

A Magnetic Time

There's now another option if you want to head north but stay off the beaten track - Magnetic Island.



Above: There are dozens of quiet bays in which to lose oneself.

Below: Sunshine, friends and fun ... chartering Magnetic Island style.



Bareboat charterers now have an exciting new destination for their next adventure holiday.

Magnetic Island's renowned sailing waters now host the island's first bareboat charter company, Magnetic Island Rent-a-Yacht. This presents an opportunity for bareboaters to sail a new frontier on the Queensland coast.

Magnetic Island is a lovely island just 8 km from Townsville in North Queensland. Boasting 300 days of sunshine a year, unspoiled beaches and 22 unique bays, it has a striking resemblance to the Greek Isles, without the hefty airfare. Much of the island is accessible only by boat, offering bareboaters the opportunity to experience completely secluded anchorages. The passages between anchorages can be as short, easy and protected as you like.

Magnetic Island's first bareboat charter yacht, a Beneteau Oceanis 320, has just commenced bareboat and optional skippered charters. The business specialises in short-hop charters of one or two nights as well as extended getaways of four days or longer. All charterers receive a pre-charter information package, a one-hour briefing before setting off, and have assistance and advice available round the clock via radio or mobile telephone.

If you are a bit rusty, or a complete novice, sailing tuition is available from an AYP Yachtmaster. In as little as half a day you and your crew can learn the sailing basics while cruising. The charterer can choose to either self-provision the yacht or have it stocked with food and beverages.

Charterers can choose to start their getaway

from either the company's base at Horseshoe Bay on the north side of Magnetic Island, or Townsville's Breakwater Marina. A departure from Townsville means visitors can be aboard their boat only minutes after arrival by air or road.

Peaceful Bay

Horseshoe Bay is rapidly becoming a must for visiting coastal cruisers, offering safe anchorage in all but a rare strong northerly. A tavern, dining, general store, and beach activities belies this beautiful bay's peaceful nature. Charterers have a choice of setting out eastwards or westwards from Horseshoe to explore remote places such as Balding Bay, Radical Bay or Fivebeach Bay. For the compulsive sailor the 20-mile round trip across Cleveland Bay to Cape Cleveland offers great sailing on protected waters.

The snorkeling at Florence or Geoffrey Bay is superb, with a wide variety of colourful tropical fish and corals. Snorkeling gear is included in the charter fee. Local advice on scuba diving and hire gear can also be arranged by Magnetic Island Rent-a-Yacht. The company is happy to assist with accommodation and transfers as well, and will arrange day trips by wave-piercing catamaran to the Great Barrier Reef, some 60km offshore.

Charterers have the option of spending a night at the Townsville Breakwater Marina in the heart of the city, where you can enjoy the nightlife, party at Flinders Street or visit the famous Great Barrier Reef Wonderland and Omnimax theatre.

The cost starts at \$300 for a six-berth vessel per night. Fuel, gas and Reef Tax are included, making this one of the best-value budget bareboat holidays available anywhere in Queensland.