



The Spirit of Hervey Bay brings a group of happy whale watchers back into the Urangan boat harbour.

Photo: SONJA PARK 07h2318c

# Tourists flocking to see Bay's other visitors

By STEVE ZEMEK

The school holidays are upon us and the Fraser Coast is being inundated with tourists, flocking to the area to take in the second-to-none whale watching experience.

With low winds and sunshine raining down, the Fraser Coast yesterday turned on the weather for interstate and overseas tourists to see why Hervey Bay is earning a reputation as the whale watching capital of the world.

Blue Dolphin Marine tours skipper Peter Lynch said the Bay needed to continue to market itself as offering a level of whale interactivity not seen anywhere else in the world.

"Earlier this week we had a mother and very young calf in the bay, that's probably the highlight so far," he said.

"The calf must have been one

day, maybe two days old.

"He was very grey and probably the youngest I've seen in my 12 years as a tour operator here."

Marianne Harling from the Spirit of Hervey Bay said the Bay had been awash with whale activity over the last few weeks.

"We are seeing lots of mothers and calves, some as young as a few weeks old," she said.

"It is common to see these mother and calf pods escorted by another whale.

"They are certainly not shy of the boat, which means we have some fantastic up-close viewing."

"The young calves are very active, so we have seen lots of breaches from them which is quite a spectacular sight.

"Our crew reports seeing lots of other activity like tail slaps, pectoral slaps and head lunges, giving passengers a thrilling experience."

## HOW DID YOU ENJOY YOUR WHALE WATCH?

Colin Smythe from Brisbane, with wife Donna and kids Mitchell (4) and Elizabeth (7), said he enjoyed his first whale watching experience. "It was really pleasant. I was surprised by how many whales we saw." 07h2318a



Adrian Jonic with son Ardie said he noticed how popular whale watching had become. "It's our first time here but there were a lot of boats out." 07h2318d



Marina Almak, with daughter Jenny Almak and Jon Eklund, said she'd come from Finland to see Hervey Bay's whale watching experience. "It's fantastic. They were very playful." 07h2318e



Kiwis Darryl and Lorraine Bryce make a beeline for the Bay.

07h2318b

## Whales a new experience

The last time New Zealanders Darryl and Lorraine Bryce were on the Fraser Coast more than 20 years ago, they hadn't even heard of whale watching.

While on holiday in south-east Queensland this week, the Auckland couple made a beeline for Hervey Bay, intent on seeing the whales as a part of their Australian jaunt.

The couple said that while whale watching was on offer in some parts of their home country, it was nothing compared to

the whale experience available in Hervey Bay.

With the region earning a reputation as a whale watching hub, Darryl and Lorraine said their perceptions of the Fraser Coast the second time around were very different.

"It's changed a lot since last time," Lorraine said.

"The first time we toured Fraser Island there wasn't any whale watching back then.

"I remember the dingoes and the wild horses."