

# Reef tourism encourages climate action, finds study

September 3 2024

---



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

University of Queensland research has revealed that informing tourists visiting the Great Barrier Reef about climate impact doesn't negatively affect their experience and can help encourage climate action. [The](#)

[research](#) was published in *People and Nature*.

The researchers surveyed 656 reef visitors about their experiences and behaviors during boat trips.

Dr. Yolanda Waters from UQ's School of the Environment said the results showed information on climate change was positively received by visitors.

"Informing visitors about the impacts climate change has had on our [marine environment](#) doesn't diminish visitor's enjoyment of the Great Barrier Reef—we found it might even do the opposite," Dr. Waters said.

"80% of participants wanted more information on climate change, specifically on what they could do to help."

Dr. Waters said the findings were a win-win for both the climate and the [tourism industry](#).

"In the world of tourism, there's this lingering idea that providing information on climate change might appear divisive or 'ruin' people's day, particularly in places that are vulnerable to degradation," she said.

"But our work shows there's an opportunity for [tourism operators](#) to enhance visitor experiences while simultaneously advancing climate action."

Five boat operators across Cairns and Townsville assisted in the study, with a portion of [tourists](#) given climate information via a marine biology presentation, posters around the vessel, a short informative video and regular mentions of climate change impacts and actions throughout the trip.

Adult passengers were then invited to complete a short five-minute survey during the return leg of the day trip.

Dr. Waters believes the work provides further opportunity to improve climate communication and effectively promote climate change engagement among tourists.

"Tourism can be a powerful tool for [climate action](#)," she said.

"Our work shows that most tourists actually want more information, particularly about how they can make meaningful action.

"As the Great Barrier Reef faces escalating threats from climate change—highlighted by the Queensland Government's latest Reef Outlook Report—the need for proactive measures has never been more urgent.

"The reef's fragile ecosystems are under intense pressure, and how tourism responds can significantly impact both environmental outcomes and the sustainability of the industry moving forward."

**More information:** Yolanda L. Waters et al, Opportunities for meaningful climate change engagement in vulnerable nature settings, *People and Nature* (2024). [DOI: 10.1002/pan3.10711](https://doi.org/10.1002/pan3.10711)

Provided by University of Queensland

Citation: Reef tourism encourages climate action, finds study (2024, September 3) retrieved 5 September 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-09-reef-tourism-climate-action.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.