



GREAT BARRIER REEF, AUSTRALIA

DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP AWARD

WINNER 2007

CASE STUDY

The **Great Barrier Reef**, the world's largest UNESCO-recognised World Heritage Area, is also one of the world's most recognisable tourism icons. The Reef, protected by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), attracts nearly 2 million international tourists and 4.9 million domestic leisure tourists every year, resulting in 54,000 full-time jobs. The future well-being of both the Marine Park and the tourism industry are inextricably linked – a healthy tourism industry in the Marine Park will always need a healthy Great Barrier Reef.



The increasing realisation of this interdependence has led to the pioneering Sustainable Tourism Partnership between the GBRMPA and the tourism industry. The aims of the Sustainable Tourism Partnership are to ensure maximum benefits and minimum negative impacts to the Great Barrier Reef and the adjacent local communities.

Key goals are to:

- Improve protection and presentation of the Marine Park by encouraging and rewarding high standard sustainable tourism operations
- Increase tourists' understanding of the Marine Park by improving the quality of the natural and cultural information available to them
- Develop a more effective park compliance system supported by tourism operators
- Ensure business-focused management through the GBRMPA taking advice from the tourism industry and local communities in its policy development
- Allow tourists to the Marine Park to contribute to its management by paying an Environmental Management Fee.

The Environmental Management fee (A\$4.50 per person per day), is paid by each tourist visiting the Marine Park. This money contributes approximately 20% of the total GBRMPA annual budget, with the approximately A\$7.2 million collected from tourists each year directed into tourism management, policy development, tourism research and community partnership projects.

CASE STUDY



The Sustainable Tourism Partnership is multi-faceted and includes:

- The High Standard Tourism Program – which encourages tour operators to achieve high sustainable tourism standards and rewards those that do.
- The Eyes and Ears Incident Reporting Program – which recognises that, because tour operators are regularly out on the water, they can significantly improve the effectiveness of the GBRMPA’s compliance and enforcement measures by reporting any violations.
- The Partnership Monitoring Program – whereby tour operators voluntarily monitor sites they visit and report observations to the GBRMPA. Examples include BleachWatch, whereby operators provide comprehensive reports to help map the extent and intensity of coral bleaching, and Eye on the Reef, which involves operators taking weekly observations at their sites, providing a solid baseline of information for researchers.

A comprehensive website designed specifically for the tourism industry, *Onboard – The Tourism Operator’s Handbook for the Great Barrier Reef*, supports the partnership goals by describing in easy-to-read detail everything an operator needs to know to operate in the Marine Park, such as permits required and how to achieve high sustainable tourism standards. It was developed in co-operation with the industry and tested by 60 tour operators.

The Tourism and Recreation Reef Advisory Committee (TRRAC) – one of the most progressive aspects of the Sustainable Tourism Program – which involves a senior level committee, representing some 600 individual marine-based tourism businesses, provides the GBRMPA with regular advice on the management of tourism in the Marine Park. The TRRAC also identifies emerging issues such as the effects of climate change, and fosters community participation in tourism and its management. There are 11 Local Marine Advisory Committees based along the Great Barrier Reef coast. These allow local communities to participate in Marine Park management decisions.