



Queensland better than ever

Queensland is once again open for business and rolling out the welcome mat, reports LEE ATKINSON.

QUEENSLAND'S tourism operators have put last summer's devastating floods and wild weather behind them and are ready to welcome travellers and holiday makers back to the Sunshine State with the message that Queensland is open for business and better than ever.

"Brisbane is open for business," said the Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Graham Quirk, at the recent launch of the Together Brisbane post-flood economic and community recovery campaign to celebrate Brisbane's unique community spirit.

"We need to let the world know that our local companies are waiting with open doors to start doing business with them again," Quirk said.

The Toowoomba and Darling Downs region, which was the scene of tragic flash flooding in January, has never looked better, says Geoff Thompson, Marketing Manager of Toowoomba Golden West and South Burnett Tourism. "The countryside looks better than it has in years. It's so green," he said.

It's a similar story further north, where most of the island resorts of the Whitsundays that were damaged by tropical cyclones Anthony and Yasi in January and February have either reopened, or are on track to reopen this month.

Tourism Whitsundays Chief Executive Officer Peter O'Reilly said the Whitsundays was slowly but surely returning to normal following the challenging start to the year.

"While physical damage to the Whitsundays from the floods and cyclones was very little, the damage to our visitor numbers has been slow to recover," Mr O'Reilly said.

"Businesses in the Whitsundays are offering fantastic deals to holiday makers to lure them here and show them we are fine," Mr O'Reilly said. "They're also putting on a smile and that famous Queensland hospitality to make visitors' holidays truly memorable."

It's good news for embattled tourism operators who have had a very tough start to the year. The floods and cyclones hit the State's \$7.8 billion domestic tourism industry badly. The latest domestic tourism figures from Tourism Research Australia show just how devastating the wild weather was to the industry, with a 4 per cent decline in the number of nights Australians spent in Queensland for the year to 31 March.

Tourism Queensland has launched a number of initiatives, including a tourism roadshow to help get the message out there.

Those efforts were recognised by travel agents when Tourism Queensland was awarded 'Best National Tourist Office' for the fourth year running at the 2011 AFTA National Travel Industry Awards last month.

"To date 2011 has been really tough. But this award provides some comfort that our efforts have paid off in reinforcing to the world that Nothing Beats Queensland as Australia's favourite holiday destination", said Anthony Hayes, CEO of Tourism Queensland.

"To be named the leading state tourism organisation for the fourth year running is testament to the team's hard work during the past year and I couldn't be more proud," he said.

Images: Brisbane's CityCat is back in operation; Beata and Eddie Wilewski from Melbourne enjoy some Whitsundays sunshine.

BACK IN BUSINESS

In Brisbane all major hotels and attractions, including the CityCat and ferry services, are back in operation. South Bank's beautiful Streets Beach reopened in mid June.

Neither the Gold Coast nor the Sunshine Coast were affected by the floods.

In the Whitsundays, major resorts that closed after the cyclones are now open again – Adventure Island Resort (on South Molle Island) is open and Long Island Resort has reopened with a newly refurbished restaurant. Hayman reopened on 1 August with brand new beach villas.

In tropical north Queensland, while Bedarra and Dunk Islands are not expected to reopen until 1 April 2012, most of the other resorts and accommodation options around Mission Beach are open.

Rockhampton is business as usual.

All major roads in the Toowoomba and Darling Downs region are open.

In Bundaberg, almost all business and restaurants are operating as per normal, except the Bundaberg Ferry Service, which is on track to reopen in August. The flood waters didn't seem to bother the turtles at Mon Repos turtle hatchery with record numbers arriving on the beaches throughout the summer.

A Season of Sailing

The Capricorn region is gearing up to host the next event on Queensland's Season of Sailing calendar, giving holidaymakers a great excuse to head north.

QUEENSLAND'S SEASON OF SAILING is the perfect time to discover Capricorn's sailing playground - and you don't need to be a serious sailor to be part of the fun. There are plenty of chances for visitors to get out and about on the region's warm tropical waters.

From Keppel Bay Marina, there's a range of options including a day sail on the yacht Grace, or getting a group of family and friends together for a fishing charter. Grace sails to one of the many beautiful beaches in Keppel Bay, where the boat anchors so guests can enjoy swimming, snorkelling, beach-combing, kayaking and fishing. A buffet lunch, morning and afternoon tea are included. Cost is \$115 per adult and \$75 per child (under 16). Sunset cruises are also available, starting from \$55 per person.

If you're keen on fishing, get a group together for a day out with Keppeluna Fishin Mission, also based at the Keppel Bay Marina. The boat will visit favourite locals' fishing spots, with the opportunity to snorkel, swim and paddle glass-bottom kayaks. A full day of fishing for up to 10 people, including gourmet barbecue lunch, costs from \$2,490 plus \$5 per person reef tax. For more information visit www.keppelbaymarina.com.au



Queensland's beautiful Capricorn region has much to offer - from the pristine reef of the Southern Great Barrier Reef to the peaceful Keppel Group of islands, as well as easily access to the Outback and the best steak you'll ever eat in Rockhampton, Australia's beef capital.

GETTING THERE

The Capricorn region is accessed via Rockhampton, an eight-hour drive north of Brisbane. Direct flights are available to Rockhampton from Brisbane (Qantas, Virgin Blue and Tiger Airways) and Sydney and Townsville (Virgin Blue and Qantas) with connections from other major cities. Visit www.queenslandholidays.com.au/sailing

Hayman reopens

HAYMAN ISLAND RESORT reopened on 1 August following temporary closure as result of damage from Tropical Cyclones Anthony and Yasi earlier this year.

The refurbished resort includes new guest and accommodation areas and gardens by landscape designer and personality, Jamie Durie.

New concepts have been introduced in both the Azure and new Fontaine restaurants, and the new Hayman Activities Centre will feature new tennis courts and indoor outdoor recreation, sports and fitness facilities.

Further information www.hayman.com.au



Gold Coast Famous for fun

www.VisitGoldCoast.com



Winter warmers on the Gold Coast

With the winter months well and truly with us, there are plenty of reasons to plan a trip to the Gold Coast to warm up over the coming weeks. Check out some of the region's new attractions and experiences.

AQUA PLAY IN PARADISE

Zagames Paradise Resort Gold Coast has made a big splash with the launch of the biggest resort Aqua Play Water Park in the Southern Hemisphere. The entire central resort area has been transformed into a massive water playground, featuring a giant central pool, large heated spa and two enormous Aqua Play attractions, with slides, water cannons, and climbing nets designed to entertain and engage the whole family. The littlies haven't been forgotten, with a smaller version of Aqua Play, featuring slides and a giant tipping water bucket. There's also a new paddling area with a gently sloping beach entry. www.paradiseresort.com.au

WHALES AND WELLBEING

Palazzo Versace Gold Coast has launched its stylish and technologically advanced Fitness & Wellbeing Centre. Australia's first and only fashion branded hotel has spent half a million dollars creating a luxury, world class fitness centre which features leading edge technology by Technogym - the most sought-after exercise equipment around the world and the first of its kind in a

luxury hotel in Australia. Palazzo is also offering an inspiring whale-watching and accommodation package for the winter months. The 'Aqua Marine' package includes accommodation in a luxurious Superior Room, buffet breakfast for two, and a two and a half hour whale-watching tour. Cost is \$620 for two people (subject to availability). www.palazzoversace.com.au

THEME PARKS VIP PASS

Gold Coast theme parks, Sea World, Movie World and Wet'n'Wild Water World have announced the return of Australia's biggest theme park deal - the revolutionary VIP Pass - which provides unlimited entry to Sea World, Movie World and Wet'n'Wild Water World until 30 June, 2012 for the incredible price of \$109.99 for new pass holders. Check out Sea World's cool new Animal Adventure program - Penguin Antarctic Adventure, which allows guests to don special snow gear and head out onto the ice with real King and Gentoo penguins. Guests will experience a back-of-house tour of the exhibit before joining the playful and inquisitive penguins in their sub zero home. www.MyFun.com.au

SEGWAY EXPERIENCE

The first adventure centre in Australia to feature the futuristic, two wheel, electrically powered Segway, has opened in Surfers Paradise. The Segway Xperience offers a range of activities including Segway Croquet and Seglympics which includes games such as skill tests, obstacle courses, baton relays, pizza delivery games and time trials.

The highlight of the park is the Segway Xperience, the closest visitors come to gliding without leaving the ground as the Segways carry them along at speeds of up to 20km per hour. There are also Eco Segway tours allowing visitors to explore some of the region's scenic bushlands. Groups and teams are also able to undertake challenges at a range of 'Xperiences' including Bikes Down Under, Mission Impossible, Survivor Team Challenges, GPS Navigation/Scavenger Hunts and even a Master Chef Cook-Off. www.xperiences.com.au

WORLD FIRST FOR RIPLEY'S

In a world first, Ripley's Believe It or Not has brought to life an interactive display of the tallest man who ever lived, Robert Wadlow, within the Surfers Paradise Odditorium. The full-sized character stands up to a full 2.72 metres (8'11") before returning to a seated position; a truly unbelievable sight. The Wadlow character is in the process of being rolled out to all 31 other Ripley's complexes across 11 countries. www.ripleys.com/surfersparadise

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O'REILLY'S STINSON WALKS

Due to popular demand, O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat, in the Gold Coast Hinterland, has scheduled additional guided walks to the site of the Stinson plane crash as part of their 'Off the Beaten Track' program. This iconic walk retraces the heroic footsteps of Bernard O'Reilly's journey in 1937 when acting on a hunch, he headed off into the rugged wilderness and discovered two survivors of a plane wreck, 10 days after the plane first went down in Lamington National Park. Remaining dates for 2011 are 1 - 3 September and 30 September - 2 October. www.oreillys.com.au



SUNSET SAFARIS

Australian Sunset Safari's new 4WD Rainforest Day Tour into the Gold Coast Hinterland allows guests to maximise their experiences throughout the day by visiting Lamington National Park and Springbrook National Park. Guests get to experience an area which is often overlooked on the Gold Coast, the breathtaking Beechmont Plateau which connects both national parks. www.sunsetsafaris.com.au
For further information visit www.goldcoast.com.au

MANTRA SIGNS RAFTER

Mantra Hotels Resorts and Apartments has launched Australia's largest accommodation marketing campaign featuring one of Australia's favourite family-men and all round nice guys Pat Rafter.

The campaign presents travel in a realistic light and includes television, radio, print, digital and PR elements. The ads show that business travel is not as glamorous and as glitzy as non-corporate travellers expect; while the leisure campaign focuses on the Great Australian Family Holiday. www.mantra.com.au



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