



Greg Cust, director at Virtual iTours

## Virtual restaurant tours find favour

PORT DOUGLAS | Gizelle Ghidella

PORT Douglas businesses are embracing smart “one of a kind” technology to enhance customer interaction on their websites, with Virtual iTour.

The technology allows a potential customer to visually experience a restaurant, for example, and explore every aspect the business has to offer.

Director of Virtual iTour, Greg Cust, said the tours are state of the art and more interesting and engaging than a simple photo gallery.

“You’re able to convey what a restaurant looks like much more successfully with a virtual tour than you can with a few photographs.

“You get to see the whole perspective, interact with it and get an idea of the environment,” Mr Cust said.

“It’s like you’re there and people have a lot more confidence in that.”

Virtual iTour is a series of 360 degree panoramic photographs complete with interactive “hotspots” where a viewer can virtually walk to the bar or a restaurant and look at the menu.

“My main focus at the moment is Port Douglas businesses because it’s geared for tourism, there’s so much potential here,” Mr Cust said.

“It helps put Port on the map even more securely because nobody has seen this product before,” he said.

A number of businesses in Port have given these virtual tours the thumbs up and have seen a significant increase of traffic on their website.

Mr Cust’s passion about Port has encouraged him to work on a “best of Port Douglas” virtual tour to entice even more international visitors.

# Operators pour the money in

THE Port Douglas and Daintree region is ready to embrace the 2017 winter period with new reef diving and sailing experiences, accommodation and regional wine and food tasting tours on offer.

Tourism Port Douglas and Daintree executive officer Tara Bennett said there was lots to talk about as operators from across the region reinvested millions into product development and enhancement.

Highlights include the completion of the accommodation renewal at Daintree Eco Lodge and Spa, a new reef vessel for Deep Sea Diver’s Den, Sailaway’s new ecotourism reef sailing experience from Cape Tribulation, the rebranding of the Sheraton Mirage to the Sheraton Grand and Quicksilver’s purpose built learn-to-dive centre in Port Douglas.

Adding to the touring experience is also Port Douglas based Brett’s Tours, now offering an outback tasting option from Port Douglas to the



Daintree Eco Lodge and Spa

Atherton Tablelands.

“The multi-million-dollar investment in new and existing attractions for our region is a real indication of the faith and confidence in the strength and continuity of the tourism industry,” Ms Bennett said.

“At the top end of the market we have the Sheraton Mirage Resort and Country Club rebranded as the Sheraton Grand Mirage Port Douglas, only the second Australian hotel to enjoy the luxury rebranding by Sheraton owner

Starwood as ‘the best of the brand’.

“This follows on from the its multi-million renovation in 2016 and is based on location, quality of function facilities, rooms and hotel amenities, as well as staff and guest satisfaction,” Ms Bennett said.

Another high-end accommodation experience is the Daintree Eco Lodge and Spa, which has renewed nine of its 15 rooms, including seven canopy dayans, offering minimalist luxury and two rainforest dayans.

Daintree Eco Lodge and Spa general manager Jody Westbrook said guests were delighted with the “beautiful, new fresh rooms”.

“We did most of the major works during February and March, stripping the rooms back to basically bare shells and rebuilding and decorating.

“A focus for us was to be as eco-friendly as possible in terms of lighting and other sustainable aspects,” Ms Westbrook said.

## Tourism talk



### AUSTRALIAN TOURISM EXCHANGE

This week I am at the Australian Tourism Exchange in Sydney with more than twenty operators from the Port Douglas and Daintree region. Over four days we will complete 100 pre-scheduled appointments with key wholesalers, tourism organisations and inbound tour operators. A selection of the buyers will be heading to the region following the trade event to come and experience for themselves what sets Douglas apart.

We recently launched our regional ambassadors as part of this year’s Show Me Your Paradise campaign, Daintree local Daniel Lamond is the first clip produced by Cats Eye Productions to be launched across our digital channels and supported by tourism organisations with more to follow over the coming month. I encourage local operators and anyone who wants to help us get the message out of what makes Douglas so special to share these clips on their social media channels.

We have just completed a number of collateral designs and destinations advertisements that will promote the region in online publications as well as content for regional publications. I would like to take this opportunity to say farewell to Glen Davis from Tourism Australia who has been a great ambassador for our region over the years in his role as industry relations manager, I wish Glen the best of luck in his new role with Tourism Australia based LA.

**Yours in tourism, Tara**

### 16TH - 20TH MAY - QUICKSILVER PORT DOUGLAS RACE WEEK

Port Douglas will be brimming with sailing enthusiasts for the 2017 Quicksilver Port Douglas Race Week proudly presented by the Port Douglas Yacht Club. 39 boats will take part in 6-day sailing regatta but it’s not just the sailing that people come for, with live local bands and entertainment set for 6 days, the party continues off the water for friends, families, locals and visitors alike.

### 26TH - 28TH MAY - PORT DOUGLAS CARNIVALE

Port Douglas Carnivale showcases the best of Tropical North Queensland from local food and wines to talented musicians, artists and live entertainment and is one of the region’s most vibrant events. Opening with Asahi Super Dry Paradise on a Plate and the Macrossan Street Parade, the sense of atmosphere will be carried through the weekend with live music, art displays, comedy, fabulous live shows and sumptuous food and wine events. For a full events schedule visit the website today <http://www.carnivale.com.au/>

### 29TH MAY - TEQ QUEENSLAND STORYTELLING WORKSHOP

Everyone loves a good story; it is through stories that we all connect. But what makes storytelling successful is the ability to use words and actions to tell a story that captures the imagination of your audience. If you’ve ever wanted to become a better story teller and improve your visitor experience, do not miss this. Facilitated by Russell Boswell from Savannah Guides Ltd this workshop will provide your business with insights and practical steps to discover, develop, deliver and share stories with your guests. Date: Monday 29 May 2017 Time: 2:00pm - 4:00pm Venue: Holiday Inn Cairns Harbourside Visit <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/storytelling-experience-development-workshop-cairns-tickets-33035304485> to register.

### 30TH MAY - FAREWELL FUNCTION FOR TTNQ CEO ALEX DE WAAL

Alex’s last day with TTNQ is the 31st May so this is your chance to bid him farewell with drinks at the Salt House in Cairns from 5.00 - 7.00pm on Tuesday 30th May 2017. If you would like to attend please RSVP here <https://tnq.wufoo.eu/forms/mbry6f10cwl1vu/> (TTNQ member only event)

### 1ST JUNE - DAINTREE TREASURE HUNT

Come and meet tourism colleagues from the Daintree for an evening of fun, networking and some amazing prizes! The evening is presented by the Daintree Marketing Cooperative, who will be bringing their operators to Port to share some of the secrets of the Daintree over a fun treasure hunt. Date: Thursday 1st June 2017 Time: 6.00 - 7.30pm Where: Port Douglas Community Hall Free beer/wine and soft drink plus nibbles provided throughout the evening. Proudly supported by Tourism Port Douglas and Daintree and Douglas Shire Council To register for this fabulous event follow this link <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/daintree-treasure-hunt-by-daintree-marketing-cooperative-tickets-34452338873> Registrations must be received no later than Monday 29th May.

### 4TH - 11TH JUNE - CAIRNS AIRPORT ADVENTURE FESTIVAL

Not long to go until the annual Cairns Airport Adventure Festival, with the event kicking off on the 11th June. Make sure you keep up to date with traffic changes and disruptions during the Coral Coast & the Ironman Cairns by visiting the below links: •Coral Coast - 4th June 2017: [www.ironman.com/coralcoast5150](http://www.ironman.com/coralcoast5150) •Cairns Airport IRONMAN Cairns - 11th June 2017: [www.ironmancairns.com](http://www.ironmancairns.com) •IRONMAN 70.3 Cairns - 11th June 2017: [www.ironman.com/cairns70.3](http://www.ironman.com/cairns70.3) •Cairns Airport Adventure Festival 4th - 11th June 2017: [www.cairnsadventurefestival.com](http://www.cairnsadventurefestival.com) Quicksilver are making it easier than ever to get between Cairns and Port Douglas during the Cairns Airport Iron Man running vessel transfers on Sunday 11th June 2017 for only \$25.00 each way! •Depart Port Douglas: 6.45am and 2.00pm •Arrive Cairns: 8.30am and 3.45pm •Depart Cairns: 8.45am and 4.15pm •Arrive Port Douglas: 10.30am and 5.45pm Booking can be made by phoning 07 4044 9944 or emailing the team on [centralres@greatadventures.com.au](mailto:centralres@greatadventures.com.au)

### 4TH JUNE - QUEENSLAND ON STAGE NEW ZEALAND

Tara will be heading to Tangalooma Island Resort to take part in Queensland on Stage New Zealand 2017 where she will meet with 80 attendees from the New Zealand tourism industry including travel agents, product managers and reservation staff as well as selected travel trade journalists and consumer media journalists, giving us the opportunity to let these travel professionals know about all that is exciting and fabulous within the Douglas region.

### 7TH JUNE - PACIFIC DAWN CRUISE SHIP ARRIVAL

Pacific Dawn will be arriving in Port Douglas around 8.00am from Cairns. It departed from Brisbane and is out on a 7 day Great Barrier Reef tour. The ship has a capacity of 2020 passengers. It is designed by the Italian architect Renzo Piano and is famous for its various types of entertainment areas on board. Port Douglas shore excursions will be running from the Marina to the Daintree Rainforest and Mossman Gorge for passengers that want to further explore the region. Later in the afternoon the ship is departing and heading towards Willis Island for a cruise along the beautiful coastline. Don’t forget to come down to the marina for the Sunset Markets.