

# Bloomfield Lodge

BEAUTIFULLY REMOTE

## Exploring the Reef By Shayne Marks – Tour Guide

To experience the Great Barrier Reef onboard our recently refitted 10m power cat – the Bloomfield Explorer has been regularly quoted to me as the “Best Day of my Life” or “The Best Trip of our Aussie Experience”.

Crewed by two and carrying a maximum of 12 guests, it’s a very personal and peaceful way to enjoy this Wonder of the World. Everything that is needed for a great day is supplied; the guests only needing to bring a camera and a hat.



Departing from the Lodge at 9am, a tender transfer puts guests aboard the waiting Explorer for sign in and safety briefs. Its a 40-45 min run to the isolated Hope Isles named by Captain Cook in hope of repairing his ship there, unfortunately for him they are surrounded by numerous coral outcrops and reefs, great for us though. The skip across Weary Bay, past Rattlesnake Point to the island is exactly as James Cook would have seen it, no development or human impact visible, the area is now mostly National Park so totally pristine.



Slowing down in the channel to Hope Island, we put out a couple of light game rods armed with lures, gently trolling in hope of a Spanish mackerel or giant trevally - fins, masks and protective uv/stinger suits are distributed. We moor 50m off the beach which is a picture perfect coral cay - East Hope Isle. Most guests can't wait to plunge into the aquamarine water made even more vivid in contrast to the dazzling white coral sand.

Protected from the south east trade winds and having 2 hectares of coral gardens only 10m from the beach, the anchorage is a perfect place for our snorkelling to start. The novice and beginners are given comprehensive one on one operational instruction before venturing further afield accompanied by the guide. Up to an hour can be enjoyed here with mostly soft corals but also brains, mushrooms and lettuce to name a few watched over by colourful fish and often a massive shoal of herring - they never fail to impress whoever swims into them.



For those guests that wish, we also offer a guided 1.5 km walk around East Hope Isle and for 99% of the time the island is totally OURS. With no furry critters or reptiles living here birdlife is abundant and remarkably calm and photogenic. Species often seen are terns, gulls, oyster catches, beach thick-knees, reef egrets, pelicans, rails, honeyeaters, ospreys, boobies, the magnificent white bellied sea eagle and the other day an uncommon squadron of high flying frigate birds. It doesn't take too long to circumnavigate the island and we return to a fully laid out buffet style picnic lunch of cold cuts with a garden salad, fresh fruit and desert cake.

Our afternoon snorkel starts on a reef corner where nutrients and life abound. Entering from a ladder at the rear of the boat we float along the reef edge for as much as 1km, those having had enough signal the Explorer that's drifting alongside for pickup. This is my favourite site, with numerous giant clams

(up to 1m), coral bommies (mountains) as big as London Buses and myriads of colourful fishes for all shapes and sizes, more often than not turtles and if you're lucky a reef shark or stingray.

All back onboard, the Explorer motors gently to one of our many fishing spots, weighted handlines are baited and dropped to the sea floor and we're always quick to get a bite. With baits disappearing rapidly, a wide variety of fish start appear over the side. Time flies when you're having fun as they say and before you know it it's last baits with hopefully the photo of the catch of the day (maybe even deserving a spot on the lodge's brag board), and fish on the menu..

