

Main beach on Voyages  
Brampton Island.



## Private island *paradise*

Arriving into Voyages Brampton Island, what really stands out is the beauty and tranquility of the island. Most holiday destinations are busy and crowded, so where better than to really relax than a private island paradise in the middle of nowhere, writes **NALISHA PATEL**.

**A** short 3.5 hour flight into Brisbane Airport from Auckland and then a transfer flight of one hour and 40 minutes out to MacKay Airport, before a gorgeous 20-minute scenic helicopter flight over the Whitsunday Ocean to Voyages

Brampton Island (in the Cumberland group of islands). The view was spectacular heading into the main island. The lush landscape of the forest below was offset by the deep aqua of the surrounding ocean.

In addition to the helicopter, there is also a launch option from



Mackay Airport which is a one hour journey to the island.

On landing, I am given a brief tour of the island by the very friendly staff, as my belongings are taken to my room. I end up at the island's bar for welcome drinks of champagne and a chance to mingle among guests. I soon head to my island view room to check out my accommodation.

The room is modern and has a relaxed vibe that suits the island perfectly. There is a bottle of complimentary wine and beach towels for my stay.

The view from my private balcony, equipped with deck chairs, is of the channel running between Brampton Island and the neighboring Carlisle Island. It is beautiful as the waves gently lap the white sandy, palm fringed beach. As I was to view each morning, the sun rose, shining directly into my room for a gorgeous view.

On Brampton Island, there are four types of accommodation that surround the island. The premier ocean view rooms are the best of the best. They are situated right on the main beach with complete ocean views. A private hammock offers outdoor relaxation, along with an outdoor area to dine. Inside features include a CD player, bathrobes, aromatherapy burners and a king size bed for ultimate indulgence.

The ocean view rooms offer beach side luxury, with a large balcony or terrace.

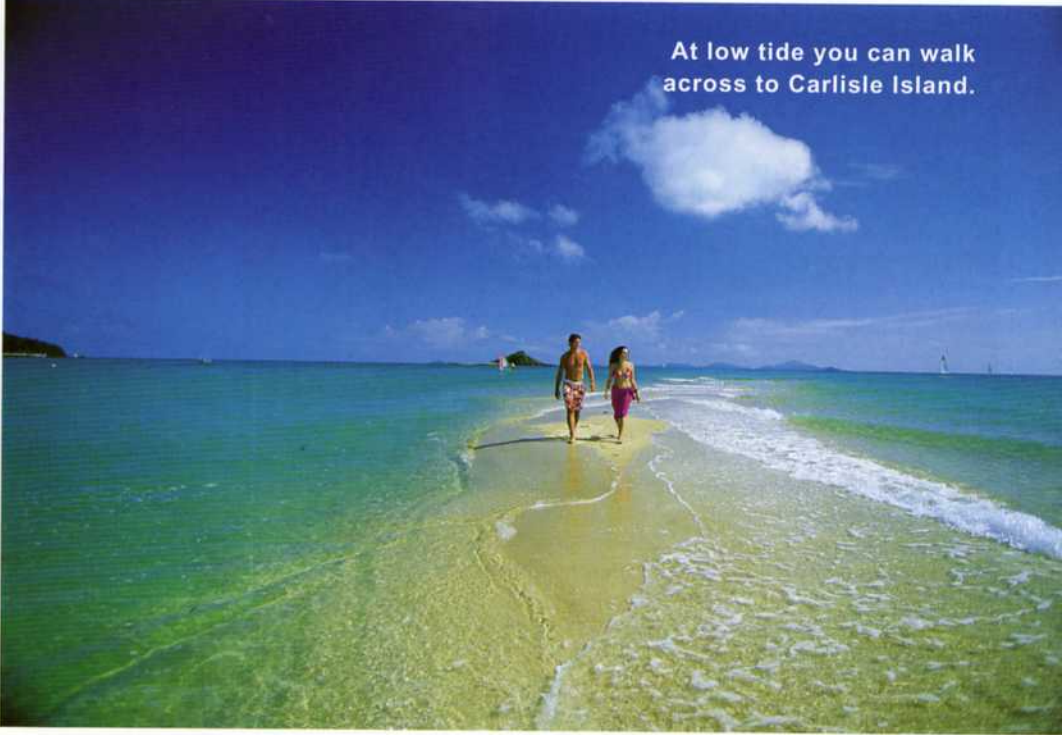
The island view rooms which I stayed in was situated on the side of the main beach amongst native gardens and the palm rooms, which open out into garden views are nestled within the island, close to all facilities and with their own balconies. Each room has an assortment of new release movies on show around the clock, for those who feel like relaxing in their rooms.

There are 106 rooms on the resort, yet just enough people milling around to feel like a peaceful island paradise. There are a total of seven beaches to explore on the island, with some accessible on foot to explore. Brampton Island is predominantly a National Park and the island's main resort is located on a palm fringed beach that has a calm bay that includes coral reef and a great snorkeling channel that captures fish when the tide goes out.

I head to lunch at the Bluewater Restaurant, now famished and anticipating the selection the regular lunch buffet has to offer. Among the selection of foods are a variety of meats, salads, fruits and desserts. All meals are included in the tariff and are on a 14-day rotation so you are not eating the same foods during your stay.

Each evening for dinner there is either a table d'hôte or a themed buffet. Dishes include a delicious feast of entrée, main and dessert from a selection of dishes, which includes calamari, fish, veal, pasta and delicious buffet desserts.

One evening a week there is a seafood buffet. The selection includes oysters, crayfish and an assortment of hot seafood dishes. The meals



At low tide you can walk across to Carlisle Island.

were the freshest seafood I had tasted and cooked up in a variety of ways. The dessert variety was outstanding and catered to all preferences including fruits, cakes and ice cream.

Breakfast was a lively affair each morning due to the friendly colourful lorikeets that came to eat breakfast with all the guests! Breakfast is a large selection of buffet dishes, including scrambled eggs, sausages, waffles and a selection of fruits.

Lunch is a themed buffet each day, including Mediterranean, Italian and BBQ choices. There is always a wide selection of dishes, several meat dishes along with vegetarian choices, soups and desserts.

The island offers many activities to keep you as active as you desire. Many guests spend the day lounging on the beach or poolside at the sea salt pool. Some active guests kept themselves active with snorkeling and swimming.

The Aqua Lounge, an indoor bar and lounge area on the main beach entertains guests in the evenings with live music or beach games. I tried my hand at limbo dancing, before various guests entertained us all with Karaoke.

There are a range of guests holidaying on the island, from honeymoon couples to older couples. On talking to other guests and staff members, I found out that 90 per cent of guests travel from Australia and many guests it seemed were frequent visitors to the island with stays of around seven to 10 days.

For the first few days on the island, I enjoyed lazing in the sun, paddling on the beach, or just quietly absorbing the beauty of the place while sipping delicious tropical "cocktails of the day". At low tide, I could literally walk across to the neighboring Carlisle Island. The scene to get there is literally out of a travel brochure, where the ocean waves lap at both sides of your feet as you walk over a thin strip of white sand. The water temperature is around 15 to 20 degrees, which is very seducing!



## BRAMPTON ISLAND



The resort features a seawater pool that overlooks the beach and ocean. Surrounded by lounge chairs, it is a great spot other than the beach to relax and unwind. There is also a freshwater pool nestled within the resort.

A range of activities is on hand to keep you active and entertained. Complimentary activities include archery, catamarans, kayaking and snorkeling.

At high tide one morning, I try my hand at a catamaran and soon become an "expert" as I weave around the front of the main beach. Another activity I tried was archery, which was great fun. Nearby kangaroos hopped along on the golf course, as fellow guests played a few rounds.

Snorkeling is best experienced in the channel between the resort and the neighboring Carlisle Island. When the tide is out, the area literally becomes a "fish bowl" where tropical fish and the odd turtle hang out. Donning my snorkel gear I headed out into the warm blue ocean, with an underwater camera on hand. There were many colourful fish to see and capture on camera. Snorkeling truly was an enjoyable experience.

A few days into my stay, I am whisked off at 12 noon for a secluded "picnic drop-off" with my partner for two hours. We travelled by speedboat to the neighboring Carlisle Island and dropped off with a sun umbrella, deck chairs, cooler bin full of food and a blanket. I was thoroughly impressed with the selection of smoked fish slices, warm bread rolls, salmon, cheeses, crackers, assortment of nuts and wine that was provided. The "picnic drop-off" is a great chance to truly be on your own private island and experience true relaxation. This is well worth experiencing for a novel experience.

For the eager, there is a walk called the Brampton Peak walk that allows you to see the true beauty of the island as you trek through the National Park. It is an estimated two-hour walk to the peak of the island for spectacular views of the area. The walk went surprising quickly as I trekked up the winding paths, stopping occasionally to have a breather and watch lizards scuttle through the bushes.

On reaching the peak's lookout point, I was overwhelmed with how incredible the views were. You can see the spectacular views of the little untouched beaches along the perimeter of the island and the dense forest landscape that houses cockatoos and colorful lorikeets.

This walk is highly recommended and not just for the fit. A camera is essential to capture the breathtaking views.

A few days into my stay I went on an activity called the "jetski safari". It involves a two-hour ride on a jetski and you are given an underwater camera to capture the experience. Paired up mostly in couples, we set off with four other couples and the instructor from the main beach. Being new to a jetski, I started out very timidly, slowly increasing my speed. We all headed out of the main beach to another smaller beach for a snorkel. With lifejackets on, we all jumped off the jetskis into the ocean. I had never snorkeled in deep water before, so the experience was truly empowering! You will see an assortment of fishes and creatures in the deep water. I even saw a sting ray glide past me! After snorkeling we jumped back on the jet skis and headed around the island.

The views of the surrounding small islands were breathtaking and it was great to experience what you couldn't see on foot. The waves at one point were quite high and I was literally riding the waves deep out in the ocean and screaming from the thrill of it all as I was showered in water. The JetSki Safari is highly recommended and was truly one of



Premier ocean view room interior.

the highlights of the trip. Close to 2.5 hours is spent on the jetskis, so it is well worth it.

One night I was booked in for a "Sunset Cruise". You are literally taken on a private dinner cruise at sunset. My partner and I boarded the boat just as the sun was ready to dip. A large seafood platter was presented on a laid-out table. The driver of the boat headed out around the island, so the cruise was more private. We were served wine and cheeses with crackers to start and we then dug into our platter with relish. We ate lobster, crayfish, salmon, oysters and king prawns, with warm bread rolls and butter. Yum! The food was delicious and fresh.

As it got darker, our private waiter lit candles and we sat back and enjoyed the gentle rocking of the boat, as romantic music played in the background. The night was lovely with the stars shining and was very romantic. This was definitely an experience to treasure and highly recommended for an activity to book prior to arrival on the island.

There is also an experience called the Sea Salt Dinner – a romantic dining experience set on the edge of the saltwater pool. You and your partner are seated around the pool at a private table as you are served up a six-course meal under the stars.

Voyages Brampton Island offers a large reception room overlooking the ocean and main beach for weddings. The couple can choose to marry on the beach or in the lush landscaped gardens of the island. There is also a conference room with facilities for those who wish to hold a corporate event there to treat staff.

My flight out of the island that last day was at 8.30am, so I squeezed in a quick breakfast and the chef was also kind enough to pack me a delicious lunch for my long travel back home. The staff were truly outstanding at the resort. Many went out of their way and everyone was very friendly and helpful.

Voyages Brampton Island was truly a once in a lifetime experience. I enjoyed every moment and look forward to returning. It was an affordable, modern and a great escape where couples of any age can go to relax and unwind.

