

# Sustainable Regions Program



## Tall Ship Adventures, Airlie Beach

[www.tallshipadventures.com.au](http://www.tallshipadventures.com.au)

Tall Ship Adventures is a family run charter company offering two and three day Eco Sailing Adventures on board remarkable vessels. Warren and Jo Ladd have been successfully operating Tall Ship Eco Adventures since 1996. They are dedicated and enthusiastic about both the Whitsunday Islands and their company's concept.

Warren and Jo Ladd's vision to operate a sustainable business stems from their passion to protect and preserve the natural environment of the Great Barrier Reef. Their main focuses are water and waste management, environmental conservation and staff and visitor education on sustainability.



### 1. Getting started

Tall Ship Adventures began on their journey to make their business more sustainable in the late 1990s. Their inspiration came from the natural beauty of the area in which they lived and worked and their desire to contribute to its preservation.

As a first step, Tall Ship Adventures wrote its own manual which included educational information about the Great Barrier Reef and information regarding the eco-friendly practices of the charter boat operation. The manual was developed by a Ranger – hired especially for this job – as well as the current employees. The manual was designed to educate new staff and raise awareness and appreciation of visitors about the rare species in the area. In order to keep the contents of the manual up-to-date, it is now regularly revised by the crew of Tall Ship Adventures.

### 2. Major initiatives

In order to seek recognition for their existing sustainability actions, Tall Ship Adventures sought accreditation under the Ecotourism Australia accreditation program. After two years and with a strong commitment to the program and their sustainability initiatives, the business then moved towards Advanced accreditation.

Since then, Tall Ship Adventures has continued to work on the four major areas - water and waste management, energy efficiency, recycling and environmental conservation. Major initiatives include:

1. As all water is stored on board the vessels, Tall Ship Adventures has enforced a strict policy of water conservation. With restrictions placed on shower length (2 minutes max!) the aim is to not only reduce consumption, but also to create awareness and encourage the guests to consider their water usage at home.
2. The vessels have on board sewage management. Sewage and effluent is held on board in specially developed holding tanks. The flush on the toilets is set at a low rate to reduce the amount of water into the holding tanks. In addition, only biodegradable detergents are used to clean the boats to eliminate negative impacts of any run-off.
3. Generating their own electricity on board of the vessels – with the help of a generator – the energy capacity on the boats is limited. All visitors are encouraged to save energy wherever possible and are strongly advised to turn off all electric appliances when not needed. Additionally, the crew are encouraged to sail as much as possible which is not only an environmentally friendly mode of transport, but also a lot of fun!
4. In the past months Tall Ship Adventures has worked together with the Marina towards better recycling opportunities. With the installation of recycling bins in the marina, the crew are now able

to recycle cans, bottles, cardboard and oil. Further to this, the company tries to reduce their amount of packaging waste by buying their supplies – such as the food for the sailing trips – in bulk and avoiding extra packaging wherever possible.

5. Tall Ship Adventures contributes to the conservation of its natural area through a combination of hands on and in-kind assistance. Tall Ship Adventures is involved in ecological research on local sea life and the "Eye on the Reef" project with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA). Eye on the Reef is an ongoing exercise in collecting and documenting marine life, water temperatures and coral health. Additionally, by carefully choosing the locations the vessels visit Tall Ship Adventures can avoid disrupting the marine life. Further, the crew are trained to observe and report any areas of concern to the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

### 3. Key outcomes

A key outcome for Tall Ship Adventures' has been a reduction of waste due to the newly installed recycling facilities at the Abel Point Marina. Before the recycling area existed Tall Ship Adventures could only recycle cans – one bag, or about ¼ of their waste. Now with the introduction of the recycling system and having reduced the amount of packaging they use, they only generate three waste bags per week and only one of these is sent to landfill (the other two are recycled).

Through visitor feedback Tall Ship Adventures is advised that the visitor education has enhanced their tour experience. Visitors value the education on water saving measures and have started to adapt the habits they are taught during the sailing trip in their own homes. Education has also led to better visitor behaviour and protection of the Great Barrier Reef. Passengers are now more mindful of the impacts they can have on the Great Barrier Reef's fragile eco system.

Job satisfaction at Tall Ship Adventures is also high due to the company's ongoing commitment to sustainability. The operation has a stable staff faction as employees feel they are contributing towards the well-being of the Great Barrier Reef eco-system.

### 4. Major challenges

One of the more recent challenges faced by Tall Ship Adventures has been the installation of recycling facilities at Abel Point Marina. Through combined operator efforts and working with Marina management a recycling system was implemented in early 2010.

Another challenge for Tall Ship Adventures is convincing some operators of the importance of sustainable behaviour and providing the infrastructure for this to occur. While having a sustainable tourism industry with minimal impacts on the environment is a priority for Tall Ship Adventures, this is not necessarily the case for others.

### 5. Advice to operators

Jo thinks that under the current circumstances of global warming everyone in the Charter Boat Industry should be obliged to become sustainable. She says,

*"Treat it as a necessity rather than a possibility".*

From her own experience with Tall Ship Adventures she knows that being sustainable not only helps the business through reduced resource consumption, but is also a great marketing tool and way to meet rising consumer expectations:

*"More and more customers are aware of the importance of environmentally friendly actions and they expect you to have certain initiatives implemented into your business, such as recycling and energy saving measures."*

### 6. Next steps

Tall Ship Adventures are continuously searching for alternative ways to improve the sustainability of their business and reduce their impact on the environment. They are currently working to reduce the number of cigarette butts left by tourists during sailing tours. Tall Ship Adventures aim to supply smokers with portable ash trays that they can attach to their belt to allow them to dispose of their butts immediately. Additionally, they are lobbying to have more cigarette bins permanently located at the key tourism sites.

As with many tour operators in the area, Tall Ship Adventures are also seeking a more environmentally friendly fuel to power their vessels. Despite regular research they are yet to find a cleaner alternative to the diesel they currently use and will continue to search and lobby for provision of bio-fuel in the region.

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