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Fishing Port Douglas News



with Heff

Well I can say the town is literally bursting at the seams with a mass influx of tourists. Everyone is stretched to the limit no matter their business including fishing charters. If you haven't pre-booked in advance you will unfortunately miss out if you leave it till you arrive.

I have my ear to the ground with a lot of different sources but one that keeps popping up is the following feedback:

- we love the area and it's natural beauty
- unfortunately because we didn't pre-book we missed out on some tours we really wanted to do and also couldn't get into any of the notable restaurants

Now from what I know this is not just resigned to our area. Any premium destination in Australia is experiencing similar problems. One big problem is staffing issues. For example popular venues around town are simply opening for 5 days a week. They can't find suitable staff to keep going 7 days a week despite the over demand being there. Secondly the big problem is housing potential staff. A lot of real estate has passed hands in the last two years and is not available for workers any more as they tend to Air B&B their property. Extra workers simply can't find anywhere to live, thus the underlying problem. Given time I believe this will come back to an even keel but not this year or likely next.

So onto some fishing news! Well as suggested we've been heavily booked pending weather conditions. We had a horror stretch of weather for about 6 weeks which dented a lot of business especially offshore. Currently the consistent blow of wind looks like it will

gradually settle but maybe not quite enough for smaller vessels to safely or comfortably head offshore. If you have been lucky enough to hit the blue water the fishing is highly consistent which is to be expected at this time of year. The river systems are also returning to some great fishing with a bit of sunshine about again.

I very recently sat in on another QLD Fishery Board Meeting but the topics at hand were related to really deep sea fishing normally associated with fishing outside the shelf further south and not affecting what we do on a daily basis on the reef. It was interesting enough and changes to bag limits to the likes of Banded Bar Cod, Blue Eye Trevalla and a couple of big Groupers are likely to take effect at some point. They are all very slow growing and normally encountered to massive sizes. For some reason the commercial sector has triggered a big increase in captures and thus the serious discussion around the topic. It will effect some recreational enthusiasts who are prepared to go to the lengths of catching them.





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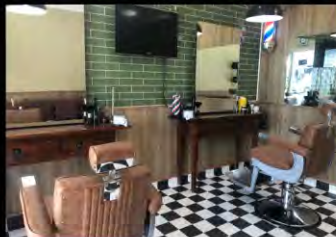
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Fishing On the Daintree

with Jamie Beitzel



Hi to all from the magical Daintree River. I'm putting this report together as a weary fishing guide. With a lot of inclement weather over the past few weeks and with the offshore boys not getting a lot of opportunity, I've been a very, very popular lad. 70-80hr weeks have been part of my schedule and it doesn't look like easing up. I'm definitely not complaining but it doesn't leave much time for other things such as family, living on a decent sized property over the Daintree River, boat maintenance and also associated book work. It's basically been a case of fit in what I can and try and get to bed at a reasonable time, ready for the next day of charter at an early start. As you may gather I've spent all my time on the river due to weather and I simply don't mind it. It's comfortable in the calm water and with a massive expanse of water to explore there's no shortage of opportunities.

Across the flats on the more challenging days I've been always able to produce some nice keepers for the punters mainly in the form of javelin fish and some ripping golden trevally. Sometimes when the water clarity is putrid you have to revert back to some fresh dead bait as the fish are using their noses along the sandy beds to source a feed.

I like to use high quality peeled prawns and even a smelly mixture of pilchard and squid does has its big moments. We managed to score javelin fish to 3kg and golden trevally to 5kg using this method. Great river fish in anyone books.

When the water clarity was at some normality I spent a fair bit of time in the deeper parts of the channel. At this time of year we do tend to get a run of big queenfish in the system and with a combination of using live bait and casting surface poppers. They were cracker fish in excess of the one metre mark and a truly remarkable sport fish showcasing spectacular leaps and hard running bursts of speed. On relatively light gear they are close to having the most fun with your pants on! They weren't the only ones with some solid trevally coming right into the system and mixing things up.

Amongst my normal snaggy country I did conjure up some nice sized fingermark but they really didn't appreciate the dramatic drop in water and air temperature. It has been one of the coolest winters I've seen in a long time where even I find myself rugged up when on the water. Please book ahead to avoid missing out.....



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Dragon Lady Charters

with Steve Adamson



I guess the July period didn't pan out as we truly hoped for mainly due to some shocking conditions at the start of the month. With a busy town full of tourists for the school holidays we couldn't take full advantage of the situation. As the days went on we did venture out but mostly under some challenging weather with winds maintaining a solid 20 knots. Towards the end of the month things did improve but we still didn't see ideal boating conditions.

Invariably we had to spend a lot of time tucked up behind the reefs for comfort and anchoring capability. It wasn't so bad because the coral trout kept us busy enough with consistent numbers taken on most days. We also had some big moments on the Moses perch which don't get much accolade around the traps but trust me they are absolutely brilliant on the plate. They don't grow overly big but I remember one day we caught around a dozen and they were all over 40cm and on the bigger scale for these species.

With some better weather on hand we fished a bit deeper and continued to catch some impressive bar cheek trout to 5kg. The deeper waters also forwarded some nice spangled emperor and reef mangrove jack along with numbers of small mouth nannygai.

We had one particular day where we landed on the honey pot and the mackerel float got a serious work out. We must have caught around eight good sized fish to 12kg off the one spot and it kept everyone entertained. July is roughly about the traditional



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time they hit their traps and this seemed to be the case with mackerel caught on most trips. They go into the community chest to share at the end of the day and there's normally plenty to go around. You do get a lot fillet from the one fish and great value in this sense.

Our shark depredation device program continued for the month with some mixed results. Some days we saw little shark activity and others they were a bit more frisky. It's a hard one to gauge at this point as to whether the devices are truly effective but as previously mentioned it is a 12 month plan to collect data and then we'll get a true picture. At the end of the day if we think they've improved our retention rate of fish hooked up to, it will be a bonus. Some of the underwater footage we've already captured in the process is rather interesting as well. From what I've seen it does appear that if a shark is in a super aggressive mood or very hungry for that matter, the devices won't stop them.

At this point it seems there's no slowing down on the amount of people coming up this way so pre-bookings are quite essential.

Saltaire Charters



with Craig Newbold

Hi to all from Saltaire Charters. We've experienced a bit of a strange month with a lot of cancellations in the early piece due to bad weather. As the weeks went on the weather improved considerably and we finished off the month quite strongly.

We seen a mixture of clientele join our vessel from a lot of family groups to your more serious anglers. Family groups are generally more relaxed as they are intent on having quality family time enjoying a bit of reef fishing and also spending a lot of time snorkeling at their own private reef systems. Upon reflection over the past couple of months they are becoming more and more popular and make up close to 50% of our business. Not only does it make family time sense but it also makes economic sense. Two separate fishing and snorkeling trips on different days equates to a similar price and it is normally on a shared basis with a crowd of people. By a private family day they are killing two birds with the one stone and the bonus is it frees up another day during their stay to explore the many different options available up in our region. Also for many one big day on the water is normally enough as well.

Dealing with a variety of different conditions from opposite ends of the scale, the better fishing did seem to favour the calmer conditions. It's fairly obvious as we can explore a lot more ground and try a variety of depths for different species. The rougher days saw up fishing close to the reefs for added protection and coral trout were the predominant catch. We were able to entice a few different trevally and also spanish mackerel whilst trolling in the shallows.

Once the weather settled we were able to move out into the deeper waters 30m plus and still maintained plenty of coral trout along with some large mouth nannygai. Our trolling efforts produced quite a few more mackerel and were notably bigger up to 15kg. Traditionally the Cairns Show Day mid July is the official start for the mackerel season with locals and it was bang on the money this year with our best catches recorded to date.

Looking ahead our forward booking are reasonably solid but if we get good weather our figures can double with spontaneous bookings whilst people are on holiday. It is a risky ploy doing it this way and you have to take your chances there is availability.



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Locally Port Douglas

Top 6 Ranking

Dated 23rd July By Google Business - Fishing Port Douglas
Our 522 photos posted got 47,382 total views in the last month



Reel Cooking with Heff Wicked Fish Burgers that Rock!



Ingredients

2 x fillets of Large Mouth Nannygai (cut in half)
Flour for dusting fillets with 1 tablespoon cajun spice mix
2 tablespoon olive oil to cook the fish golden brown on fry pan
4 medium white bread rolls (200g), split in half and lightly grilled
1/2 cup (150g) whole-egg mayonnaise to butter the rolls as a spread
Hot coriander sauce to drizzle over the roll contents- 1/3 cup (80ml) olive oil, 1 fresh green jalapeño, seeded, chopped, 2 teaspoon finely grated lime rind, 2 teaspoon freshly squeezed lime juice, 1 cup firmly packed fresh coriander
3 cups of shredded coleslaw



Method

Cook fish with dusting flour and a touch of cajun spice in olive oil till golden brown both sides - very medium heat
Assemble rolls with mayonnaise spread and coleslaw and cooked fish
Pour over Hot Coriander Sauce on top of fish and a bit over the coleslaw as well
This will Rock Your Socks!



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