

# In Cook's wake

Follow the trail of Captain James Cook by cruising to the Top End of Australia



## hearing the most out of life

Helen Keller, who was both deaf and blind, said she would rather be blind than deaf. Many golfers say they would rather hear the ball being hit than see where it goes... Sound halves in intensity for every doubling of distance. So the further you sit away from the television, the louder it has to be.

The bottom line, hearing is about quality of life not just how well the ear works. And the best qualified person to test your hearing and improve your quality of life through better hearing is an Audiologist. Till next time, Geoff

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Eyes shining with a huge sense of achievement, we and our fellow passengers slap each others' backs and look at each other with new respect. We feel like we just ascended our own personal Mt Everest – in the tropics, of course.

Cook's Look is a significant destination in the seven-day Top End cruise itinerary developed by Captain Cook Cruises to follow in the wake of the Brit explorer who inspired the company's name and named much of the Tropical North Queensland coastline and reefs.

The Look is the highest point on Lizard Island, about 1200m up. It was here Captain Cook spent the night with botanist Banks, trying to work out a passage through the treacherous reefs for his vessel the *Endeavour*.

Not a walk but a vertical climb at times on all fours best describes the ascent to Cook's Look. The rewards were superb, not only 360 degree views of paradise but a pod of whales frolicking in the azure waters.

One can only think of Captain James managing the feat dressed in his British woollens. On returning to the comforts of *MV Reef Endeavour*, any stress was quickly alleviated.

Captain Cook Cruises is marketed as the small ship cruise line and it is an apt strap line.

Spas bubble in the open air on the top deck, a sauna soothes and a gym satisfies the work-out guilts. A swimming pool on C Deck is the perfect cooling-off place. Interpretive talks and videos are shown in the Reef Room, the Captain Cook Saloon beckons diners and The Lizard Lounge is the perfectly named day saloon and cocktail bar.

Cabins/staterooms are soundproof comfort zones with generous sized storage space (it's a treat to be able to put your luggage away under the bed once you've unpacked).

Usually, the *MV Reef Endeavour* plies two routes from Cairns – a four-day northern itinerary and a three-day southern escape. However, several times a year it breaks away with a special seven-day cruise itinerary encompassing the Top End features which were such a major aspect of Captain James Cook's voyage of discovery.

Leaving Lizard Island, the next stop is at tiny Morris Islet, a small cay on a huge reef which supports a large variety of nesting shorebirds and green and hawksbill turtles. It's a wonderful, untouched paradise and even the pelicans seem to appreciate our visit.

It's a change of pace the next morning when we touch down on Thursday Island, the administrative heart of the Torres Strait. History features largely here, particularly the bastion of Green Hill Fort and the memorials to the Japanese pearl divers who created the region's first industry. Pearls are still the best takeaway souvenir of the island.

But the day's best feature is waiting – the Top End. This is the northern-most tip of the continent of Australia (there's actually a sign there in case you're unsure of your whereabouts) and it's a relatively easy walk from the beach to the rocky outcrop, thanks to the tenders from *MV Reef Endeavour* placing us in close proximity.

Back on board, the champagne is complements of the captain and the toast is to the Tip. A sensational sunset farewells us as we head south, by course and by inclination, to discover what the menu in the Captain Cook saloon features this evening. Every day and night the menu themes differ and the on-board cuisine is a much feted highlight with our fellow passengers.

The shore excursions are perfectly timed and just the right duration.

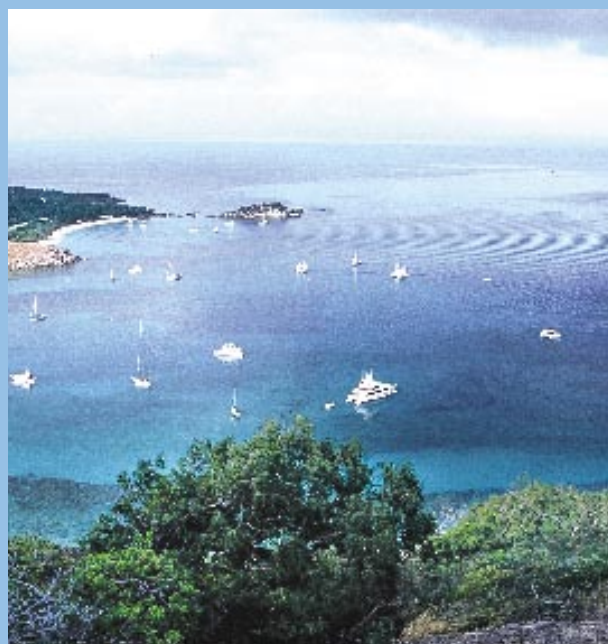
At Stanley Island we visit a significant cultural site featuring spectacular Aboriginal cave paintings and rock art. Our native guides Danny and his niece Taryn, descendents of the area's traditional owners, impart their knowledge. The ancient artists have drawn four masted ships, indelibly etched in ochre in the protected caves. Is one the original *Endeavour*?

Exploring the reef below is a significant part of the cruise and the fabled No.5 Ribbon Reef is our next destination for diving, snorkelling and glass bottom boat tours. This crystal coral haven at the edge of the Continental Shelf is a verdant garden of marine life and the sunlight is perfectly positioned in the morning for the best possible viewing of the reef's casual inhabitants. Moorish idols, rabbitfish, clownfish and giant clams all form a procession to our eager eyes.

It's a shame that Captain James Cook didn't have coral-viewing apparatus otherwise he certainly wouldn't have damned the reef as a hindrance to his passage. In fact, it was a piece of coral, a large one, which saved him and his crew when his ship struck a reef. The solid coral broke off and lodged in the hole created, effectively blocking the sea from flooding the vessel completely.

Passengers on today's *MV Reef Endeavour* fully appreciate the corals and the path which Cook struck more than two centuries ago. As a voyage of discovery on all levels, the Top End cruise is both exhilarating and relaxing. Exploring should always be this accessible.

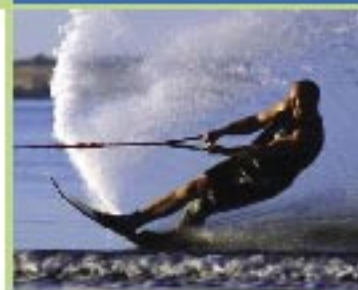
The cruise costs \$2240 per person twin share. For departure dates contact Captain Cook Cruises, ph: 9206 1122, visit: [www.captaincook.com.au](http://www.captaincook.com.au) or email: [cruise@captaincook.com.au](mailto:cruise@captaincook.com.au)



Exploring in style ... The *MV Reef Endeavour*, opposite page, Lizard Island, passengers celebrate reaching The Tip and Thursday Island.

Photographs // Mia Lacy and Captain Cook Cruises

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