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A Big Milestone for The Big Mango at Bowen

An estimated 1.5 million people have had their photo taken at the internationally-renowned Big Mango at Bowen – and now this selfie hotspot is celebrating a major milestone.

The 10-metre iconic tourist attraction, at the top of The Whitsundays, will turn 21 on Thursday 25 May 2023. Weighing a whopping five-tonnes and made of fibreglass, the structure was built in May 2002.

It continues to attract an estimated 80,000 people a year with more than half of those calling in to the Bowen Visitor Information Centre next door.

Located just five kilometres south of Bowen on the Bruce Highway, the Big Mango is arguably among the most popular of Australia's 'big things' – which are typically massive drawcards for small agricultural towns such as Bowen.

Manager of Bowen Tourism and Business, Leanne Abernethy, said the Big Mango represents something truly special for Bowen locals.

“While it’s an object in reality, this icon is now an internationally-renowned symbol of our town and our region. We’re a proud coastal town of many farming families who value the opportunity to share our pride with as many visitors as possible – and the Big Mango plays a huge role in attracting these visitors from all over the world.

“As a roadside tourist attraction, the Big Mango is an incredible asset to Bowen. We believe it’s the world’s largest mango structure and it’s so great to see the entire community getting involved in celebrating this milestone. We’ve been running an online photo competition and we have other birthday activities planned to mark the milestone,” added Ms Abernethy.

With a population of about 11,000 and known as ‘the food bowl’ of The Whitsundays, Bowen supplies 10 per cent of the entire Australian mango crop.

The Big Mango symbolises the Kensington Pride variety of mango, which is also known as the ‘Bowen Special’ and is lush in colour. Bowen is the birthplace of the Kensington Pride in Australia, after being introduced from India in 1871.

Some argue that the Big Mango was built upside down because they think it should display the way a mango sits in a tree – with the stem at the top. However, growers maintain a mango is the right way up when it is packed for sale – with the stem at the bottom.

The Big Mango was the brainchild of a local doctor at the time, Geoff Ingham, who got the project underway by establishing the Big Mango Trust to help fund and build it. The Big Mango cost AUD \$90,000 to build – almost \$60,000 over budget; but 21 years later, Bowen continues to reap huge rewards from the giant icon.

Chair of Bowen Tourism and Business, Jenn Honnery, said the Big Mango was named the Top Tourist Attraction in The Whitsundays Tourism Awards in 2022, and the Bowen Visitor Information Centre’s retail-offering is also very popular.

“At the Bowen Visitor Information Centre next door, we sell virtually every kind of mango product you can imagine – and the tourists love this,” Ms Honnery said.

“From mango body trifle, figurines, daquiri mix and chutney, to brightly-coloured clothing featuring our mascot, Kenny, we offer fun and plenty of flavour.

“While mango season is brief, typically spanning October-January, we celebrate mangos all year round. We sell a delicious frozen mango sorbet, made from locally-grown fruit picked ripe in season.

“We’re actually on-track to sell a record number of mango sorbets this year. We’re averaging about 385 mango sorbet sales each week, which is just incredible especially for the local husband-and-wife couple who have been making the sorbet locally for more than 24 years.

“There’s no doubting that a couple of publicity stunts have helped to elevate the Big Mango’s popularity. One saw the Big Mango ‘split in half’ early this year and the other was during 2014 when our Big Mango made headline news across the globe when it mysteriously ‘disappeared’ overnight,” Ms Honnery added.

It was later revealed that restaurant chain, Nando’s, was responsible for ‘stealing’ the Big Mango to promote their new Mango and Lime flavoured sauce.

“We were absolutely blown-away by the media attention which certainly helped to put Bowen on the map.

“We actually have two big mangos in Bowen. The second was donated by Nando’s in appreciation for the cooperation of our community. The Little Mango is six metres high and located on Santa Barbara Parade, in the middle of Bowen’s beautiful foreshore precinct,” added Ms Honnery.

The Big Mango is available 24 hours a day, every day for selfies. The area is pet-friendly and includes an off-lead dog park and ample parking for vehicles of all sizes.

The Bowen Visitor Information Centre, next to the Big Mango, is open 9am-5pm weekdays and 10am-3pm on weekends. The Centre is operated by Bowen Tourism and Business – a not-for-profit organisation which works to showcase Bowen and its businesses and is supported by more than 220 members.

A beach-lover’s paradise with country town hospitality, Bowen is situated on a headland overlooking the Whitsunday Islands. It’s home to eight secluded beaches, world-famous lookouts, and visitors can snorkel the fringing reefs directly off the beaches of Bowen.

About an hour’s drive from the Whitsundays mainland town of Airlie Beach, Bowen is easily accessible via the Whitsunday Coast Airport with daily flights from capital cities. Bowen is also just 85 kilometres from the Pit Pony Capital of Australia, that is, the historic mining town of Collinsville, which settled over 100 years ago and boasts a rich history filled with tales of struggle, strife and mateship.

Bowen is also famous for featuring in the Baz Luhrmann movie *Australia*, and is largely undiscovered.

Bowen offers accommodation ranging from backpackers and caravan parks, to four-star absolute beachfront apartments. For more information about accommodation and experiences at Bowen, visit tourismbowen.com.au.

FOR MEDIA ENQUIRIES – INCLUDING IMAGERY AND INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES – CONTACT:

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