

MEDIA RELEASE

GLOBAL TOP 100 SUSTAINABILITY STORY - LOWS ISLES THE SEASIDE PARADISE

A UNIQUE tropical isle located on the Great Barrier Reef near Port Douglas has made a global list of the best destination sustainability stories.

Low Isles, located 13km northeast of the resort town, was selected in the 2021 Top 100 Green Destinations Sustainability Stories today.

Every year, the Top 100 Destination Sustainability Stories competition collects sustainable tourism stories and good practices from destinations all over the world to be shared as inspiring examples to others, from tourism professionals to travellers.

The unique tropical islands – Woody and Low Island - are part of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and are surrounded by coral reefs with over 150 different coral species. Port Douglas Daintree was one of five Australian ECO destinations awarded a place in the Top 100 Sustainable Destinations last year.

Tourism Port Douglas Daintree Chief Executive Officer, Tara Bennett, said the top 100 listing was a credit to the practices of local businesses who take visitors to the islands.

“We have an amazing group of eco-certified operators who raise awareness and educate visitors about biodiversity, reef health and impacts of climate change on reef systems around the world,” she said.

“Living amongst the coral is an enormous variety of fish and other marine fauna, such as turtles, dugongs. Also, dolphins, sharks and whales are commonly seen near the islands.”

“We are facing really challenging times, so it is fantastic to see our sector’s resilience and hard work in the sustainability recognised on the world stage.”

By telling their stories, destination management organisations can be acknowledged and recognised for the solutions they have implemented in response to challenges and problems they have faced. Submissions were evaluated by the Sustainable Top 100 Team, country experts and Green Destination Partners, coordinated by Green Destinations.

The Top 100 Committee stresses that selection to the Top 100 list does not mean the destination is sustainable, but that the destination has been pre-selected based on a minimum level of compliance with the core criteria of the Green Destinations Standard and selected to the list based on the assessment of their Good Practice Story.

Douglas Shire Mayor Michael Kerr said Low Isles was a standout for local sustainability.

“Many of our amazing community groups such as the Low Isles Preservation Society and Great Barrier Reef Legacy do some fantastic volunteer work out there,” he said.

“We also have plenty of locals who have joined citizen science programs, such as bird counting days and beach clean-ups.”

The competition is held under the auspices of the Top 100 Partnership, with special contributions by: Green Destinations, QualityCoast, Travelife, ITB Berlin, Asian Ecotourism Network, Ecotourism Australia, Global Ecotourism Network, Sustainable First and GLP Films.

The story, **Low Isles the Seaside Paradise**, and the whole 2021 Top 100 list will be available on the Green Destinations website.

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PIONEER IN REEF RESEARCH - DID YOU KNOW?

In 1928, the world's first comprehensive year-long coral reef study was carried out at Low Isles. The data from this study has been used as a baseline for any information that is gathered now and will be gathered in the future. Notably, Low Isles is one of the few coral reefs in the world for which a long series of data exists and presents a valuable opportunity for continuing long-term studies. This data provides the researchers unique information to analyse the changes in the reef, marine fauna and the surrounding habitat.

Low Isles is an important data collection site for the Bureau of Meteorology. First weather observations were recorded at Low Isles in 1887 and nowadays the locals are able to receive real-time data from the islands, including weather statistics, which helps with weather predictions.

One special historical moment in 1996 was when a local youth sea scout member of Low Isles Preservation Society Alicia Stevens introduced the importance of the area and President Clinton to the world in Port Douglas.

During his speech, President Clinton called together nations to legally agree to binding commitments to fight climate change.

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