



accommodations. After lunch, it's a short drive north to Airlie Beach, a picturesque seaside town on the Whitsunday coast, where we'll split up for our chosen activities:

### **SCUBA AND SNORKELING OPTION ON THE GREAT BARRIER REEF** *Tuesday (Continued)*

If you enjoy being on and in the water, we've got just the thing! After arriving in Airlie Beach, you'll have the rest of the afternoon to pick up last minute supplies, and grab a bite to eat, before we board the Anaconda III this evening - a true Maxi designed to make for an unforgettable sailing experience. Overnight Maxi sailing is unique to the Whitsundays, and allows you the opportunity to participate by taking the wheel, hoisting the sails and grinding the winches on one of the most famous yachts in racing history, whilst visiting the very best destinations the Whitsundays have to offer. The Anaconda III is our home for the next three nights, and after a champagne toast, we depart the marina, cruising towards the Hook Island passage. The expert crew will brief you thoroughly on what to expect over the next few days, and if you are not a qualified diver but would like to experience the thrill of SCUBA diving, the expert instructors will be happy to introduce you to the amazing underwater world and its colourful inhabitants. (Optional AUD\$55 per dive). If you prefer, there is some amazing snorkelling to be done in the region instead!

*ACCOMMODATION: "Anaconda III" live-aboard mega yacht, (B,L)*

*Wednesday*

### **SCUBA DIVING or SNORKELING OPTION**

This morning you will wake up at Whitehaven Beach, recognised as one of the most beautiful beaches in the world. Stretching over six miles, this pristine expanse of pure white silica sand fringed by brilliant blue water and lush Tropical Island, is one of the jewels of the Whitsundays. There is plenty of time for a game of beach cricket, a stroll along the beach or simply soak up the beauty of our surrounds as those who learn to SCUBA for the first time take their first Introductory dive. After returning to the boat, we lift anchor and it is time for another sumptuous meal as we head towards the protected waters of the Great Barrier Reef, with reef and still water as far as the eye can see. The Great Barrier Reef is the most extensive reef system in existence, with over 2000 individual reefs stretching from Papua New Guinea down the Queensland coast for over 1200 miles. The protected waters between the reef and the coast are home to at least 400 species of coral, 1500 species of fish, 4000 species of mollusks and 500 species of seaweed. There are also hundreds of uninhabited islands that 200 different species of birds call home. Luckily we're going to have time to see and explore a great deal of these islands! Scuba dives will be scheduled to maximize the amount of diving per day. If you decide to snorkel, your crew will let you know where you're going, what and who you might see, and you're away!

*ACCOMMODATION: "Anaconda III" live-aboard mega yacht, (B, L, D)*

*Thursday*

### **SCUBA DIVING or SNORKELING OPTION**

Being on a live-aboard boat means we have the flexibility to move whenever we like - so this morning we'll relocate to Bait Reef (weather permitting) ready for you to explore first thing. Bait Reef is located on the Outer Great Barrier Reef near the Whitsunday Island Chain. It is one of the most pristine scuba diving locations in the world and benefits from protection under the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The crew has numerous sites at their fingertips, and will choose the best one depending on the conditions. Scuba divers will also be able to do one or two night dives during the trip if you're keen to see who comes out at night!

*ACCOMMODATION: "Anaconda III" live-aboard mega yacht, (B, L, D)*

*Friday*

### **SCUBA DIVING or SNORKELING OPTION**

This morning we cruise back through the Whitsunday Passage, to Blue Pearl Bay on Hayman Island. Whether you choose to snorkel or scuba dive, you will be stunned at the range and diversity of the coral at Blue Pearl. As is typical of fringing reefs, the range of coral is extensive, with all sorts of hard and soft corals waiting for you to explore their fragile beauty -- not to mention the Giant Clam. Watching and being part of the fish feeding at Blue Pearl Bay is an absolute highlight of any trip to the Whitsundays. You will be surrounded by hundreds of fish ranging in size from the smaller Sergeant Majors and brilliantly coloured Fusiliers right up to our own metre long Giant Wrasse, called "Mick Jagger " for obvious reasons!! Here we'll have one last morning of diving and snorkeling. Then it's time to lift the anchor and return to Airlie Beach. After 3 days in the water, you'll appreciate a chance to relax on the deck as we sail through the Whitsunday Islands and back to the mainland. By late afternoon, we'll be on shore again and saying goodbye to the Anaconda III crew. We'll then meet up with the rest of the group for our final dinner together.

*ACCOMMODATION: Whitsunday Terraces, Airlie Beach (B, L, D)*

**- OR -**

### **HIKING AND SEA KAYAKING OPTION** *Tuesday (Continued)*

If live-aboard boats aren't for you then we've got another awesome option for you! We'll spend the next two days hiking and sea kayaking amongst some of the most beautiful tropical National Parks in the area. You'll have some time this afternoon to relax and explore the seaside town of Airlie Beach, or go swimming in one of the many outdoor pools. Be sure to get lots of rest tonight, as the next couple of days are going to be very active!

*ACCOMMODATION: Airlie Beach lodgings, Airlie Beach*

*(B,L)*

*Wednesday*

### **HIKING AND SEA KAYAKING OPTION**

Today we'll have an early start - we've got a big day ahead of us! The Great Whitsunday Walk is quite a new trail through the tropical Conway National Park, and many people take a couple of relaxed days to walk the 30 km (20 miles) track, but we reckon it's best done as a day hike! If challenging day hikes aren't your thing, we have plenty of other options available for this day – simply let us know in advance. After a quick breakfast, we have a short drive north to the start of the walk at Brandy Creek. We'll begin hiking amongst majestic tropical rainforest with towering palms, giant strangler figs, and Mackay tulip oaks decorated with basket ferns. Gradually the track steepens as we follow the ridge up towards the summit of Mount Hayward, our lunch spot for today. Upon reaching the summit you'll be rewarded by cool breezes and awesome views out to the Whitsunday Islands. Keep an eye out for the brilliant blue flash of the Ulysses butterfly or a glimpse of the little kingfisher, and listen for the deep, resonating calls of wompoo fruit-doves. After lunch we'll descend to the rainforest once again to enjoy the shade provided by rainforest plants & the lush moss gardens. Then after conquering the last steep climb of the day, we'll begin our final descent through gum trees, grass trees and cycads back to civilization.

*ACCOMMODATION: Airlie Beach lodgings, Airlie Beach*

*(B,L,D)*

*Thursday*

### **HIKING AND SEA KAYAKING OPTION**

This morning we'll head to Shute Harbour where we'll be fitted with modern double sea kayaks and all the appropriate safety equipment. We'll launch from here and paddle out to explore a select few of the 70 or more islands that make up the Whitsunday group. Absolute beginners and seasoned veterans alike will find this a wonderful trip! We'll pay a visit the tiny White Rock Island National Park, where



Cook in his discovery of Australia. The tropical paradise they discovered remains virtually untouched to this day and features pristine shorelines.

*ACCOMMODATION: Edge on Beaches Villas, Town of 1770*

*(B,L,D)*

*Tuesday*

### **Coastal hiking and sea kayaking in the Town of 1770**

This morning we'll be exploring the coastal headland discovered by Captain Cook on foot. If you feel like stretching your legs, then there are miles of remote coastline on offer, and if you simply feel like strolling for sea shells then that's okay too! After some lunch, we'll be heading out to explore this beautiful coastline in a different way – by sea kayak! After pairing up, we'll be fitted with modern sea kayaks and all the necessary safety equipment. We'll have the afternoon to explore, and if the wind's blowing our way we even might try a bit of kayak sailing too! Then we'll head back to watch the sunset from our beachside accommodation before we head into the Outback tomorrow.

A unique option today is to visit Lady Musgrave Island National Park. Lady Musgrave is a unique coral cay surrounded by 3000 acres of living reef, only about 30 nautical miles from the Town of 1770. Your vessel will moor in the calm waters of the island's coral lagoon, a feature unique to the entire Great Barrier Reef region, and from here you'll have entire day to explore. You can snorkel or scuba dive on the surrounding reef, or take to the land to explore the pisonia forest and the immense variety of native birdlife. Between November and February, Green Turtles nest on the island with the hatchlings emerging 8 to 12 weeks later. If you're keen to do this option let us know when we meet you in Brisbane and we'll make it happen! *(Lady Musgrave Option including meals, transport and snorkeling gear approx US\$100pp).*

*ACCOMMODATION: Edge on Beaches Villas, Town of 1770*

*(B,L,D)*

*Wednesday*

### **Surfing at 1770 & Ferry to Fraser Island**

This morning we'll be trying our hand at the true blue Aussie sport of surfing! On 1770's secluded beaches there are plenty of ideal learn-to-surf spots, and with all the gear you need supplied, it's always a fun morning! Absolute beginners are the norm here, so don't worry if you haven't tried surfing before – give us a morning and we'll have you "hanging ten" with the best of them! If you prefer to do something else, you can lounge about on the beach or explore the coast on foot.

This afternoon we'll head south to the whale-watching town of Hervey Bay. Here we'll hop on the ferry to Fraser Island. Fraser Island, the world's largest sand island, is an absolutely beautiful place with World Heritage Park status. Its unique position on the edge of the 2000-foot oceanic continental shelf means it attracts an incredibly diverse range of marine and coastal wildlife. You'll see all sorts of birds while you're here – possibly including the electric-blue plumaged kingfisher! We'll be spending two nights on the island amongst the gum trees at the luxurious Kingfisher Bay Eco-Resort.

*ACCOMMODATION: Kingfisher Bay Eco-Resort, Fraser Island*

*(B,L,D)*

*Thursday*

### **Free Day on Fraser Island**

Today you'll have free reign to discover what gives Fraser Island its World Heritage Park status. Unique rain forest & wildlife, beautiful fresh water lakes, mighty sand dunes and the shipwrecks along Seventy-Five Mile Beach are a few things that make this island special. The hike inland to pristine Lake McKenzie is well worth the effort, and there are also ranger-guided ecotours, self guided 4WD trips and scenic flights available for those that choose to explore. Alternatively, you can take to the ocean for marine cruises or canoe paddles to see whales, dolphins, dugong and sea birds. From August to October you may even see the great Humpback Whale's migration, as mothers and calves cruise north to warmer waters. Or if you prefer, you can relax and enjoy the swimming pools and beach, or indulge at the natural therapy and beauty clinic. It's completely up to you! Our guides will tell you about all the options before you arrive & make any bookings you need in advance.

*ACCOMMODATION: Kingfisher Bay Eco-Resort, Fraser Island*

*(B)*

*Friday*

### **Ferry & Hiking in Kondalilla National Park**

After catching the early ferry back to the mainland, we'll be heading south to Queensland's Sunshine Coast. Here we'll be hiking in some of the beautiful sub-tropical rainforests of the hinterland known as the Blackall

Range. We'll visit Kondalilla National Park and Kondalilla Falls, whose aboriginal name translates as "rushing waters". We'll hike down through the rainforest, past amazingly intricate fig tree formations, to the base of the seasonal 270-foot falls. You'll have a chance to take a cool dip in the rock pools before we head through to the quaint town of Montville, where we'll be serving up a fair dinkum Aussie BBQ for our last night's dinner together.

**ACCOMMODATION:** *Clouds of Montville B&B, Montville*

*(L,D)*

*Saturday*

### **Visit Australia Zoo & Goodbyes at Brisbane**

This is the last day of your two-week trip to this fabulous country. We'll have a short drive south to Beerwah and the Australia Zoo, home of Steve Irwin, the "Crocodile Hunter"! Now Australia Zoo isn't a traditional zoo, as its name implies, it's more like a center for rescued or endangered animals. These guys are the leaders of crocodile rescue so they know a thing or two about crocs, and we'll also meet many of the other curious characters native to Australia. They will keep you well entertained for the afternoon, since they can be hard to spot in the wild.

We'll leave in the afternoon for the one-hour drive to Brisbane Airport, where we'll arrive in time for afternoon international flights. You'll arrive in North America on the same day, ready to go back to the office recharged on Monday. In your two weeks with ACTIVE AUSTRALIA, you'll have experienced an incredible variety of activities, met a bunch of great people, and enjoyed the best of what Australia has to offer! If you'd like to see more of Australia talk to us about adding on the *Dingo Ayers Rock* extension, or check out our ACTIVE NEW ZEALAND itineraries if you've got lots of time and want to visit New Zealand, just a short hop across the ditch! *(B,L)*

## **Important Information**

**ACCOMMODATIONS:** The *Platypus* is an activity-oriented trip along the Queensland coast. We've chosen interesting and comfortable accommodation throughout. In some places it's quite luxurious. But many of the other places we stay are off the beaten track – and don't have many accommodation options – but are really, really spectacular. Some accommodations have separate bedrooms with ensuite bathrooms, and others have two bedroom apartments with shared bathrooms. Our clients often say a real highlight of the trip is meeting the Aussies who are their hosts. You'll love the places we stay!

**FITNESS:** You must have a reasonable level of fitness to enjoy yourself on the *Platypus*. You don't have to be young and extremely fit (although if you are, you won't be bored) but you should be in the habit of doing at least some exercise. Age and experience are not important. We would rather have a person in her 50s who hikes every couple of weeks than a 22-year-old couch potato! If you're concerned about your fitness level, have a chat with us so we can help you choose between the *Platypus* and our other trips.

**EXPERIENCE:** You don't have to have any outdoor experience at all to take our trips because we help you make the most of Australia's incredible outdoor environment. Our staff are highly trained and very experienced outdoor guides, and we will look after you! You don't have to carry a large pack unless you're doing the hiking option. You don't need to have ever done any snorkelling, kayaking, surfing, caving or horse riding to enjoy these activities with us. All we ask is that you are energetic, enthusiastic, and in reasonable shape, and we guarantee you'll have an incredible time. We manage the level of commitment to suit your experience, and we have an impeccable safety record. We hold all relevant government licenses.

**DIRECTION OF TRAVEL:** To keep our group sizes down, we sometimes run the *Platypus* in two different directions – northbound (starting in Brisbane) and southbound (starting in Mackay). This itinerary happens to be written up in the *Southbound* format. Whichever trip you take, you'll do all the activities we've mentioned, just in a different order. The *Platypus* is a product of years of evolution and fine-tuning – it works well whichever way you do it!

**RECOMMENDED FLIGHTS:** If you're flying in on the first day of the trip, or out on the last day, we recommend arriving in Mackay by approximately 10am or earlier on Monday, and departing from Brisbane after 3 – 4pm on Saturday. Other flight times may also be possible - if you are considering alternative flight times please let us know

**PICK-UP INFORMATION:** On the first day of the trip we can either pick you up from the Mackay Airport in front of the café at 10.30am, or at our downtown pick up location in Mackay at 11am.

**DROP-OFF INFORMATION:** On the last day of the trip we can drop you at Brisbane Airport for domestic flights after 4pm, or 3pm if need be.

**FLEXIBILITY:** Because of the off-the-beaten path and non-commercial nature of the places we stay, we may need to change a night stop. We try to make as few changes as possible, but retain the flexibility to make sure your trip is as good as it can be. Some of our activities are weather dependent and if it's a choice between safety and an activity, your safety will always come first. In these cases we'll have a suitable alternate activity.

**INCLUDED:** The trip fare is US\$3499 + applicable taxes and fees. We quote all prices in US dollars, so our guests from all over the world can more easily relate prices to their own currencies. You can also join for shorter periods of time, at a pro-rated fare. The trip fare includes just about everything, specifically:

- All guiding services. We generally have two guides per trip, a lead guide/driver, and a second guide who is responsible for meals and accommodations. This means we can really make sure you have a great time! We operate with small groups, and we don't hesitate to offer a second departure when our trips start getting full.
- Comfortable accommodations for the entire period you are with us (see "Accommodations" above). We can organize extra accommodation for you, if you want to arrive earlier or leave later.
- All your meals (as indicated), except where we've found people prefer to check out the wide range of restaurants. (B,L,D) means breakfast, lunch & dinner included. Alcohol is not generally included, although we do spring for a few drinks here and there!
- All hiking, surfing, caving, horseback riding activities as described in the itinerary, except optional extra activities, such as the whale watching tour on Fraser Island. We have estimated the rates for optional extra activities operated by local activity operators in US dollars, but these rates may vary according to the USD/AUD exchange rate of the day. There are many optional activities available at extra cost along the way – just ask your guide. None of these activities are compulsory, and nor will your trip seem less awesome if you do the more budget options. Although some people enjoy sampling the optional extras, others prefer to focus more on the hiking, surfing, caving, horseback riding which is of course the reason you're coming to Australia in the first place!
- All specialised equipment required for all activities – please refer to our gear list for further details.

**We'll see you soon!**