

## CAIRNS COASTAL CHARTERS

Now I have known Justin Gibbins for a long time, he was one of my best guides during my days at ***Fishing the Tropics***, and he still has a good working relationship with that company.

Justin was in the enviable position (with some help from his father Bob, also a mad keen fisherman and one on Cairn's leading orthodontist) to be able to branch out into his own charter business earlier this year - and hence the birth of [Cairns Coastal Charters](#).



The vessel is a modern 23-ft Haines Hunter sport fisher powered by a 225hp Evinrude outboard and can take him to his secret spots in quick time. I know Justin is a great skipper and guide and I have seen plenty photos of his exploits over the years. It was not until this Wednesday 5th Dec. however, that I had actually had the opportunity to experience his new tour first hand.

We met at the Yorkeys Knob boat ramp at 7.30 am and headed out to his marks just off the coast. The sea was calm with only a few waves caused by the 10-15 knot East/ Nor Easter, the water temperature a warm 82F and we were on the first location in about 20 minutes. The hand held GPS guided us to within 10 ft of the structure and with the aid of two sounders, had the bait schools pinned down in no time.

Over went the marker buoy, over went the anchor and down went the live bait jigs. In about ten seconds flat we both had live yakkas onboard which were quickly pinned to 6/0 wide gapped hooks and dispatched to the bottom some 50 + feet below.

The rods were placed in the holders (we were using Shimano TLD 25's, one with 40lb mono, the other with 80 lb braid and short stoker rods - perfect!) Over went the bait jigs again and before we had even reached the bottom Justin's ratchet growled menacingly and his rod buckled over. He had one hell of a fight on his hands but the experienced skipper soon had a large cod on the deck of about 20-lb.



I was next - and it took me some time to get the fish off the bottom. It stubbornly refused to be drawn from the depths but with persistent straining, groaning, bruising from the rod but and a lot of backbreaking pumping and winding we saw colour.

A magnificent large mouth [nannygai](#) showed through the water column, it looked silver at first but as the fish came closer to the surface that distinctive pink / crimson colour shone through. What a beauty, at just on 8kg's (17lb) it was a great capture, my mind was already having culinary thoughts - these are just one of the best eating fish to come from the Great Barrier Reef and are highly prized by the charter industry. It was duly dispatched, cleaned and put on ice - things that make you go Hmmm!

After a few more heavy runs the fish went quite, even the bait was hard to come by so Justin pulled anchor and headed to the next mark. Its amazing to watch an experienced navigator, just click the next point on the GPS, point the boat in the right direction and follow the line to within a few metres of the location - so easy, the hard part is finding and marking the spots in the first place. Its no wonder they are generally guarded so carefully least they come into the wrong unscrupulous hands. We have all witnessed the "butcher brigade", the ones that will strip a patch until nothing is left for the next bloke. These morons get some perverse sense of satisfaction is killing everything and destroying a healthy eco system.



Phew!.....sorry, I got on my soapbox a bit there didn't I.

Anyway, we did it all over again, the marker, the anchor, the bait jigs, the livies and you guessed it... the hook up, the groaning, the agony, the brilliant fish coming through the clean blue seas. Another magnificent "red" / nannygai hit the deck and this one was even bigger than the first.

The third location was a little further out and was a substantial lump; the sounder showed masses of baitfish from the bottom to just below the boat. Its amazing to see it on the colour Furuno, just clouds of bait hanging on the lump with larger blobs showing up, our targets.

This time, while Justin put the livies down, he handed me a 12-kg jig stick and high speed Mitchell spinning reel. On the business end was one of those locally made (and fast becoming world renown) shiny chrome slices called "bumpa-bar's". Just let it flutter / sink to the bottom.....57ft down, and crank it back as fast as you can advised Justin with one hell of a grin on his happy dial.

No sooner had I turned the handle three times and the metal slice was hit like a freight train from the depths. That stick had a beautiful feel, the Mitchell handled the fish with assured authority and we soon had a nice 5kg bludger trevally on the surface. It was quickly released and the jig went back down. I cracked harder this time and said - looks like I got it past them this t...! I didn't even get a chance to finish the sentence when I was slammed again. This was a bigger fish but that outfit was a pleasure to use, just matched so perfectly to the task and I soon had another bludger on the surface.



I had a few more casts, nothing.....on about the tenth retrieve, and some three quarters of the way back to the boat, there was a sudden surge, not a solid hit like the previous two hook ups but more of a grab and lunge forward. The high-speed retrieve soon had the line tight and I came up on a beautifully marked cobia (black kingfish). These critters fight to the end and it was a fantastic struggle of silky smooth proportions, the fish not giving an inch, lunging for the depths and taking back line as fast as I could gain it again. There were two of his mates following the hooked fish, the fight lasted about eight minutes and Justin lifted the highly prized eating fish over the side.



I cast again, the slice sunk to the bottom, I cranked hard again.....It came up tight about half way back and I was into another one. This was the twin of the first cobia and it did the same trick. Great fighters on this tackle and I could not help wondering if I was in angler heaven. Even though I live in the black marlin capital of the world and certainly no disrespect intended, there is something special about the enjoyment of tangling with quality sport fish on light / medium tackle that really satisfies the hunter / sportsman in us. I was absolutely stoked!!!!

We tried a few more spots, had similar results, landed a few livies, landed a few smaller reds and another beautifully marked estuary cod - then called it a day.

There were two very happy fishermen that headed back to port at around three o'clock that afternoon. We had had a ball, experienced some truly magic fishing, in one of natures tropical playgrounds - all within easy sight of the stunning mountainous backdrop that shelters the modern city of Cairns, hell we could even see the high rise buildings on the esplanade.

**Footnote** - I couldn't wait to get home and show the wife and kids what I had caught, I gave Justin one of the cobia's and took home its twin and the two big reds. To see the look on their faces, "Daddy did you really catch that" - it made the day even more special.

[Cairns Coastal Charters](#) is one of the exciting new charter options available from Fishing Cairns. Check out the web site for full details and prices.

**Catch you on the water**

**Regards, Les.**

*I recently lost a friend suddenly to cancer, he was only 40 years of age, has left a lovely wife and three beautiful daughters as well as an extended family, seven brothers and many wonderful friends - all of whom just don't know why Henry was taken from us. I trust you are safe in God's company mate! My Christmas is dedicated to you.*