Welcome to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area

Why world heritage?
The reef is of exceptional natural beauty
- At nearly 350,000 km² (bigger than Italy), the world’s largest coral reef system
- A broken maze of 3000 reefs and 900 islands

Major stages in Earth’s history are recorded here
- Geological evolution uniquely shown in the volcanic and granite continental islands, and the coral, sand and rubble cays and reefs
- Climate history recorded in old massive corals

Diverse systems support rare and endangered plants and animals
- Over 350 species of hard reef-building corals
- Major seagrass feeding grounds for large populations of vulnerable dugongs
- Over 1500 fish species with a vast range of shapes, colours and behaviours
- Mangrove communities among the most species-rich in the world
- Over a million individuals of 22 seabird species breed on islands
- Breeding and feeding grounds for six of the world’s seven marine turtles

These outstanding universal values were recognised in 1981 when the Great Barrier Reef was listed as a world heritage area.

Keppel Bay Islands National Park — a small piece with a big part to play

Traditional land and sea of the Ganomi-Woppaburra people
The Ganomi-Woppaburra people have lived in the Keppel Islands for at least five thousand years. As marine experts, they traditionally use knowledge and specially crafted tools to manage the limited resources of their homelands.
Eating areas (middens) throughout the Keppelets are testament to thousands of years of occupation.

Vulnerable sea turtles breed and feed here
Flatback turtles migrate from as far as Torres Strait to rest on Peak Island beaches, the most important breeding rookery for these vulnerable turtles on the east coast of Australia. You can see Peak Island if you look south from the Ridgetop Trail.

Mainland trees still thrive here
These two tree species, which originate from the central and northern coast of Queensland, are found on North Keppel Island. They could have been growing here since the island was part of the mainland, 10,000 years ago.

Seabirds flock to island shores and forests
These islands are important roosting and feeding sites for vulnerable beach stone-curlews and rare sooty oystercatchers.

When out on the water, keep your eyes open for vulnerable green turtles popping up for air while feeding over seagrass areas.