

Cashed-up travellers add 45%

Number 2 on Instagram

■ Emily Smith

CLINCHING a top-two spot in a list of the world's "most Instagrammable locations" is likely only to bolster the incredible growth in the Whitsunday tourism market seen during the past 12 months.

Data released last week by Tourism Research Australia shows the amount of money spent by tourists in the Whitsunday region increased by 45% in the financial year ending June 2016, compared to the previous year.

The figures state that \$147m was spent in the region in 2014-2015 while \$213m was spent in 2015-2016.

Tourism Whitsundays chief executive officer Craig Turner believes up to 32% growth in the "higher yielding" European and American markets may have attributed to some of this

phenomenal growth.

He said the lower Australian dollar in the past financial year was likely to have motivated these international visitors to come to the region.

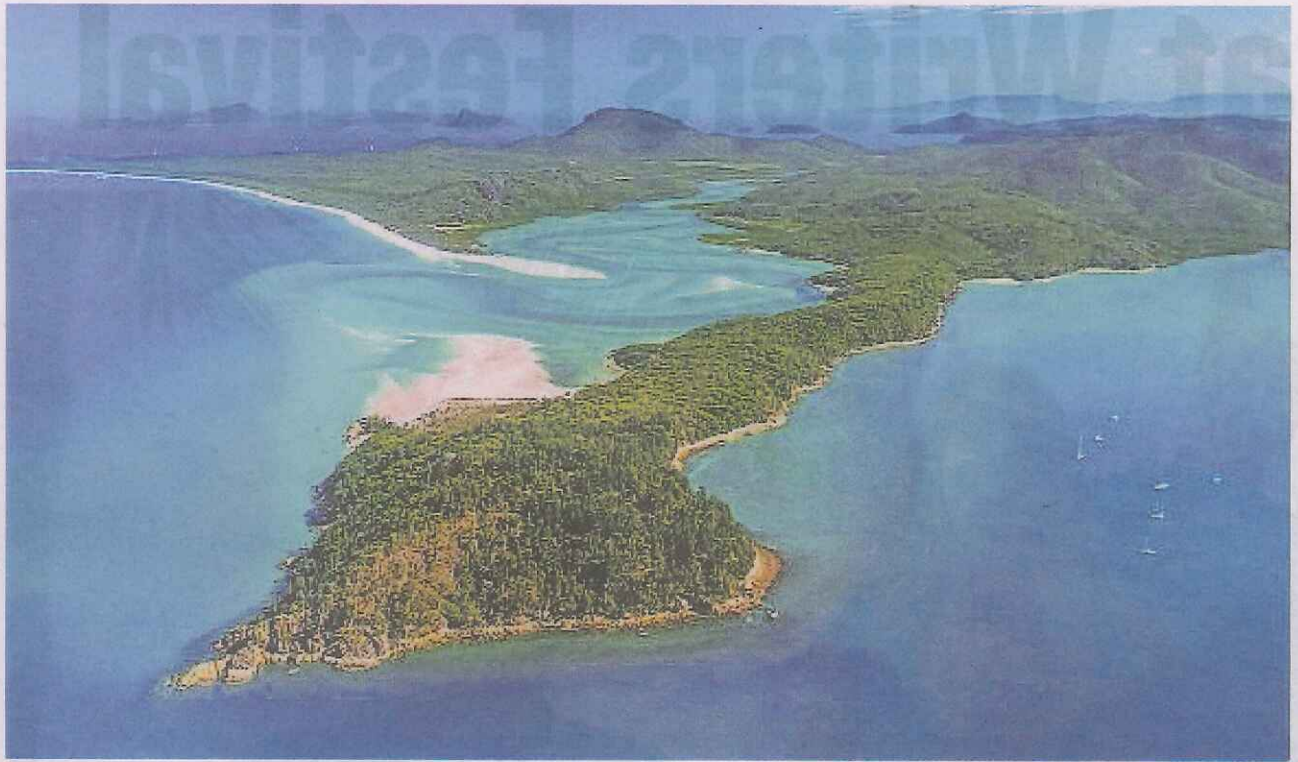
But on the whole, he put the growth down to "individual (tourism sector) operators getting out there and working hard".

A spokesman for State Tourism Minister Kate Jones said the data showed a different type of tourist was now coming to the Whitsundays – one with lots of money.

While tourists were spending almost twice as much money, the number of tourists visiting the region remained almost the same, increasing 6% in the year.

And while tourists spent 1516 nights in the region in 2014-2015, they spent only 1449 nights in 2015-2016.

The spokesman believed it



PERFECT: The picture that saw the Whitsundays ranked "second-most Instagrammable location" in the world.

PHOTO: PAUL PICHUGIN

was the greater offering of high end resorts and attractions drawing these well-off visitors to the area.

As well as Europe and America, he said a large proportion of tourists were now coming from China.

Abell Point Marina general manager Luke McCaul said the past year had seen superyachts stay up to a month longer than they had previously.

As the average superyacht spent \$20,000-\$50,000 a week, that equated to a significant boost to the region's economy, he said.



English actress Lily James is one of many celebrities posting Whitsunday images on Instagram. PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

That's why Mr McCaul was continuing to work with the State Government to encourage more superyachts

to the region.

Earlier this month, Cosmopolitan Magazine UK listed the Whitsunday

“It's down to individual operators getting out there and working hard.”

— Craig Turner

islands as the number two "most Instagrammable" locations in the world, behind Mykonos in Greece.