



Ecotourism at Thala Beach Nature Reserve

Thala Beach Nature Reserve is awarded the highest Ecotourism accreditation for maximising informative & meaningful experiences, whilst enhancing the local environment. The Thala Experience adheres to global principals of Ecotourism.

- **Natural Area Focus:** Thala is built atop a private peninsular jutting into the Coral Sea, surrounded by miles of World Heritage coastline and The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park on the seaward side. The private beachfront has been left as nature intended it to be. Thala's magnificent 145 acre peninsular has six different habitats concentrated into this small area. Ancient littoral rainforest, casuarinas and mangroves lap the beach, while dry eucalypt woodland, gallery forest and coconuts occupy the higher ground and inland creeks. Each habitat attracts its own unique wildlife species.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** In the early 1970's Rob & Oonagh Prettejohn purchased the 145 acre Peninsula. At the time Thala only had 45 acres of the original forest. The balance of 100 acres had been cleared and was a degraded, unsustainable sugar cane plantation. Environmental sensitivities were not as they are today and planning approval at the time would have allowed for a 700 bedroom hotel to be built! Fortunately as locals with a feel for a low impact on this wonderful environment, this was not their style. They planted many thousands of indigenous plants to rehabilitate the area and start its return back to a wild natural state. The lodge is built out of natural sustainable materials in a low impact style that does not set out to dominate the surrounding landscape.
- **Contribution to Conservation:** Thala Beach Nature Reserve is a beacon of hope as mankind progresses from being 'the demolisher' to 'the conserver' and now to 'the environmental benefactor'. Over a period of 30 years, Rob and Oonagh have shepherded the re-establishment of complex forests on land that was once cleared and devastated by extractive farming. With the return of the forests, wildlife populations have exploded bringing their pulsating natural energy. Approximately 120 butterfly species and almost 200 bird species have been spotted at Thala. On site rangers estimate that there are around 50 agile wallabies inhabiting the forest.
- **Customer Satisfaction:** Rob and Oonagh employ wildlife specialists who are on hand to guide and amaze their guests in the forests, the beaches or along Thala's rocky headland. Complimentary tours are offered in a personalised quiet and unregimented fashion, designed so that guest enjoy the thrill of making their very own discoveries. They might see rare snub-finned dolphins or a resident osprey diving for fish to feed her chicks. Perhaps while strolling through rainforest they'll spot some of the many bird and butterfly species. Guests are encouraged to add new sightings to the growing lists recorded. Thala has many permanent guests: they are recognizable by their wild temperament and generous covering of fur, feathers or scales. They are constantly surprising and delighting the transient humans. At night there is an observatory where guests are taken time travelling to the far reaches of The Milky Way on a guided stargazing odyssey.

- **Working with Local Communities:** Recognising the importance of the spirit of our local indigenous communities Thala invites the elders of the KuKu Yalanji community to take our guests through the journey of their culture. From healing plants to bush food the elders bring in leaves and seeds for guests to handle and learn their history and importance to the survival of this wonderful community. Musical instruments so important to the rites and rituals of the ancient peoples of this ancient land are a part of Thala's experience. Thala is always grateful to the KuKu Yalanji elders for their eager sharing of their ancient knowledge.
- **Responsible Marketing:** All marketing material at Thala, Brochures, Website, Flyers and all Images displayed are actual photographs taken, and are true images of what guests can expect to experience. The Brochure can be seen on the web site, reducing the necessity for mass print outs.
- **Guests at Eco-lodges** like Thala leave a soft print in an environmental journey towards a better world: They take away memories and understanding that will inspire them and others for years to come. Their active involvement at Thala also assists in the environmental rehabilitation process. Rob & Oonagh Prettejohn and their staff are proud to be associated with the modern and thoughtful ethos for which **Australia's Eco Accreditation** scheme is the standard bearer.

