



Ecotourism at Thala Beach Nature Reserve

Thala Beach Nature Reserve, located between Cairns and Port Douglas in Queensland, Australia, is awarded the highest Ecotourism accreditation for maximising informative & meaningful experiences, whilst enhancing the local environment. The Thala Experience adheres to global principals of Ecotourism.

After ten consecutive years meeting the strict criteria for Advanced Ecotourism status, in 2017 Thala was awarded Green Travel Leader status with Ecotourism Australia.

National Geographic Unique Lodges of the World

In April 2018, in recognition of Thala's substantial credentials in offering deluxe eco-designed accommodation while minimising environmental impact, the beachfront eco lodge was handpicked for membership of National Geographic's Unique Lodges of the World after successfully undergoing a rigorous vetting process. The standards for inclusion are based on four pillars of sustainable tourism:

1. protection of natural heritage
2. protection of cultural heritage
3. support for local communities
4. environmentally friendly practices

National Geographic Unique Lodges of the World is a collection of handpicked lodges that invite guests to experience the world's most treasured places while helping to protect them for generations to come. Each lodge has made the choice to tread lightly, to celebrate nature rather than conquer it, to support cultural heritage, and to engage with local communities. From remarkable architecture to fine cuisine, National Geographic lodges are inspired by and complement their surroundings. The experience they offer is intimate and extraordinary, connecting guests with their destination in an authentic and meaningful way.

Natural area focus

Thala is built atop a private peninsular jutting into the Coral Sea, surrounded by miles of World Heritage coastline and The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park on the seaward side. The private beachfront has been left as nature intended it to be. Thala's magnificent 145 acre peninsular has six different habitats concentrated into this small area:

1. Eucalypt Woodlands on top of the main ridge and flats (includes grass trees and cycads).
2. Beach and coastal vegetation such various Paperbark species and beach sheoaks (Casuarinas) (littoral forest).
3. Lowland vine thicket/rainforest
4. Patches of rainforest on the valley floor including seasonal creeks (gallery forest)
5. Mangroves at the southern end of Oak Beach
6. Coconut Plantation

Each habitat attracts its own unique wildlife species.





Environmental sustainability

In the early 1970's Rob & Oonagh Prettejohn purchased the 58 hectare/145 acre peninsula. At the time, the land comprised just 45 acres of original native forest. The balance had been cleared and was a degraded, unsustainable sugar cane plantation. Environmental sensitivities were not as they are today and planning approval at the time would have allowed for a 700-bedroom hotel to be built! Fortunately, as locals with a feel for a low impact on this wonderful environment, this was not their style. They planted many thousands of indigenous plants to rehabilitate the area and start its return to a wild natural state. The Main Lodge and all bungalows are built out of natural sustainable materials in a low impact style that does not dominate, rather enhances, the surrounding landscape. Thala opened in 1998.

Conservation & wildlife habitat

Thala Beach Nature Reserve is a beacon of hope as mankind progresses from being 'the demolisher' to 'the conserver' and now to 'the environmental benefactor'. Over a period of 30 years, Rob and Oonagh have shepherded the re-establishment of complex forests on land that was once cleared and devastated by extractive farming. With the return of the forests, wildlife populations have exploded bringing their pulsating natural energy.

Approximately 120 butterfly species and almost 200 bird species have been spotted at Thala. On site rangers estimate that there are at least 50 agile wallabies inhabiting the forest. Young joeys and pregnant females are regularly sighted, indicating a thriving population. Frogs, lace monitor lizards, sugar gliders, echidnas, spiders and geckos are in abundance too.

Customer satisfaction

Rob and Oonagh Prettejohn (Thala's owners) employ wildlife specialists who are on hand to guide and amaze their guests in the forests, the beaches or along Thala's rocky headland. Complimentary tours are offered in a personalised, relaxed and unregimented fashion, designed so that guests enjoy the thrill of making their very own discoveries. Guests might see rare snub-finned dolphins or a resident osprey diving for fish to feed her chicks. Perhaps, while strolling through rainforest, they'll spot some of the many bird and butterfly species. Guests are encouraged to add new sightings to the growing lists recorded.

Thala has many permanent guests: they are recognizable by their wild temperament and generous covering of fur, feathers or scales. They are constantly surprising and delighting the transient humans. At night there is an observatory where guests are taken time travelling to the far reaches of The Milky Way on a guided Stargazing Odyssey.

Working with local communities

Recognising the importance of the spirit of our local indigenous communities Thala invites the elders of the Kuku Yalanji community to take our guests through the journey of their culture. From healing plants to bush food the elders bring in leaves and seeds for guests to handle and learn their history and importance to the survival of this wonderful community. Musical instruments so important to the rites and rituals of the ancient peoples of this ancient land are a part of Thala's experience. A didgeridoo demonstration is the highlight of





the cultural presentation. Thala is grateful to the Kuku Yalanji elders for their eager sharing of their ancient knowledge and cultural traditions.

Responsible marketing

All marketing material at Thala, (brochures, website, flyers and all images displayed on website and social media) are actual photographs taken and are true images of what guests can expect to experience. The brochure can be viewed on the website, reducing the necessity for mass print outs.

Leaving a soft footprint

Guests at eco-lodges like Thala leave a soft footprint in an environmental journey towards a better world. They take away memories and an understanding that will inspire them and others for years to come. Their active involvement at Thala also assists in the environmental rehabilitation process. Rob & Oonagh Prettejohn and their staff are proud to be associated with the modern and thoughtful ethos for which Australia's Eco Accreditation scheme upholds the highest standards.

Thank you for your interest in helping us to help the planet.

More information

www.thalabeach.com.au

