

THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

WHALE & DOLPHIN RESEARCH PROGRAMME

RESEARCH ASSISTANT INFORMATION PACK

- 2017 -

BLUE PLANET MARINE

CEAL
Cetacean Ecology and Acoustics Laboratory

Blue Planet Marine – expert marine environmental research and consulting

Contents

Welcome **3**

The Programme **3**

Programme dates 4

Aims of the Programme 4

Study site 5

Climate on the Great Barrier Reef 6

Research vessels 6

Research team 7

Conditions of participation in the Programme 8

Participation certificate and other bonuses 8

Expenses 8

Cancellation policy 9

A typical research trip **9**

Your role as a Research Assistant 10

Health & safety and emergencies in the field **10**

Moving around the vessels 12

Swimming 12

Travel planning information **12**

Joining the research vessel – Airlie Beach 13

Joining the research vessel – Mackay 14

Disembarking the research vessel – all research trips 15

Transport to/from Airlie Beach 15

Transport to/from Mackay 16

Accommodation in Airlie Beach and Mackay 17

Travel and medical insurance 17

Medical and fitness 17

Packing guidelines 18

Responsibility for your gear 19

Online resources 19

Programme packing checklist **21**

Contact details **22**

The Great Barrier Reef Whale and Dolphin Research Programme - 2017

WELCOME

Congratulations on securing a place as a Research Assistant on the Great Barrier Reef Whale and Dolphin Research Programme (the Programme). You're about to enter an amazing realm of marine mammal research in one of the world's most spectacular environments. This will be an experience you'll never forget!

This information pack details things you need to know about the Programme and organise before you join us. If you have questions that we haven't answered here, then feel free to contact us by email or phone. We're happy to help. You can find our contact details on the last page of this information pack or on our website.

By now you'll know that the Programme is led by Blue Planet Marine (BPM). It has been carefully designed with the Cetacean Ecology and Acoustics Laboratory (CEAL) at The University of Queensland (Australia), and will be run in collaboration with them. Both organisations have many years of experience working with marine mammals around Australia, including humpback whales off Australia's east coast.

THE PROGRAMME

Rather than just an opportunity to get up close and personal with marine mammals, the Programme is real science and has real conservation value.

You will be collecting data on the east Australian humpback whale (EAH) population, on their breeding grounds within the Great Barrier Reef (GBR). With your assistance, this project will increase knowledge of the breeding sub-stocks of humpback whales in the south west Pacific Ocean, and help determine whether these whales should be managed together or as separate populations. The International Whaling Commission has identified these data as the highest priority research required in order to effectively manage humpback whales in this area.



Humpback whale breaching

You'll also help to fill in knowledge gaps about: the social dynamics and drivers around humpback whale breeding; social communications (including social sounds and song) on the EAH breeding grounds; and the potential for anthropogenic (human) impacts on humpback whales within the breeding grounds.

There's a lot to do!

Programme dates

The Programme will run from 16 July to 22 September 2017. This time will be divided into eight research trips. Six of these trips will take six days, while two will last twelve days. We've listed the dates of these for you in the table below. Please take time now to ensure you know the dates of your research trip(s) as well as the start and end location(s).

Research Trip #	Start Date	End Date	Number of days/nights	Start/End Location
1	16 Jul 2017	21 Jul 2017	6/6*	Airlie Beach
2	23 Jul 2017	28 Jul 2017	6/6*	Airlie Beach
3	30 Jul 2017	4 Aug 2017	6/6*	Airlie Beach
4	6 Aug 2017	17 Aug 2017	12/12*	Airlie Beach/Mackay
5	20 Aug 2017	31 Aug 2017	12/12*	Mackay/Airlie Beach
6	3 Sep 2017	8 Sep 2017	6/6*	Airlie Beach
7	10 Sep 2017	15 Sep 2017	6/6*	Airlie Beach
8	17 Sep 2017	22 Sep 2017	6/6*	Airlie Beach

* You may choose to stay aboard for the last night of your trip, or are welcome to stay ashore.

Aims of the Programme

Based from three research vessels, the Programme intentionally coincides with the peak of EAH migration to the GBR. There will be a lot of whales!

The overarching aims of the Programme are to:

1) Identify areas of the GBR that are most important for humpback whale breeding activities;
2) Gather information regarding the structure of the east Australian humpback whale sub-stock; and
3) Gain a better understanding of whale communications and the potential for anthropogenic impacts within the breeding grounds of the GBR.

In order to do this we will:

- Further identify areas of the GBR that are most important for breeding activities. This involves the collection of hormone samples from blubber and will help us to understand which whales are there to breed;
- Continue the identification of individual whales through photo identification of flukes. These images will be used to determine the movement of individual whales within the GBR and the South Pacific;

- Record whale vocalisations. These data will help us figure out: what songs are being sung; what social sounds are being made (and what they may mean); and how these differ within and between whale sub-stocks in the South Pacific;
- Systematically collect genetic samples using biopsy techniques. These data will be compared to samples taken within the GBR and from other sub-stocks of humpback whales from the south west Pacific Ocean and Western Australia. They will help us to identify how much different sub-stocks interbreed;
- Systematically collect data on whale behaviour using visual observation, video, and digital photography. These data will help us to work out the behaviour within a group of whales on the GBR; and
- Collect baseline data on dolphins and other whales encountered during the Programme as well as background noise in the region. These data will add to the general understanding of how background noise may affect whale communications within the GBR, and general species presence and distribution there too.

In addition to the boat-based work, we're investigating options to undertake land-based observations for whales and other marine fauna from a high vantage point on islands in the region. While we are not planning on using land-based observer teams during the 2017 field season may scout out suitable locations for land-based observations to be used during future programs. It is proposed that the land-based observer team will assist in directing the vessel-based teams to the areas of highest density of whales, as well as collecting important information on the overall abundance and distribution of whale pods in the region.

Study site

Our primary study site is in the Whitsunday Island/Mackay/Swains Reef region, out to the outer reefs of the GBR, off the Central Queensland coast (east coast of Australia). This area is within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. These waters are sheltered from open ocean swells by the GBR and there are many spectacular anchorages within the region, which we will use during each research trip.



Map showing the general study site

Climate on the Great Barrier Reef

From July to September the climate of the GBR is temperate with mild winter and spring conditions. The temperature will range from an average daytime maximum of 25° C (77° F) to an overnight minimum of approximately 16° C (61° F). As it is the dry season, we would expect an average of only 3 rain days per month. Uncharacteristic weather patterns may occur, however.

Days are typically clear with cool mornings warming to a pleasant day on the water where shorts and T-shirts would suffice. There are some days when you may get wet. We advise bringing a waterproof jacket, waterproof pants/trousers, as well as suitable footwear such as dive booties or sea boots etc. While the average daily wind speed is around 9-10 knots, we may experience weather patterns that result in up to 30-35 knots of sustained winds. During such times, it is too rough to work offshore for a couple of days at a time. During these periods, depending on wind direction, we may be able to work within the sheltered waters of the Whitsunday Island Group.

Sea water temperature will be around 20-21° C (68-70° F). This is considered fairly warm and would be enjoyed by most swimmers for a short while. If you want to spend extended periods in the water it would pay to bring a light (3 mm) wetsuit.

Research vessels

Three specialised research vessels owned and operated by BPM will be used during the Programme.

RV Flying Fish V, a 23-metre research vessel, will be your home and work platform for the duration of the Programme. The entire research team including all Research Assistants will live and work from the vessel on a daily basis. She is comfortable, set up for environmental research and is well equipped for working in the GBR. The maximum research team size will be 16 people (up to 10 Research Assistants and 6 researchers/crew). Accommodation aboard *Flying Fish* consists of 4 cabins each with a double and a single bed, plus a further 2 cabins each with 4 single beds. You will have your own bed and will most likely be sharing a cabin with another member of the research team.

Working in conjunction with *Flying Fish*, will be *RV Coda* and *RV Beluga*. *Coda* is a 6.4 m rigid-hulled inflatable, is specialised for close approaches to whales and dolphins and will be used for collecting: photo identification and genetic samples.



RV Flying Fish V

Beluga is a purpose-built 6 m rigid-hulled inflatable research vessel. She is fitted with a bow sprit for work with whales and will be used to for collecting acoustic and genetic data, as well as photo identification. *Coda* and *Beluga* will each carry between 4-6 research team members on a daily basis.

All vessels are in full commercial survey and will be operated by our experienced and qualified research team. The safety of the entire research team is paramount throughout the Programme. As part of this information pack you are supplied with specification documents for BPM's research vessels.

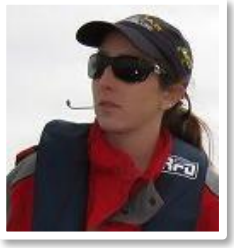
Research team

As well as Research Assistants, the Programme research team includes the following researchers (NOTE: not all researchers will be on all research trips).



Dr David Paton – Principal Investigator

Managing Director of BPM, Dave is a marine mammal, turtle and seabird biologist and ecologist with 30+ years' experience around the world. His PhD thesis focussed on humpback whale population dynamics and movement patterns.



Dr Rebecca Dunlop – Co-Investigator

Bec is a Senior Lecturer in physiology at the School of Veterinary Science, University of Queensland, and Co-Leader of CEAL. She is a world leader the contextual use of social sounds in humpback whales and the effects of noise on their behaviour.



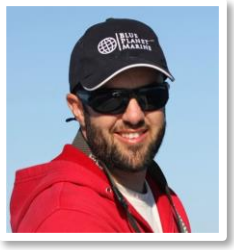
Associate-Professor Michael Noad – Co-Investigator

An international leader in the field of humpback whale acoustics, Mike's main research interest is the evolution and function of humpback whale song. He is an Associate-Professor at the University of Queensland and Co-Leader of CEAL.



Dr Simon Childerhouse – Researcher

Simon has worked as a marine mammal biologist for 20+ years in Australia, New Zealand, Antarctica, USA, Canada and the South Pacific. A past member of the IWC Scientific Committee, he knows first-hand how science and management connects.

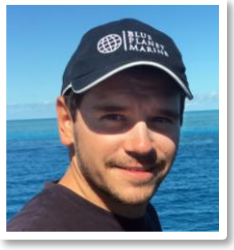


Dr Dan Burns – Researcher

Dan is a marine scientist at BPM with 15+ years' experience on a variety of projects. He completed his PhD at Southern Cross University studying the migratory movements of humpback whales on their southern migration off eastern Australia.



David Donnelly – Researcher
A cetacean researcher with 21 years' experience in a wide range of research projects using a diverse range of methods, David specialises in close approach vessel work for photo ID, tagging, blow and biopsy sampling of cetaceans.



Damien Morales M.Sc. – Researcher
Involved in research projects around Australia including on sea lions, bottlenose dolphins, humpback whales and blue whales, Damien is an experienced environmental scientist specialising in marine megafauna.



Dana Cusano M.Res. – Researcher
Most recently at the Syracuse University (New York), Dana's research focused on the acoustic communication and behavioural ecology of North Atlantic right and humpback whales. Her primary research interest is behavioural acoustics.

Conditions of participation in the Programme

The conditions of participation in the Programme are outlined on our website. Please refresh yourself with these and advise us if any details have changed since you booked your trip(s).

Participation certificate and other bonuses

At the end of your time with us you will be presented with a participation certificate. If you wish, we'll also supply you with a detailed description of your research activities with us. You'll also receive a 'Great Barrier Reef Research Project' T-shirt and a DVD including photographs and recordings taken during the Programme.

Expenses

As well as your accommodation aboard *Flying Fish*, the Programme fee covers all food (breakfast, lunch and dinner) while you are aboard. Special dietary requirements can be catered for, within reason and provided you give us sufficient notice.

The following is considered a personal expense and is not included in the Programme fee:

- All travel and accommodation to/from the start and end locations of your research trip(s), including any necessary Visa application fees;
- Personal insurance (all Research Assistants must have medical/travel insurance);
- Any food or drinks required during transit or when not aboard the research vessels;
- Any special treats or snacks you would like while aboard the research vessels;

- Alcohol (the legal drinking age in Queensland is 18 years – excessive consumption of alcohol is not permitted during the Programme);
- Free time activities during time off between research trips; and
- Other personal expenses.

Note that you will need to arrange your travel to and from the start and end locations of your research trip(s), and your personal health and travel insurance for the duration of your transit to and from the Programme and while you are with us. You must also arrange any required travel Visa and any accommodation required outside of your research trip.

Cancellation Policy

From time to time unforeseen circumstances arise that mean you are unable to attend all or some of the Programme. Please ensure you understand our cancellation policy below. Any cancellation must be in writing and emailed to info@blueplanetmarine.com.

In the unlikely event that BPM must cancel a research trip you may choose an alternative date for your research trip or receive a full (100%) refund. Where there are too few people for a research trip to proceed, BPM may request a change of dates or alternatively you will receive a 100% refund of your Programme fee.

If you fail to join the Programme without notifying us that you are cancelling, no refund will be issued.

Time of Cancellation Prior to Research Trip	Fee Forfeited if Cancellation by Participant
30 or more days' prior	30% of Programme fee
29 or fewer days prior to OR after starting date	100% of Programme fee
During research trip	100% of Programme fee

If for any reason you do not attend the research trip(s) you booked, BPM is not liable for any other costs you may incur outside of your Programme fee. This includes, but is not limited to, the cost of your airfare to join the Programme.

We strongly recommend you book fully flexible airfares.

A TYPICAL RESEARCH TRIP

- 6-day research trips will start and end at Airlie Beach, Queensland.
- The first 12-day research trip (6-17 August 2017), will start at Airlie Beach, and end at Mackay, Queensland.
- The second 12-day research trip (20-31 August 2017), will start at Mackay and end at Airlie Beach.

On the first day of each research trip we'll provide a safety briefing, as well as detailed instruction on data collection methodology. Health and Safety will be paramount for the duration of the Programme.

On the first morning of all research trips, we'll meet you at 7 am, board *Flying Fish* and head to the study site. While we're on our way (and when we're at the study site), we expect to see numerous pods of dolphins as well as turtles, seabirds, and other spectacular marine wildlife.

Once we are set up at the study site, research teams will work from *Flying Fish*, *Coda* and *Beluga* collecting data. Your team will always include a mix of researchers and Research Assistants. You'll also rotate among teams, vessels and tasks so you will experience all aspects of the Programme. Each morning (weather permitting) we'll head out to look for whales and dolphins. At the end of each research day *Flying Fish* will anchor at a sheltered anchorage within the GBR.

On days where the weather is not suitable for research activities, we may spend the day catching up on data entry and sorting, matching whale fluke identification photos, exploring the islands, spotting whales from shore, snorkelling, swimming, fishing, kicking a ball around on the beach and having a BBQ as we watch the sun set over the GBR.

During research activities, we will make sure there is time to snorkel and swim on some of the more remote reefs of the GBR, which are rarely visited by tourists. There will also be opportunities to catch a fish for dinner. So, bring your snorkel gear, a light wetsuit and a fishing rod if you wish. You can hire snorkelling gear from Abell Point Marina – or nearby businesses.

On several nights during each research trip we will deliver presentations on our research results and lectures on whale biology and ecology.

Your role as a Research Assistant

As a Research Assistant, you will be an integral member of the research team. You'll be hands-on and there will always be someone experienced to help you.

On a daily basis Research Assistants will be actively involved in all aspects of research activities, including: whale fluke photo identification; video recordings; assisting with the collection of genetic samples; recording behavioural observations; and recording whale song and social sounds. You will also assist with vessel operations, including all day-to-day activities such as cooking, cleaning and vessel maintenance.



Whitehaven Beach anchorage, Whitsunday Island Group

HEALTH & SAFETY AND EMERGENCIES IN THE FIELD

Health and Safety aboard during the Programme is the responsibility of everyone on the research team.

A full health and safety briefing will be held on the first day of each research trip (including the location and use of safety equipment on *Flying Fish*, *Coda* and *Beluga*) and as necessary throughout. Your active participation in these meetings is mandatory. The health and safety of everyone aboard is paramount.

While working on the vessels the wearing of covered shoes is a requirement. Crocs is a minimum type of foot wear. Your feet may get wet and so we recommend the use of dive booties or sea boots etc. You will be supplied with a personal floatation device (PFD) for use during your research trip(s).

In the event of an emergency, there is 24/7 access to Proserpine Hospital, Mackay Base Hospital, Rockhampton Hospital and Gladstone Hospital. There are medical centres at Airlie Beach, Mackay, Rockhampton, Gladstone and elsewhere along the coast. There is also access to Volunteer Marine Rescue Whitsundays. If required, First Aid can be provided by Programme staff and we carry an extensive offshore first aid kit aboard *Flying Fish* including a defibrillator and oxygen supply system.

Proximity to Medical Care	
Programme staff certified in Senior First Aid	Staff members from Blue Planet Marine will be on the research vessel throughout the Programme.
Nearest hospitals	**Proserpine Hospital** Corner Herbert and Taylor Streets, Proserpine, Qld 4800 Phone: +61 7 4813 9400 www.health.qld.gov.au/services/mackay/whitsunday_hs.asp **Mackay Base Hospital** 475 Bridge Road, Mackay, Qld 4740 Phone: +61 7 4885 6000 www.mackay.health.qld.gov.au/ **Rockhampton Hospital** Canning Street, Rockhampton, Qld 4700 Phone: +61 7 4920 6211 https://www.health.qld.gov.au/services/central-queensland/rockhampton **Gladstone Hospital** Park Street, Gladstone, Qld 4680 Phone: +61 7 4976 3200 https://www.health.qld.gov.au/services/central-queensland/gladstone All public hospitals in the Queensland region:

	https://www.myhospitals.gov.au/browse-hospitals/qld/
Distance to nearest Hospital	Proserpine Hospital – 20.1 km from Abell Point Marina Mackay Base Hospital – 12.8 km from Mackay Marina Rockhampton Hospital – 50.6 km from Keppel Bay Marina Gladstone Hospital – 2.2 km from Gladstone Marina
Volunteer Marine Rescue (VMR) Whitsundays	In the event of a serious medical emergency the VMR Rescue vessel could reach us in under two hours, depending upon our location at the time. **Whitsunday Marine Club** 2 Altmann Ave, Cannonvale Qld 4802 Phone: +61 7 4946 7207 Mobile: +61 410 013 881 VHF Radio Channels 16, 67, 81, 82 HF Frequency 2182, 4124 www.vmrwhitsundays.com.au/

Moving around the vessels

Care must be taken at all times while moving around the research vessels, whether underway, at anchor or in port. A vessel is a moving platform and the decks can become damp and slippery from either sea spray or dew. When moving around the vessel make full use of the safety handrails. Keep in mind the adage: 'One hand for the ship and one hand for yourself'. Take particular care moving up and down the staircases within *Flying Fish*.

Swimming

There will be opportunities to swim on the GBR. There are risks associated with this activity, however, including bites or stings from animals (some of which are venomous). If you do want to swim it is essential that you inform another person on the research team. In some cases the Captain will indicate that swimming is not permitted due to safety issues or other operational requirements. We recommend the use of a light (3 mm) wetsuit.

TRAVEL PLANNING INFORMATION

Please read the following information carefully, it will help you prepare for your research trip. Feel free to contact us if you require clarification or need further information. We have included a list of useful websites (online resources) at the end of this information pack that may assist with your travel plans.

Where you join or disembark the research vessel will depend on which research trip you are taking. Please ensure you fully understand the locations relevant to your research trip(s):

- **All 6-day research trips start and end at Abell Point Marina, Airlie Beach, Queensland.**
- **The first 12-day research trip (6-17 August 2017), will start at Abell Point Marina, Airlie Beach, Queensland and end at Mackay Marina, Mackay, Queensland.**

- **The second 12-day research trip (20-31 August 2017), will start at Mackay Marina, Mackay, Queensland and end at Abell Point Marina, Airlie Beach, Queensland.**

Joining the research vessel – Airlie Beach

If you are on a 6-day research trip or the first 12-day research trip (6-17 August 2017), then you will join the BPM research vessel (*RV Flying Fish V*), at Abell Point Marina, Airlie Beach, Queensland (www.abellpointmarina.com.au).

We will meet you at the **Abell Point Marina Arrival/Departure Plaza at 0700** on the first day or your research trip and will board *Flying Fish* at 0730. The Abell Point Marina Arrival/Departure Plaza is shown on the map provided to you separately as part of this information pack. We'll depart the marina at 0830. We recommend that you stay in Airlie Beach on the night prior to the first day of your research trip.



If something has gone wrong and you will be late, you must contact us on +61 (0)431 664 472. We cannot delay vessel departure but will assist you in determining an alternative pick up point.

Joining the research vessel – Mackay

If you are on the second 12-day research trip (20-31 August 2017), then you will join the BPM research vessel (*RV Flying Fish V*), at Mackay Marina, Mackay, Queensland (www.mackaymarina.com).

We will meet you outside the **Lighthouse Seafood Restaurant (at the northern end of Mackay Marina, which is beside the white lighthouse building) at 0700** on the first day or your research trip and will board *Flying Fish* at 0730. The Lighthouse Seafood Restaurant is shown on the map provided to you separately as part of this information pack. We'll depart the marina at 0830. We recommend that you stay at the Clarion Hotel Mackay Marina, or in Mackay on the night prior to the first day of your research trip.

If something has gone wrong and you will be late, you must contact us on +61 (0)431 664 472. We cannot delay vessel departure but will assist you in determining an alternate pick up point.



Disembarking the research vessel – all research trips

Whether your research trip ends at Abell Point Marina or Mackay Marina, we will arrive at approximately 1800 on the last day of your research trip (return time may vary subject to weather conditions). You are welcome to stay aboard that night or disembark and head to your own accommodation. Since our arrival time back at the marina may be variable, we recommend you plan your onward travel from Airlie Beach or Mackay to commence on the day after your research trip is complete. If you decide to stay aboard for the last night of your research trip, disembark time is 8 am the following morning. It's important that you assist us with disembarking on time. You are responsible for making your way from the research vessel to connect with your onward travel.

If you need to contact us at Airlie Beach or Mackay, our mobile number is +61 (0)431 664 472.

Transport to/from Airlie Beach

There is plane, road, train and ferry access to/from Airlie Beach.

We strongly recommend you purchase fully flexible travel tickets in case of any unforeseen changes to plans.

Planes

Getting to Airlie Beach from overseas is best done by flying into Brisbane (BNE), Cairns (CNS), Sydney (SYD) or Melbourne (MEL), and then booking a domestic flight into Whitsunday Coast Airport, Proserpine (PPP). The airport is serviced by Virgin Australia and Jetstar offering daily flights from Brisbane and connecting flights from other cities. Brisbane offers the best range of connecting flights into the region.

Whitsunday Coast Airport is located in Proserpine, approximately 30 minutes to Airlie Beach. Buses and taxis meet every flight to transfer guests to Airlie Beach. Car hire is also available at the airport.

An alternative airport is located on Hamilton Island (HTI), and is serviced by Jetstar, Virgin Australia and Qantas. You will need to catch a ferry from Hamilton Island to Abell Point Marina in order to meet the research team.

Road

The Bruce Highway (A1) is the major road linking Queensland's coastal cities and towns from Brisbane to Cairns. The Bruce Highway runs through Proserpine. Airlie Beach is located approximately 20 minutes off the Bruce Highway from Proserpine along Shute Harbour Road.

Major coach operators include Airlie Beach in their regular scheduled services from major cities along the coast.

Train

Queensland Rail services operate the 'Spirit of Queensland' passenger service to the Proserpine Station on the Whitsunday Coast. This service links Airlie Beach to the coastal centres between Brisbane and Cairns. Trains travel north via Proserpine from Brisbane on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays. Trains return south through Proserpine to Brisbane on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays. Coach transfers between Proserpine and Airlie Beach are included in rail travel passes.

Transport to/from Mackay

There is plane, road and train access to/from Mackay.

> We strongly recommend you purchase fully flexible travel tickets in case of any unforeseen changes to plans.

Planes

Getting to Mackay from overseas is best done by flying into Brisbane (BNE), Cairns (CNS), Sydney (SYD) or Melbourne (MEL), and then booking a domestic flight into Mackay Airport (MKY). The airport is serviced by Virgin Australia, Qantas Link and Jetstar offering daily flights from a variety of cities within Australia. Brisbane offers the best range of connecting flights into the region.

Mackay Airport is located approximately 15 minutes' drive from Mackay CBD and 20 minutes from Mackay Marina. A public bus service (Translink), operates between Mackay Airport and the CBD: the route number is 303. This bus comes to/from the airport eleven times a day Monday to Friday and four times on a Saturday. Taxi and shuttle services provide door to door passenger transport service to/from the airport. Car hire is also available at the airport.

Road

The Bruce Highway (A1) is the major road linking Queensland's coastal cities and towns from Brisbane to Cairns. The Bruce Highway runs through Mackay. The Peak Downs Highway (70) also runs directly to Mackay. As a guide, it takes approximately 11 hours to drive from Brisbane to Mackay.

Major coach operators include Mackay in their regular scheduled services from major cities along the coast.

Train

Queensland Rail services operate the 'Spirit of Queensland' passenger service to the Mackay Railway Station. This service links the coastal centres between Brisbane and Cairns. Trains travel north via Mackay from Brisbane on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays. Trains return south through Mackay to Brisbane on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays.



Humpback whales

Accommodation in Airlie Beach and Mackay

You will need to book accommodation in Airlie Beach or Mackay prior to joining the research vessel on the first day of your research trip. If you intend to disembark the research vessel on the evening of the last day of your research trip, then you will also need to arrange your accommodation for that night. You are welcome to stay aboard the research vessel on the last night of your research trip and disembark by 8 am the following morning. This early disembarkation time allows time for the research team to prepare the vessel for the next research trip. Ensure you leave plenty of time to travel from Airlie Beach or Mackay to your connecting flights or other travel arrangements.

There are many resorts, hotels, back-packers, bed and breakfast, and caravan parks in the area. Accommodation may be scarce, so book early. The hosts at your chosen accommodation will be able to advise on or arrange transfers to Abell Point Marina or Mackay Marina.

Travel and medical insurance

In order to participate in the Programme, you must obtain comprehensive medical and travel insurance policies covering your journey to and from the Programme. This is your personal responsibility and your Travel Agent and/or insurance agent should be able to provide appropriate professional advice.

> Please provide BPM with copies of your medical and travel insurance.

Medical and fitness

If you are traveling from overseas, please ensure that you are aware of any health requirements related to travel between your country and Australia. This information should be available from your Travel Agent.

It's important for your safety, the safety of others aboard and for your enjoyment of the Programme that you are physically fit. You will be spending 6-12 days/nights aboard the research vessel and will be travelling considerable distances offshore.



There's time for exploring ashore too!

Research Assistants will be involved in light physical activity and require only a general level of fitness.

> If you have any doubts or concerns about your fitness to participate you should consult your Doctor.

Packing guidelines

Baggage

Please use a large-sized soft traveling bag such as a duffel bag or nylon barrel-shape zip bag. Because they can't easily be stowed aboard *Flying Fish* suitcases are not appropriate.

NOTE: If you are on a longer trip and traveling with more luggage than you will need during the Programme, you may need to make prior arrangements to leave ashore what you will not need aboard. The accommodation you are using in Airlie Beach or Mackay will usually provide guest baggage storage facilities.

Bedding

All bedding is provided on board *Flying Fish*. We will also supply a bath towel. Please bring a beach towel for swimming activities.

Clothing

Casual clothing is fine during the Programme. Include shorts and t-shirts and/or slacks and shirts for during the day. Evenings and early mornings may be cool on deck – so a warm top and/or jeans and tracksuit pants are worth including. A waterproof/windproof jacket as well as waterproof over trousers are essential. While working on the vessels the wearing of covered shoes is a requirement. Crocs is a minimum type of foot wear. Your feet may get wet and so we recommend the use of dive booties or sea boots etc. Do not forget to bring a sun-hat, sunscreen and sunglasses. There is a washing machine aboard *Flying Fish*, which you are welcome to use.

Accessories

Only you know your own personal needs and what comfort and ease means to you, so bring what you feel you need. All we ask is that you try to fit all you bring into your large-sized soft traveling bag. You will be surprised how little you need on a vessel at sea.

Personal cameras, computers, mobile phones etc.

You are welcome to bring your personal electronic devices including: digital camera + lenses; video camera; laptop computer; iPad/tablet; iPod or similar; mobile phone etc. Don't forget to bring an external hard drive or equivalent to back up your data.

Please keep in mind that working space aboard is limited. Power outlets aboard are also limited and so research cameras and other equipment take precedence over the charging of personal electronic devices.

We will have mobile phone reception intermittently during the research trip, depending on our location within the GBR. Wi-Fi access will be intermittent and limited also.

Responsibility for your gear

Please note that care and stowage of your personal items is your responsibility. Particular care is necessary when you take personal items out on the deck of the research vessels. BPM and CEAL and their associated personnel are not liable for any damage to your personal items.

Due to space limitations, we ask that when you are no longer using personal items that you stow them in your cabin, this is especially important in communal areas or areas where research stations are set up.

Online resources

Below is a list of websites that may be of use to you. It is by no means exhaustive nor does it represent a formal recommendation by us.

BPM and CEAL

- www.blueplanetmarine.com
- www.uq.edu.au/whale/ceal

The Great Barrier Reef and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

- www.gbrmpa.gov.au

Visa information

- Australian Government: www.border.gov.au
- Please check travel information with your relevant government agency

Airline and other transport resources

- Virgin Australia: www.virginaustralia.com/au
- Jetstar Australia: www.jetstar.com/au/en/home
- Qantas: www.qantas.com
- Tiger Air: www.tigerair.com.au
- Webjet flight portal: www.webjet.com.au
- Expedia flight portal: https://www.expedia.com.au
- Portal for all modes of travel: www.rome2rio.com
- Queensland Rail route: www.queenslandrailtravel.com.au
- Queensland Rail timetable: www.queenslandrailtravel.com.au
- Greyhound Australia (bus): www.greyhound.com.au
- Whitsunday Coast Airport: www.whitsunday.qld.gov.au
- Getting to Airlie Beach: www.airliebeach.com
- Whitsunday Transit: htwww.whitsundaytransit.com.au
- Airlie Beach bus services: www.qld.gov.au/transport/public
- Ferry from Hamilton Island to Airlie Beach: www.hamiltonisland.com.au
- Mackay Airport: www.mackayairport.com.au
- Getting to Mackay Marina: www.mackaymarina.com
- Mackay bus services: https://translink.com.au
- Mackay Transit Coaches (bus): http://mackaytransit.com.au

Accommodation

- Booking.com: http://www.booking.com
- Trivago: http://www.trivago.co.nz
- TripAdvisor: https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz
- Rome to Rio: www.rome2rio.com

Other travel resources

- Queensland tourism website: www.queensland.com
- Rough Guides: www.roughguides.com/destinations/australasia/australia
- Lonely Planet: www.lonelyplanet.com/australia
- World Travel Guide: www.worldtravelguide.net/australia
- Weather Zone Australia: www.weatherzone.com.au
- Australian Government advice for travellers: www.smartraveller.gov.au
- Information about Australia: www.countryreports.org
- World time server: www.worldtimeserver.com
- Currency converter: www.xe.com/currencyconverter
- Telephone dialling from and to anywhere: www.countrycode.org
- ATM locator – MasterCard: www.mastercard.com/global/atmlocations
- ATM locator – Visa: www.visa.com/atmlocator/index.jsp

Health information

- Center for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov
- World Health Organization: www.who.int
- Disease Outbreaks: www.who.int/csr/don/en
- Travel Health website: www.mdtravelhealth.com

The phone number for emergency services (fire, police and ambulance) in Australia is 000.

Gear hire

- Abell Point Marina (Aqua Dive hire a range of gear including mask and snorkel, fins, wetsuit, and dive gear): www.aquadive.com.au
- There is no snorkel/scuba gear hire operation in Mackay, however, there Tackle world, where you can purchase fishing gear: www.tackleworld.com.au

If you intend to hire or purchase gear for your research trip, please ensure that you have this with you at the time of departure on the first day of your research trip. In fairness to the rest of the team, we will not be able to delay the departure of the research vessel in order for you to organise your gear.

PROGRAMME PACKING CHECKLIST

Essential Items

- ☐ Passport and/or visa (if necessary)
- ☐ Photocopies of your passport, flight itinerary, credit cards and travel/medical insurance in case the originals are lost or stolen; the copies should be packed separately from the original documents

Required Items

- ☐ Clothing: t-shirts/shirts, shorts, slacks/jeans
- ☐ Waterproof/windproof jacket and over trousers
- ☐ Sweatshirt and/or tracksuit (for cool evenings/mornings)
- ☐ Deck-style covered shoes (e.g. crocs, dive booties, sea boots etc.)
- ☐ Sun glasses (preferably polarised)
- ☐ Sun hat (wide brimmed)
- ☐ Sunscreen lotion (broad spectrum, water-resistant and SPF30 or above)
- ☐ Beach towel
- ☐ Swimmers

Personal Supplies

- ☐ Personal toiletries
- ☐ Antibacterial wipes or lotion (good for "washing" hands while in the field)
- ☐ Personal first-aid kit (e.g. sun-burn ointment, antibiotics, antiseptics anything that you personally require)
- ☐ Personal medications
- ☐ Motion sickness remedy

Miscellaneous

- ☐ Electronic devices + chargers AND voltage converter/power adapter (if necessary): www.tripadvisor.com
- ☐ Extra camera batteries and memory storage cards for personal camera

Optional Items

- ☐ Earplugs
- ☐ Reading material
- ☐ Light (3 mm) wetsuit
- ☐ Mask, fins and snorkel
- ☐ Fishing equipment
- ☐ Personal snack items/treats/drinks including alcohol

Please note that while alcohol is permitted on the Programme excessive consumption is not. You must be over the age of 18 to consume alcohol in the State of Queensland.

Illicit/illegal drugs are not permitted on the Programme. Use of these will result in your immediate removal from the Programme at your cost and forfeiture of any Programme fees.

SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES:

CONTACT DETAILS

If you require clarification regarding the content of this information pack or if you have any further questions, please contact info@blueplanetmarine.com or call Dave Paton on +61 (0)431 664 472.

www.blueplanetmarine.com