



MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR FITNESS ON *hamilton island*

TONI KRASICKI DISCOVERS WHY HAMILTON ISLAND IS THE EVENTS CAPITAL OF THE GREAT BARRIER REEF.

FLYING IN TO Hamilton Island I instinctively want to call out, 'boss, the plane, the plane'. But my name isn't Tattoo and this is not *Fantasy Island*. However, after a few sublime days chasing the winter sun, it sure feels similar!

Hamilton Island, strategically placed within the Whitsunday Islands off the Queensland coast, lays out its welcome mat all year round, hosting an array of events. Tagged as 'the major events capital of the Great Barrier Reef', Hamilton Island or 'Hammo' to residents, lives up to its reputation.

The big daddy of the events is the legendary Race Week. Held at the end of August, Australia's largest offshore yachting regatta has been entertaining yachties, celebrities and party-goers since it started in 1983. I, on the other hand am visiting during the Hamilton Island Cup, the country's largest outrigger event and one of the largest canoe regattas in the world. In its 28th year, The Cup features more than 100 races and included in the line up for 2011, the inaugural

ocean ski and stand up paddle board events.

During the four-day event, paddlers compete in sprint and medium-distance races and '16km marathons' as they call them. However, the main event on the final day is the 42km Hamilton Cup marathon that takes paddlers on a gruelling circuit around both Hamilton and Dent Islands. It's a punishing battle with rushing tides and winds, and the quick crew changeovers, when paddlers are replaced by other team members, are amazing to watch. The efficiency of these changes can decide the winner!

Sydney Outrigger Canoe Club paddler, Peter Avery, has paddled in enough international events to declare that Hammo offers world-class organisation and the 42km marathon is a demanding paddle. It's his second Hamilton Island Cup and he admits that 2011 isn't as busy as previous years 'when there have been up to 100 canoes lining up for the event.' Although many of the international teams have opted to



ANNUAL EVENTS ON HAMILTON ISLAND:

May: Hilly Half Marathon.

June: Hamilton Island Outrigger Cup (including 'King of the Mountain' foot race to Passage Peak).

August: Hamilton Island Race Week.

November: Hamilton Island Triathlon and Ocean Swim.

Hamilton Island will also host the 2012 SB3 World Championships (Laser SB3 Sports Yacht Race).

Other activities available include:

- + Golf – Hamilton Island Golf Course (Dent Island).
- + Bushwalking.
- + Quad bike tours and go-karts.
- + Sports club facilities; tennis, squash, group fitness classes, weights and cardio equipment.
- + Kayaking, stand up paddle boarding, catamaran sailing and windsurfing.
- + Jet-ski tours, parasailing, jet-boating, waterskiing, wakeboarding and tubing.
- + Helicopter and seaplane flights.
- + Dingy and yacht hire.
- + Adventure sailing, sport fishing, diving, snorkelling and aquatic driving range.
- + Target shooting, mini golf, and Kegel 9-pin bowling.

stay at home this time, he still feels that it's a 'must do' competition if you're a passionate paddler.

Need a break from the water? About 70 per cent of the island is undeveloped and retains several kilometres of walking tracks that crisscross the island. The highest point, Passage Peak, sits at 229m. An early morning walk to the Peak is a great way to start the day and to capture some spectacular views over Catseye Beach and across to Pentecost Island – which, by the way, resembles an ape's face staring up to the sky.

Stephen Jackson, sports club manager and 'King of the Mountain' organiser, says it's my lucky day when we spot deer grazing not far off the path. It's an odd thing to see deer on a tropical island, but apparently they were brought here to meet the terms of agreement on the farming lease. When the Whitsunday Islands were declared a National Park in the 1920s, the islands exempt were those with existing farming leases. So Hamilton Island farmed deer until the lease was changed to allow tourism.

Later on day three of The Cup, about 30 to 40 competitors run the 6.4km return trail from the beach to the Peak in the 'Hamilton Island Weddings King of the Mountain' race. It's a hairy track, a mixture of comfortable wide flat trails and sections of steep narrow rocky stairs. The walk itself is enough to raise the heart rate, so the run is certainly challenging, with the winner usually crossing the finish line in just over 30 minutes. Registration is free and for the first time this year a 2.5km course for junior competitors has been added. I assure Stephen of my disappointment at not being able to compete, as I'm taking a sunset sail!

If the crowds on Hammo get to you, take the five-minute ferry ride to the tranquil Dent Island,

which is home to Hamilton Island's new 18-hole championship golf course. The par-71 course designed by champion golfer Peter Thomson is a course for all level of players. The stunning views are mesmerising and may well put you off your game. After you make it through the five hours it takes to play the 18-holes, grab a bite to eat at the clubhouse restaurant and watch sea eagles hover on thermals at eye level and drink in a little more of the view.

After all the physical exertion a visit to the new Wumurdaylin Day Spa for some relaxation and recovery is definitely on the cards. Wumurdaylin, meaning dragonfly in traditional Aboriginal language, features several treatment rooms and a vast menu of blissful indulgences, from massages to facials, which are perfect to aid in the recovery of tired muscles or even if you're just after some pampering.

If you are looking for a getaway that offers action and relaxation all rolled in to one, then check out Hammo's event schedule and never-ending list of activities. It's unique to find one place where you can find world-class dining and a tremendous variety of activities in one stunning location.



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