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 » 72 Ways to Have Fun in the Whitsundays

72 Ways to Have Fun in the Whitsundays

by **Fiona Harper** · 4 minute read



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The Whitsunday Islands have been on holiday-makers itineraries for eons. Once a backpacker mecca, with recent infrastructure improvements, downtown Airlie is reinventing itself. Backpackers are still flocking there while others are enjoying a level of, dare we say it, sophistication. Travel writer Fiona Harper checks it out.

EAT

Barcelona's Tapas Bar and Café is one of many new kids on the block. Channelling Spanish flair with typical Aussie flavour, the owners flew in UK Masterchef finalist, and Spanish raised, Dani Bowler to establish opening menus. Occupying an enviable position overlooking Abell Point Marina, early mornings they do a roaring trade in coffee. Come dusk, diners prop themselves on the deck, tucking into caramelised scallops on corn nut crumble with mango gel and grilled chorizo.

Any breakfast buffet that includes bottomless bottles of bubbles is always going to be a winner. Particularly when it's served up alongside an almost overwhelmingly extensive breakfast buffet. Of course there's tea and coffee too if you're more of a traditionalist. And all the usual breakfast suspects are there in abundance. And then some. Sure, you'll need to be a guest at **One&Only; Hayman Island** to enjoy **Pacific Restaurant**, but that's no real hardship.



PLAY

If you can't find yourself on a boat during a Whitsundays sojourn, well, you're really not trying. The Whitsundays are to sailors what Uluru is to geologists. So head down to the marina and hop on board.

Abell Point Marina has undergone a transformation over recent times thanks to new owners who are seriously focused on creating an entertainment precinct. With new restaurants, bars and shops popping up, you no longer need to be a boat owner to enjoy sunsets from the waterfront. Take the boardwalk at the northern end of the marina and you'll find yourself a few minutes later at the waterfront swimming lagoon in downtown Airlie.

At the other end of town **Port of Airlie** is the new kid on the block. Flanked by swanky new apartments and private luxury homes, landscaped gardens, cafes and shops are dotted along the waterfront. A short walk from the Whitsunday Sailing Club and downtown Airlie, Cruise Whitsundays have their new passenger terminal here, and there's also a new coach terminal popular with budget travellers.

If you've a hankering to get your hands dirty, or more likely, wet, the **Whitsunday Sailing Club** is sailing central. Skippers are always looking for keen experienced or novice crew. If you're lucky you'll jag a berth on board La Quilta owned by local legend Heather Sutton. Wednesday twilight sailing is pretty laid back. Truth be known, twilights are more about socialising than sailing. It gets a little more serious during Airlie Beach Race Week. Then, crews and their yachts compete in one of the best sailing regattas in the country. Don't be too concerned if you don't know port from starboard, here's a helpful reminder - port is red and there's no port left in the bottle! (port being the traditional tippie of sailors alongside rum).

Speaking of rum, the appropriately-named **Rum Bar** should be your next stop once you've steadied on your sea legs. Part of **Fish D'Vine restaurant**, the Rum Bar offers an astounding collection of over 450 rums. Their mojitos are probably the best you'll come across this side of Cuba. Bar Manager and self-confessed rum nut Mark Wyatt insists that the secret to a good mojitos is that it should be made with love. Who are we to argue?



STAY

The new Port of Airlie is home to luxury **Boathouse Apartments by Outrigger**. Harbour and sea views are the superstars, ably assisted by stylish boat-themed interiors. Polished timber floors replicate teak and holly floors found on traditional timber boats. White plantation shutters and glass louvres direct cooling breezes from large balconies.

If it's a sea breeze you're after, sleeping on the Great Barrier Reef is one of those bucket list beds you really should slip into. Once the day trippers have departed and the sun sinks towards the horizon, a handful of lucky reef sleepers spend the night at **Cruise Whitsundays Reefworld platform**. A Reef Host is onsite to man the bar and the kitchen along with famously fishy grouper George who's been loitering around Reefworld for years. Bunker down in a luxury swag beneath a dazzling Milky Way accompanied by a marine orchestra as the tide ebbs and flows. Peace reigns supreme.

If that's a little too adventurous, check into the all new luxurious **One&Only; Hayman Island**. Perfecting a level of fine hospitality rarely seen in Australia, Hayman has reinvented itself yet again. This is surely the best incarnation on an island that has hosted a resort since the 1950's. The iconic building remains little changed at first glance, so too that famous lagoon swimming pool. Apart from adding a new family-friendly pool alongside alfresco **Aquazure Restaurant**, enhancements are discreet. Which kind of sums up Hayman. That and impeccable. Elegant too. Hayman has always been a winner with loved-up couples. Now, under gentle One&Only, management this quiet achiever discreetly emerges as a global superstar.

And the 72 ways to have fun? That's how many islands there are in the Whitsundays - surely you'll find at least one of them to your liking!

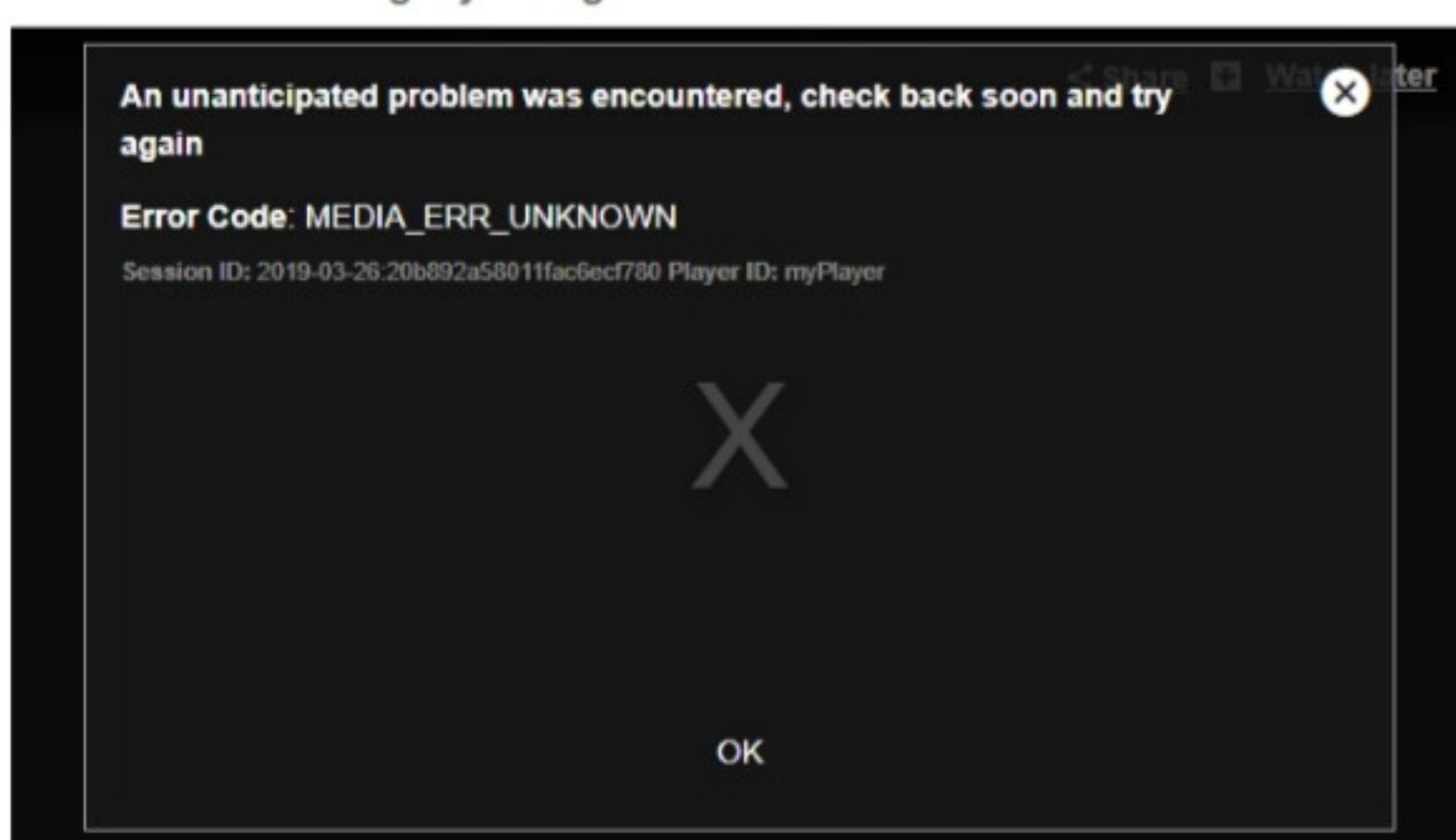


For more information, please visit [Tourism Whitsundays](#)

Fiona Harper is a travel writer specialising in cruising, active and soft adventures. Follow her at Travel Boating Lifestyle [www.travelboatinglifestyle.com](#)

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