



# HANGING OUT ON HAMILTON

Even a teen is happy  
on adventure island,  
writes Briar Jensen

**T**HE grin on my 15-year-old's face says it all. He's holding a .44 Magnum, which might give some parents cause for concern, but we're at Target Sports on Hamilton Island and I'm pleased he's finally found something he can do by himself.

After enticing him on a family holiday to Queensland's Hamilton Island with the promise of adventure activities, the first two he chooses have age restrictions — 18 years to drive a jet ski and 16 years for adult quad bikes. Cue sullen face and grumpy demeanour.

But it turns out there are plenty of activities to keep us all busy, despite the sun taking a holiday, too.

First is a jet-boat ride, which I leave to my husband and son. They return drenched and shivering, but nod vigorously when I ask if they've had fun. He's a nutter, says hubby, referring to the jet-boat driver, who says it's the roughest weather he's seen in a while — so rough he couldn't do multiple 360s. Not that the boys seemed concerned.

I get a feel for the waves the next day as we bash and bounce our way to Whitehaven Beach on a half-day tour. The sun might not be out, but even on a grey day Whitehaven's silica sand is pristine and inviting.

It's our son's first silica beach and we laugh as we see who can make the loudest squeal by scuffing our feet. Competition for the best cracked-sand footprint ensues.

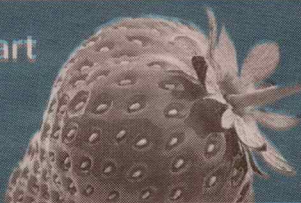
"Why didn't you bring me here when I was little?" he asks, self-consciously jumping on sandbanks like a little kid. Why indeed.

We head across for a snorkel at Chalkies Beach, donning wetsuits before braving the water. The reef is thankfully close to the beach, though the swell disturbs visibility. But we see rainbow parrot fish, clown fish and giant clams.

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# Hang out on a fantasy island

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There's a reef in front of our hotel, too — appropriately called the Reef View — which we explore at low tide, finding weird sponges, delicate anemones and striped sea worms.

We never manage to sync with high tide, though, to take advantage of the free beachfront water sports of windsurfing, sailing and kayaking.

Getting around the car-less island is easy, with a free local bus connecting our hotel, the Resort Centre and Front St, home to restaurants, shops and galleries. This gives our son some independence when we want some down time — my husband to rest a sore foot and a relaxing massage at Spa wumurdaylin for me.

After dinner we try nine-pin bowling in a disco-like alley with glow-in-the-dark lanes, pins and balls.

Despite my lack of skill, I'm doing quite well and having a ball — until hubby lowers the gutter guards. Sportsport.

Next day, while my husband is off sailing, my son and I hire an electric golf cart and do the buggy challenge — a rally to familiarise you with every part of the island.

We drive up One Tree Hill in the drizzle, count the tennis courts at the gym and visit the island's gorgeous little white church.

Quality time with Mum deserves payback with some serious fun, so we putter (maximum 20km/h) to Palm Valley Go-Karts, then it's on to target shooting. Our son has never shot a gun, but, like many teenage boys, has a fascination with them and the opportunity to fire one outweighs the disappointment of not driving a jet ski or quad bike.

After directions from the instructor



**Riveting ride:** You'll get seriously wet but have a blast on a jet-boat trip.

he starts with a .22 rifle and progresses to a .44 Magnum. Even with earmuffs on I jump out of my skin at the Magnum's noise, which attracts the attention of other patrons. "Epic," says our son.

On our last morning we squeeze in a tandem parasail. As we float side-by-side in the depressingly grey sky wav-

ing to Dad below, we agree, despite the weather, it's been a great family holiday. We may not have been blessed with blue sky and warm sun, but we still had fun. And our son has the paper target sheets to prove it.

**The writer was assisted by Hamilton Island Enterprises**

## THE DEAL

**Getting there:** Jetstar ([jetstar.com](http://jetstar.com)) and Qantas ([qantas.com](http://qantas.com)) fly directly to Hamilton Island from Melbourne. A ferry operates between Shute Harbour on the Queensland mainland and Hamilton Island. See [fantasea.com.au](http://fantasea.com.au)  
**Staying there:** There are a variety of accommodation options, including the four-star Reef View Hotel.  
**Playing there:** From feeding ducks to playing golf, there are activities for all.  
**More:** [hamiltonisland.com.au](http://hamiltonisland.com.au) or [tourismwhitsundays.com.au](http://tourismwhitsundays.com.au)

