

Reel thing: a marlin is caught in the stunning blue waters off the Queensland coast; below: one of Far North's central console boats



OUT THERE

AN AZURE ADVENTURE

In the far reaches of North Queensland, a new fishing outfitter offers what might just be the most civilised angling exploits on the planet. **Mark Chipperfield** explains

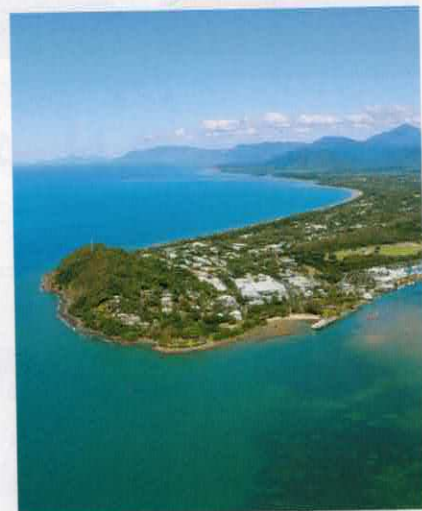


The upper tip of the Great Barrier Reef has been a popular blue-water fishing destination for over 60 years. But despite A-listers coming to tropical Queensland in search of the mighty black marlin for so long, the opportunities for indulgently comfortable fishing charters in this part of the world have been fairly limited. That has all changed with the launch of **Far North Sports Fishing** (farnorthsportsfishing.com), a specialist charter operator that offers small group fishing expeditions to the outer reef from Port Douglas, an hour by car from Cairns.

What sets Far North apart from other purveyors is the fully staffed 21m mother ship called *Blue Martini*. The newly refitted boat, which sleeps up to eight, offers air-conditioned cabins, spacious deck areas, a well-stocked wine cellar and its own on-board chef. It operates alongside a custom-built 12m game boat and three other smaller fishing vessels (central ▶



Left, clockwise from top: Blue Martini, Far North's newly refitted main vessel; the array of boats in Port Douglas harbour; Lizard Island, a prime fishing spot; a central console speeds away from the mother ship; right: aerial view of Port Douglas



consoles), which together provide an unbeatable platform for every imaginable type of fishing adventure – from saltwater fly to heavy-tackle reef fishing.

And while black marlin remains the major prize for visiting sports anglers (these monsters grow to 450kg), the warm waters around the Great Barrier Reef are rich in many other fish species including Spanish mackerel, red emperor, mahi mahi and giant trevally – all of which are caught on a catch-and-release basis. "Our intention is to provide our clients with a complete five-star fishing experience including haute cuisine, premium wines, top-end tackle and world-class fishing guides," says company owner Tony Fyfe.

To that end, Fyfe offers a number of charter options – from St Crispin Reef to Lizard Island and farther north to the remote waters around Cape York – alongside snorkelling and scuba diving, to say nothing of helicopter transfers to speed the start of the expeditions, ensuring that every aspect of the experience is nothing short of top drawer. ◀

REBIRTH OF A CLASSIC

Hayman Island, one of the best-loved resorts on the Great Barrier Reef, reopened in July following a six-month, A\$80m refurbishment which cut the number of suites from 209 to just 160. The new-look hideaway, once owned by legendary Australian tycoon Sir Reginald Ansett, becomes the first One&Only property in the Asia-Pacific region and now offers a pool wing, several restaurants and an opulent spa. hayman.oneandonlyresorts.com

