importance of protecting marine habitats. Visitors are encouraged to enjoy wildlife encounters responsibly by giving animals space to behave naturally and safely.

Temperature

Sea surface temperatures in the Far Northern and Northern regions remain approximately 0.5–0.8°C above long-term monthly averages. Temperatures in the Central and Southern regions are closer to average, sitting around 0.2°C above normal.

The Bureau of Meteorology forecasts sea surface temperatures to remain above average through winter and into August.

Climate forecasts suggest an El Niño may develop

later this year, which can increase the likelihood of warmer and drier conditions across northern Queensland. However, other climate factors, such as conditions in the Indian Ocean and tropical weather systems that influence rainfall and cloud cover, also affect local weather, so conditions may vary across the Reef catchment.

Rainfall

The Indian Ocean Dipole, which can influence regional rainfall patterns is currently neutral and forecasts remain uncertain.

Should both El Niño and a positive Indian Ocean Dipole develop during winter and spring, northern Queensland could experience drier-than-average conditions over the coming months.

Reef health

Over the past month, 521 Reef Health Impact Surveys were conducted across 43 reefs;

In the Far Northern region, one reef was surveyed, recording no coral bleaching and low levels of coral damage.

In the Northern region, 24 reefs were surveyed. Coral bleaching was recorded on 18 reefs, ranging from low (1–10%) to moderate (11–30%) prevalence. Coral damage was recorded on 20 reefs.

In the Central region, 8 reefs were surveyed. Three reefs recorded low levels of coral bleaching and 7 reefs recorded low coral damage.

In the Southern region, 10 reefs were surveyed. Eight reefs recorded low to moderate coral bleaching prevalence and four reefs recorded low coral damage.

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Local Fishing News

The local area is already undergoing one of the busiest times of year with the school holidays filling the region to the rafters. On the fishing front offshore conditions prove to be a bit challenging with south east trade winds and only suitable for larger vessels. Inshore the calm water systems in our rivers and estuaries are now in winter mode fishing.

River Fishing

In recent times this has been the only option available for many as strong offshore winds remain persistent. Cooler days have seen the water temperatures drop and this changes the dynamic and tactics needed to employ. Live bait is always key to better success but now fresh dead baits also play an important role.

With strong winds along the coast it does push dirty water into the systems. You'll have more success fishing on an incoming tide with the wind behind it. An outgoing tide going against the sea breeze can churn things up considerably and makes it a bit tougher.

You'll still get fingermark and queenfish on live bait as well as blue salmon towards the river entrance. You'll cover most bases using a combination of squid with either pilchard or strip bait. Fresh quality prawns peeled are also a worthy option. Typical winter species on the go using this method include blue salmon, javelin fish, bream, permit, sickle fish and river trevally. You fish with lighter gear and these fish of decent size will give you a good run for your money.

Reef Fishing

As mentioned a decent sized boat is necessary of late due to the winds. Yet if you can get out to the outer reef the fishing has been exceptional. Bottom fishing is producing quality coral trout, nannygai and a host of other species. These have included stripeys, emperor and a floating pilchard will entice a spanish mackerel. If you want mackerel however ,trolling lures is definitely the go. If you get one on the troll keep working over that same area as they are travelling in packs and are hungry. It always pay to have a shallow diving lure and a deeper version swimming out the back. If you know what you're doing rigged garfish work a treat and they have raised small black marlin and sailfish as well. The cooler currents coming from the south are providing the ideal conditions for this time of year for our pelagic species. Whilst doing this there's every chance you'll see whale action as well as they've started their migratory run already. There's not a better day if you're pulling in some ripping reef / pelagic species and get to watch a whale spectacular whilst travelling around.

Bookings are extremely tight with the influx of tourists escaping the cold from down south. We suggest to get on the phone to secure your fishing spot. The word on the street is that accommodations have limited space left moving forward, caravan parks are at capacity and this flows onto various tours and restaurant bookings etc .. etc .. Call us on 0409610869 to jump the queue.



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