



MEDIA RELEASE

Issued Friday 25th May 2007

Life's pretty cruisy in North Queensland

Townsville is developing a reputation as a cruise passengers' paradise. The region has received incredible feedback from cruise passengers and staff following recent visits from high end ocean liners the Silver Cloud and The World. Passengers have lavished praise on the region and have enjoyed the diversity of reef, rainforest and outback experiences on offer from Townsville. The two luxury ocean liners docked in North Queensland without knowing exactly what to expect. The response from passengers and crew was overwhelmingly positive.

Both ships were offered a range of local touring packages through the region's rich outback, rainforest and reef experiences. Hidden Valley Tours and Ironbark Tours were on hand to ferry cruise passengers around the region giving passengers the complete Australian experience. Hidden Valley Tours are working closely with the cruise industry to develop the ideal tour package. Proprietors Ross McLennan and Chelsea Cox are working closely with Townsville Enterprise and the region's tourism industry to give visitors the best taste of Townsville.

"Visitors to Townsville can experience the best Australia has to offer in one region. They can discover the aquatic wonder of the Great Barrier Reef and hug a koala in the morning and eat scones in a gold rush heritage cabin for lunch in the afternoon," Mr McLennan said.

Hidden Valley Tours took on a VIP tour from the seven star Silver Cloud at very short notice and were able to accommodate the guest's desire to see native Australian flora and fauna. These Egyptian passengers were so impressed they rated the tour their best Australian experience. Wholesaler David Reid from Southbound Australia booked the urgent tour and was so impressed with the level of service he now has no hesitation recommending a tour of Townsville.

"I want to take this opportunity to say a millions thanks to Hidden Valley Tours, to Chelsea who provided us with such a lovely program and beautiful pictures within a couple of hours and also to Ross for the superb service. We have used 5 star touring companies in each location and we were very nervous giving business to

Hidden Valley Tours for such important VIPs from Egypt. We highly recommend this company to everyone, who is interested in touring in Townsville,” he said.

Ironbark Tours proprietor Tony O’Connor offers cruise passengers the chance to discover the region’s gold rush history and get a taste of the Australian outback. His local knowledge sets him apart as a guide. Passengers on The World – the exclusive cruising apartment block – were talking about their Townsville adventure for days afterwards. Jeff Barnard from Bob Wood Travel Group’s Cruise Division was blown away by the tour’s success.

“The whole day was an overwhelming success and I have listened and heard so many positive comments about the commentary, driving skills, and the unique places the tour visited. The residents enjoyed the Heritage Tea Rooms which are a true bit of Australian history. It was a true adventure and I know the residents of “The World” will be talking about this, as one of their highlights of there trip to Australia,” he said.

There are plenty of options for those passengers looking to discover Townsville on their own steam. Townsville is a vibrant tropical city boasting fine shopping, dining and a host of do it yourself touring options. A Silver Cloud staffer was so enamored by Townsville she wrote to the city’s mayor promising to become Townsville’s greatest ambassador.

“I am currently in Auckland but my enthusiasm for wonderful Townsville has not diminished... as a matter of fact, I miss it very much, I truly love your beautiful town. I have managed to put together a letter to Mayor Mooney. It took me a while to put it together and, still, it doesn't even come close to describe the magic time I had in Townsville.”

The letter describes her trip through Townsville’s CBD and a leisurely jog along the Strand – Townsville’s 2.5km beachfront esplanade. Townsville is one of Australia’s undiscovered cruise destinations and has a dedicated cruise ship terminal due for completion in 2009.