

EXPLORE



Enjoy the serenity, or...



Cathy Finch finds that Mission Beach is back on the tourism map

IT HAS been three years since Cyclone Yasi tore through the pretty North Queensland seaside township of Mission Beach inflicting widespread damage.

Many businesses closed, some just gave up and left, but others knew they would never vacate this piece of paradise that offers some of the most jaw-dropping views along the coastline.

One such luxury holiday property, Altitude One40, set high above the Coral Sea and encircled by World Heritage-listed rainforest, was stripped bare of every available leaf and foliage.

But fast forward to 2014 and although some scars are still apparent, nature's pruning of the forest has brought a rebirth of lush vegetation and life.

Their re-birth reflects the way the Mission Beach community has fought back.

"It's astonishing to think anything endured the wind speeds of Yasi," private hideaway owner Shane Hunter said.

"Funnily enough, the butterflies, one of nature's most delicate creatures, were the first to emerge after the deluge. It took a full two weeks for our white bellied sea eagles to return. But what I remember most is the noise. That

terrible freight train noise, ripping through our homes."

Today there is only silence. A quiet serenity that whispers on the back of a gentle breeze caressing the ancient vines and tree trunks around me. Sprawling beneath are healthy fields of sugar cane and



Mission Beach has fought back from the devastation caused by Cyclone Yasi and is now open for business once more

banana plantations that extend all the way to the ocean dotted by a string of islands such as Dunk, Bedarra and Hinchinbrook. It's a haven for peacefulness and privacy.

Cassowary chicks and wallabies tend to wander through the setting unencumbered by horses in the paddock or guests soaking in the ambience.

But don't be totally thrown by the surrounding solitude. Just as I

slip into a self-induced coma, a piercing long-pitched shrill slices the valley floor, as a couple of terrified bodies fall like boulders from a tiny aeroplane above.

Underneath Mission Beach's sleepy exterior, it seems there is an ever-present throb for adrenaline-fuelled adventures being offered within this Jurassic Park-styled wilderness.

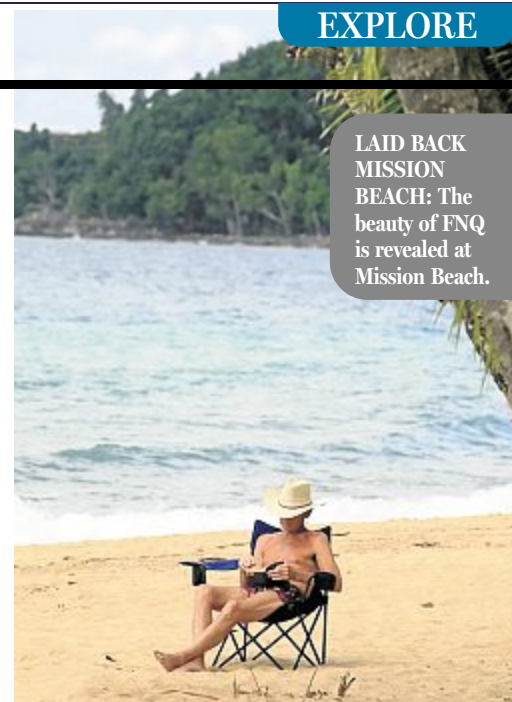
Locals will readily throw you from a plane to land on a picturesque beach below, guide you down a raging rapid, over rushing waterfalls and through dramatic gorges on the nearby Tully River or take you out on to the Great Barrier Reef to swim with rays and sharks.

You can also helicopter in and land on helipads. But if you are anything like most of the eagles that land here, you will choose a perch, dig in your claws and only move from the view when hungry, thirsty or under threat.

For now, however, cyclone season has passed uneventfully and only solitude and seclusion prevail.

Mission Beach is back as one of those special places to visit in Australia.

- The writer was a guest of Altitude One40



LAI D BACK MISSION BEACH: The beauty of FNQ is revealed at Mission Beach.

PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED



Mission Beach

Go

Mission Beach can be reached by a two-hour drive south from Cairns or three-hour drive north from Townsville.

Do

Snorkelling Reef Trips
Spend hours gazing underwater at fascinating marine life such as giant clams, manta rays, turtles, beautiful living corals and colourful fish everywhere.

Coastal Tours
The best way to see the coastline is either from the water or air so come along and have a coastal tour and see our beautiful scenery, islands such as Dunk Island or Bedarra Island.

CONTACT: Mission Beach Island Reef Adventures
Mobile: 0408 990 600

Stay

Altitude One40 sits 140 metres above the Coral Sea on 7 hectares of private land just 3 kilometres outside the township of Mission Beach.

Prices start from \$450 per night.

Contact:
www.altitude140.com
Ph 0417 258 140

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ROMANCE ON HAMILTON

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