

Heron Island Research Station

Induction for groups not collecting specimens

This information will help you get the most out of stay at Heron Island Research Station. We appreciate you reading this guide before you arrive on the island.

Once you have read it, fill out your induction form and email it to us at hirs.scientific@uq.edu.au.

When you arrive at our station, a staff member will consolidate what you read here with a short face-to-face induction.

Staff

You'll see staff in UQ uniforms working around the station.

Staff are available every day, from 8am to 4pm:

- Scientific staff can help with field and laboratory needs
- Boating and diving staff can help with water activities
- Maintenance and housekeeping staff can help with facilities and accommodation issues
 - Maintenance staff can also help with experimental set-ups
- Administrative staff can answer queries at Reception.

Protecting our environment

Our surrounding environment is fragile, so it's important that we work together to preserve it. As part of our commitment to the environment, we operate under UQ's [Environmental Management System](#). This management system defines how the station and our visitors conduct themselves in order to limit the impact of our activities.

Activities

Permits

All activities conducted through the station require a permit, which your course coordinator has already obtained. You must know and understand the conditions of this permit. Under your permit, **you are not able to make any collections** – you may only observe. Please be aware that even observational activities, such as reef walking, will still be specific to a particular zone so make sure you understand the different zones around Heron Island (see zones and restrictions section below).

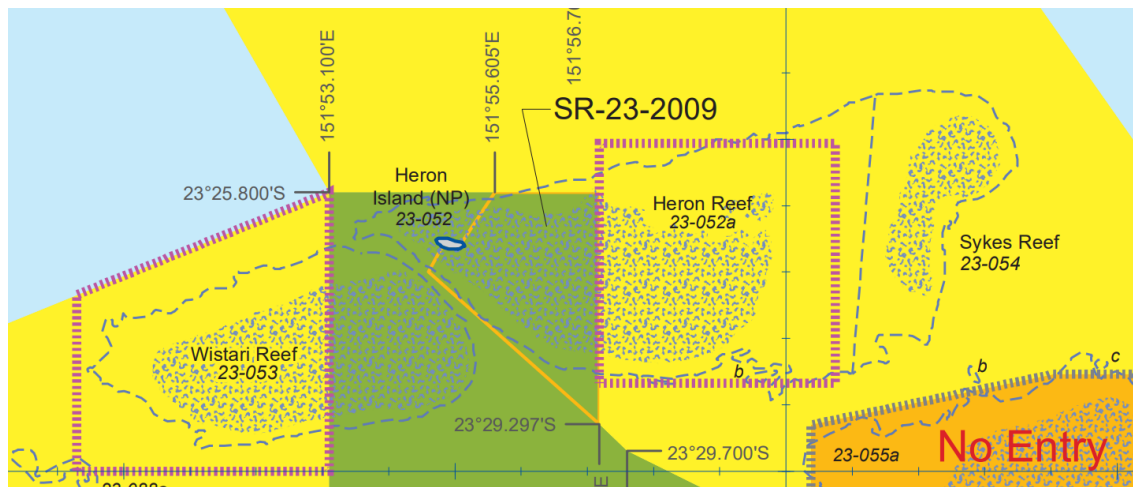
Equipment deployment

Your permit will outline the conditions around deploying equipment on the reef and how you should label the equipment.

You must fill in a HIRS site registration form if you plan to leave something deployed on the reef. We may remove incorrectly or insufficiently labelled equipment.

Zones and restrictions

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is divided into many different zones, each with their own restrictions. Your permit will specify in which zone your activities must be conducted. Heron reef has a scientific zone, a marine national park zone and a conservation zone.



GBRMPA ELibrary: Great Barrier Reef Marine Parks Zoning MAP 18 - Capricorn Bunker Group

Primarily, research and education activities occur in the scientific research zone. Alongside this zone is the marine national park, which is heavily protected. Beach markers will help you understand the location of the zones, and our scientific officers can also point you in the right direction.

Many different groups conduct activities within the scientific research zone.

Discuss your study sites with our scientific officers to ensure you don't impact on someone else's research. Also keep an eye out for other people's sites whenever you are on the reef so that you don't disturb them.

Please note: Heron Island is an Aircraft exclusion zone and as such, **drones are not allowed**. There are exceptions to this if you have the correct permits in place. Please talk to Scientific Staff if you have any questions.

Reef walking

Various highly venomous organisms, such as the cone snail, are present on the reef. Thus, all individuals must wear appropriate footwear at all times when reef walking and must not touch or handle any shells or marine organisms without proper approved supervision. We stock a limited supply of reef walking shoes and recommend that you bring your own.

We encourage you to stay on the sand paths. Do not ever walk on live coral. Move carefully to avoid falling.

Always check the tide times before starting a reef walk and calculate how much time you have to safely collect before the reef flat floods.

Snorkelling

Any recreational snorkelling performed around Heron Island during your stay is at your own risk. There are no patrol and no Resort or HIRS personnel controlling recreational in water activities. Make sure you are comfortable in the water and snorkelling before undertaking any snorkelling.

Our boating and diving staff will organise your hire equipment for you when you arrive only for regulated official snorkelling activities. Recreational snorkelling gear is not available for hire.

Check tide times before going out and talk to our boating and diving staff about additional safety equipment.

Our rules for safe snorkelling include:

- Always snorkel in a buddy pair
- When at high tide, stay on the reef flat
- Never snorkel out so far that you can't make it back. To the island's east, the reef flat is very wide
- Don't go over the reef crest into the deep water, as currents can be strong.

There is a communal whiteboard with space for people to check out / check in from any snorkelling activities.

The harbour is a great place for recreational snorkelling – you'll see many turtles and stingrays. As it is a working harbour with boats needing passage in and out, snorkelling hours are restricted to before 8am and after 5pm.

While snorkelling and reef walking you'll encounter some amazing animals. Some animals are very poisonous or venomous so it is always best to simply observe.

You can read more about UQ's snorkel policies and procedures [here](#).

Wildlife

Heron Island Research Station is situated within a national park and marine park, so you will encounter a variety of wildlife, depending on when you visit. Books in our library can help you to identify what you see, or ask one of our staff.

We encourage you to take every opportunity to observe the island wildlife, but ask that you do so responsibly – never touch or interfere with native wildlife.

Birds

The summer months are dominated by birds. The island is an important nesting site, so there can be more than 100,000 birds on the island at any one time. You'll see white-capped noddy terns building nests in the *Pisonia* trees and silveryeyes flitting about – many of which are banded as part of a long-term research project.

During summer, shearwaters build nesting burrows across the island. The burrows are prone to collapse under foot traffic, so take special care when walking near them and always stick to the paths. If you accidentally collapse a burrow, dig it out so that the bird does not suffocate. Alert station staff if you need help.

Seagull populations increase in summer. Be cautious of seagulls around kitchen and dining areas as they have been known to swoop for food.

Never feed the birds – unnatural food sources are bad for their health, and feeding them makes them aggressive.

Other animals

In summer, the island is a rookery for green and loggerhead turtles. Seeing turtles lay their eggs or hatchlings emerge from their nests is an incredible experience.

The best time to see adults laying is during high tide at night. You must not disturb them as they can become frightened and return to the ocean without laying. Stay calm and still, don't cross in front of them and don't shine lights anywhere around them, as doing so can disorientate them. Once an adult has dug its pit and is settled and laying, you can move a little closer. **Never touch the turtles.** During turtle nesting season (November – April) lights are not permitted on the beaches, this includes red lights as turtles can still see red light. If you are walking over difficult terrain you may briefly use a low light to ensure your safety, making sure to only shine it where you are stepping.

The best time to see turtle hatchlings is at dusk. The change in sand temperature as the sun sets triggers them to hatch. Don't pick up the baby turtles as they make their way to the ocean and don't shine lights anywhere around them.

In winter, keep an eye out for whales passing through the waters around the island.

Touch and display tanks

The station has a touch tank and display tank for educational purposes. Feel free to gently handle any of the animals in the touch tank. Keep them in the water as much as possible so you don't cause them unnecessary stress. We are also permitted to hold *Tridacna* clams in the tanks. They are endangered, so it is a privilege to be able to interact so closely with them – touch them with care.

Workplace health and safety

The station is a University workplace, so you must follow UQ workplace health-and-safety policies in the laboratories. This includes wearing enclosed footwear, not consuming food or drinks in the laboratories, and disposing of general, clinical and sharps waste according to UQ procedure.

Aquaria and laboratories

All aquaria and laboratories are plumbed with saltwater. Our saltwater system is a high-flow-through system with all saltwater drains leading directly back to the ocean. Only put uncontaminated seawater down the drains.

There are also freshwater sinks in the laboratories.

Do not put any laboratory chemicals down the drains. All chemicals must be bottled up and removed from the island. Scientific officers can advise how best to do this.

Lab Store

Our store contains laboratory and field equipment. Your course coordinator can help you find items. Mark down what you take from the store on the sign out sheet, and when you return it. Return all items in a clean and tidy state to where you found them. If anything breaks or if you can't find an item, talk to our scientific officers.

Aquaria system

The aquaria system allows you to hold organisms on the station for experimental purposes. You can use a range of aquaria and plumbing supplies.

Glass aquaria are prone to cracking and chipping, so take care: never move glass aquaria when they are full of water.

Take care with any electricity around the aquaria deck, and ask our maintenance staff or scientific officers for help and advice when setting up experiments.

First aid and emergencies

Your safety is important to us. The station has several procedures in place to ensure the station, and the manner in which you conduct your activities, is safe.

First aid

If you have a medical issue, contact a staff member – we are all trained in first aid – or your course coordinator. At times there is a nurse on call at the resort.

A first aid kit on the Reception deck contains standard first aid supplies and sunscreen, as well as wipes for disinfecting coral cuts, and a defibrillator, vital-signs monitor and oxygen provision kit for those qualified to operate them.

Poisonous and venomous marine animals inhabit the waters around Heron Island. If an incident occurs, report it to staff immediately.

Emergencies

Do not call triple zero in the event of an emergency. Instead, during staff hours, find a staff member immediately.

Outside staff hours, use the emergency radio to contact us. An emergency radio is located at the first aid station on the reception deck. We'll show you how to use it when you arrive on the station.

Fire alarm

Smoke detectors are located in all rooms.

It is not uncommon for the station's fire alarm to be falsely activated.

If it is activated, a voice alarm will sound in every room advising you to remain where you are and wait for further instructions. Provided you see no evidence of fire or danger, wait for staff to respond to the alarm before taking any action. If it is a false alarm, it will suddenly stop – this is the signal that everything is fine and you can carry on with your activities.

If there is an emergency that requires you to evacuate, the voice will stop and a continuous siren will sound. Refer to the fire emergency evacuation plans in the building you are in. Calmly make your way to the evacuation assembly point on the beach clearing (we'll show you where this is in your face-to-face induction on arrival) and wait for further instructions.

Communications

Heron Island typically has no mobile phone coverage. There is a Telstra phone box located outside the caterers kitchen.

The station is wi-fi enabled, although reception can be patchy in some places. If you're visiting us from outside UQ, we'll show you how to connect to our wi-fi. If you are visiting from another University you can use eduroam however, this needs to be set up on your devices at your home institution prior to your arrival.

Facilities

Shortly after arriving at the station, we'll show you to your accommodation. We provide linen but you should bring your own towels.

Toilets and showers are located next to your accommodation building, along with a shared space for washing, drying and storing your snorkel gear. The outside showers are used for rinsing and don't have drains, so don't use any soaps or detergents.

You may be on the station with other groups. Always be respectful of other guests and keep shared areas clean and tidy. Out of respect for other island residents, keep the noise down after 10pm.

Kitchens

Keep the kitchen, dining room and outdoor eating areas clean and tidy by always returning your plates, cutlery and glasses. Always wear footwear in the kitchen. Be mindful about what goes down the drains as drain waste is treated at a plant located on the island – minimise discarding fats and oils down the drain. HIRS recycles so please take note of the bins and ensure you place your rubbish in the correct bin.

If you need anything, ask our Housekeeping staff for help.

Lights

Turning off lights is important for the welfare of the island's animals. Lights can disorientate turtles and disturb birds. Many station lights are on timers – press the black button to activate them. They will illuminate for a brief time and then turn off. Fully depress the button and always take care when moving around at night.

Restricted areas

Restricted areas on the island are clearly marked. These include the workshop and staff accommodation. If you need to access the workshop, ask a Maintenance staff member for help. Staff accommodation areas are restricted to respect our privacy.

The resort adjacent to the research station has several off-limits areas. The resort is a separate entity. During busy times, access might not be possible. Always be respectful of the resort's guests and staff.

Alcohol and smoking

Alcohol consumption is restricted to certain areas. If you are over 18 years of age and intend to consume alcohol during your stay, ask us for information about our alcohol policy.

Smoking is prohibited on all UQ sites. If you intend to smoke, ask staff to show you where on the island smoking is permitted. Dispose of cigarette butts responsibly.

Please note – if the on duty staff get an out of hours call out due to group members behaving irresponsibly – your group will be charged a double time call out fee.