

Eco Warrior

Robin Aiello, Ocean Antics Consulting



Robin Aiello, Environmental Manager for Passions of Paradise Reef Tours and Environmental Management Consultant with her own company, Ocean Antics Consulting has three pearls of wisdom she lives by every day: Don't be afraid to live life with a passion, don't be afraid to try something different and don't be afraid to stir the pot.

And judging by this woman's extraordinary life experiences, she does all three – frequently.

Don't be afraid to live life with a passion

Robin is a marine biologist and a passionate advocate and custodian of the Great Barrier Reef. Her twin roles mean that she is constantly working to achieve best practice within the tourism industry.

"Diving, the reef and its protection are all very important to me," she said.

Her consultancy works with a range of government agencies including the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. "I train staff in best practices and bridge the gap between scientists and staff as to how best treat the reef and protect it."

Robin's work also entails advising companies on becoming Eco Certified.

Her role with Passions of Paradise Reef tours involves specialised tour guiding and managing the company's environmental needs. "We host catamaran sailing day tours out of Cairns. I'm proud of the company because we provide a great day out for tourists, while having a minimal environmental impact.

"We have Advanced Eco Certification, are a member of the Planet Safe Partnership and are the subject of a case study by the GBRMPA for being a reef tourism operator going carbon neutral.

Don't be afraid to try something different

Born and raised in Cambridge Massachusetts, Robin said she learned to swim before she could walk and learned to scuba dive at 12 years old.

The fact that the water temperature rarely got above 15 degrees Celsius in summer didn't deter her and she said diving soon became an addiction.

After thinking of studying medicine and then trying political science at Harvard, Robin finally settled into studying marine biology via evolutionary biology and palaeontology.

"I really am an accidental marine biologist," she jokes but after diving for years, it was indeed a natural choice.

Her studies and diving have taken her across the globe from the inviting waters of the balmy Caribbean to the freezing conditions in Antarctic waters.

Twenty years ago she set up home in Townsville and six years later settled near Cairns and while her American accent is still strong, she proudly calls herself an Aussie.

Don't be afraid to stir the pot

"I think we should go above and beyond to preserve the reef, I will always fight for its protection – I am a bit passionate about it.

"At the moment I am trying to promote the idea of no touch diving and snorkelling to reduce our human impact on the reef. Having said that, I think most operators are doing the right thing."

If you'd like to nominate someone as an Eco-Warrior for a profile in Eco on Q; someone who is an exemplary ambassador for the industry please send your nomination to Eco on Q via email ecoonaq@tq.com.au.