



PRESS RELEASE

Mission Beach – Far North Queensland’s unspoilt gem

The far North Queensland holiday market is changing as ever-increasing numbers of travellers bypass the more traditional destinations of Cairns and Port Douglas.

Visitor numbers to smaller, more exclusive spots like Mission Beach are growing as holidaymakers seek out a more secluded tropical experience away from crowded tourist strips.

Vicki Wiltshire, of accommodation booking service Mission Beach Holidays, has seen her business double over the last two years.

“Many of the bookings we’re getting are from people who would have previously chosen Noosa or Port Douglas as a holiday destination,” Ms Wiltshire says.

“However, they say these places are becoming too busy and developed ... they want a quieter, more relaxed holiday.”

Mission Beach has been the focus of unparalleled levels of investment in recent times, sparking speculation it is set to become the new prestige destination for far North Queensland.

A new \$100 million championship golf course, 20-shop retail centre and multi-million dollar revamps to two of the area’s top resorts are just some of the projects already under way, with more planned.

Woolworths will open a supermarket in June this year in response to major growth forecasts for the area.

Eco Village accommodation owner Dan Hatten says the area missed out on the rampant growth which overtook Cairns and Port Douglas in the 1980s and 1990s.

“It was a blessing, really, because now the planning controls are in place that will ensure the next level of growth is done sympathetically,” he says.

“We have a really unique environment here ...it’s so important that we preserve it.”

Mission Beach is made up of five settlements set in a 14km long stretch of fertile plain bordered by exquisite beaches on one side; pristine, world heritage-listed rainforest on the other.

The largest settlement – North Mission Beach – is the main tourist centre with a variety of shops, cafes, restaurants and bars grouped in a charming village-like setting.

There are a host of action-packed activities on offer – from sky diving, white water rafting and diving on the reef, to a pulse-racing jet-ski tour around nearby Dunk Island.

And for those who seek a more sedate holiday experience there are walks in world heritage-listed rainforest and moonlit alfresco dinners at beachside restaurants.

Ms Wiltshire says the current \$18 million makeover of the five-star Elandra resort is indicative of the confidence the business community is displaying in the high-end tourist market.

The new-look resort was launched in June to a glittering 500-guest function at Mission Beach hosted by television personality Sonia Kruger and singer Grace Jones.

Ray White Mission Beach principal Dick Williams says he is seeing an increasing number of prestige property buyers in the Mission Beach market. "They like the fact that it's big enough to have restaurants, bars and tourist attractions, yet it still has that intimate village atmosphere," Mr Williams says.

He says Sea Patrol - the Channel 9 hit television series filmed off the Mission Beach coast – has injected a new level of interest in the area. "The cast and crew all stay in Mission Beach while they're filming and, of course, they go back and rave to their city friends about the place," Mr Williams says.

Ms Wiltshire says Mission Beach has its fair share of high-profile visitors. "We've rented holiday accommodation to some very well-known names," she said.

"They like the fact that we can offer them a private retreat where they can kick back, relax and be completely undisturbed – there's not many places like that left in the world."

And the price tag?

"Anything up to \$6000 a week on a short-stay basis," Ms Wiltshire says.

"Don't get me wrong – you can get good accommodation in Mission Beach for as little as \$90 a night. But people wishing to stay in exclusive accommodation are prepared to pay for the luxury of privacy."

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