



OPENING IMAGE: View marine life and coral from the Underwater Observatory.  
 OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP: Refreshed coastal rooms; Daydream Island; meet the local wallaroos; modern Australian cuisine.

ADVERTISING FEATURE } **Living**  
 THE DREAM

In the Whitsunday Passage in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, Daydream Island Resort has reopened for coastal-loving holiday makers.

The rubbery yet silky soft texture of stingray ‘Louanne’, a pink whipray, evokes a muffled giggle through my snorkel as she glides past my hands. Soon, she’s confidently suctioning a pipi from my palm in a group-feeding session. I’m staying at the newly reopened Daydream Island Resort, snorkelling with a marine biologist in The Living Reef – a free-form coral lagoon that winds 200 metres throughout the resort’s central building.

Holding more than 1.5 million litres of water, the lagoon is home to stingrays, sea cucumbers, crabs, around 1,200 marine fish of all sizes, and 80 species of coral. A team of seven marine biologists tend to the Living Reef and it’s a perfect introduction to learning about the wonders of the Great Barrier Reef and its marine life without leaving the resort – perfect for those who may get seasick or with younger kids not so keen to head out to the actual Reef.

At Daydream’s new underwater observatory, I sit and watch four metres below the surface as one of the marine biologists, in scuba gear on the other side of the glass, is submerged and cleaning the observatory’s glass window. It’s peaceful and almost mesmerising to watch as a ray of sun beams through the water’s surface, illuminating the spectacular networks of coloured coral as fish of all shapes and sizes slither past.

On the 30-minute ferry ride to Daydream Island, which I board at Hamilton Island, I spot dolphins in the clear Whitsunday waters. On arrival at the resort, all clean and fresh following its April opening, I pass a wallaroo on the pathway to my room. A cockatoo lands on my balcony overlooking the water as if greeting me; more wallaroos gather on Mermaid Beach and on the grass near the games hut alongside the resort’s pool hub and cabanas; and walking through the resort past the Living Reef, you pass baby sharks, stingrays and bright-coloured clown fish. Following the devastation of Cyclone Debbie in March 2017, it’s warming to see guests once again enjoying this much-loved and completely revamped resort that first opened in 1933.

There are 277 contemporary suites and rooms including the premium Serenity Suite which faces the idyllic Lovers Cove – the best position on the island to watch the sun go down. Throughout the resort, couples can easily find privacy – but there is equally plenty to keep families busy and active too including jet-ski and sail-boat hire, snorkelling adventures and helicopter tours exploring the island and surrounding Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Three signature restaurants are led by executive chef, Keith Le Fevre with a focus on local produce. During breakfast at Graze Interactive Dining I watch Louanne and other fish dash past through the clear glass sides of the Living Reef. At the premium Infinity restaurant, a chef is theatrically fanning the flames at a private Teppanyaki Suite; while at the more relaxed Inkstone Kitchen and Bar alongside Mermaids Beach, kids play on the grass while adults sip on cocktails and tuck into modern Australian cuisine. The sun is setting as dusk falls, casting a scatter of pink and lilac puffs of cloud in the sky. Two bronze mermaids outside Inkstone appear to smile at this tranquil scene. Soft music plays, families are trading stories and couples are wandering the gardens arm in arm. The holiday dream lives on. 🌊

KATRINA HOLDEN  
[daydreamisland.com](http://daydreamisland.com)

