



QUEENSLAND BEACHES & BEYOND

Tropical North Queensland

Riding the Skyrail Rainforest Cableway down 7.5km through the Barron Gorge National Park, is like a long, cool drink of water on a hot day. Ride through the tree tops in a comfortable gondola for epic bird's-eye views, or hop-off midway down and wander through the forest trails.



The upper end of Queensland is where the rainforest meets the reef. From the cool forest-lined highlands, down to the white-sand coast and beyond into the Coral Sea and the islands of Great Barrier Reef, the Tropical North is a region made for self-guided exploration.



Island hopping

Fitzroy Island is a tropical island paradise of coral beaches and rainforest, a short boat ride from Cairns, within the calm, sheltered waters of Great Barrier Reef. The island, 45 minutes from Cairns via Fast Cat, offers affordable accommodation at Fitzroy Island Resort where guests can base themselves before exploring the reef by land and sea. Snorkel off the beach to begin exploring the reef's incredible coral and sea life, or take a glass bottom boat tour. On land walk the rainforest trails up to the summit lighthouse for 360-degree views or take a tour through the turtle rehabilitation centre.

From your base in Cairns you can take a scenic rail trip through forest and mountains to the village of Kuranda and return via the **Skyrail**. Get up close and personal with crocodiles at Hartley's Crocodile Adventures, a working croc farm, enjoy a guided aboriginal rainfor-

Beach relaxation

For a stretch of sandy beach head to **Palm Cove**, 30 minutes from Cairns, hemmed on one side by the Coral Sea and on the other by a backdrop of rainforest-covered mountains. Palm Cove offers visitors a welcoming village atmosphere, where you can relax with a book, and dangle your legs over the jetty while you picnic on tropical produce. It's also the spa capital of Australia.

For a great city-side beach experience head to Trinity Beach, a relaxed beachside suburb, just 15 minutes' drive north of Cairns airport. Its central location makes it a great spot to base yourself for a Tropical North Queensland holiday. Barbecue on the beach, have a beer in the local hotel with the best water view in town, try a spot of fishing or play a round of golf.

Perfect gateway

Base yourself in the bustling seaside city of Cairns, trawling the shops and enjoying fine dining on the Esplanade.

est tour or for something a little more pulse-racing, how about white water rafting on the Tully River? And all that's before you even begin to explore the jewel of **Great Barrier Reef** and its islands. The reef stretches for 2000 glorious kilometres, and can be explored by boat, plane or helicopter directly from Cairns or Port Douglas.

First port of call

Port Douglas is a short one hour drive north of Cairns along one of the most scenic coastal roads in Australia. Home to golden beaches and some of Tropical North Queensland's most exclusive resorts, the quiet former fishing village of Port Douglas is both sophisticated and relaxed and the perfect place to escape and unwind with designer shops, and stylish restaurants, spas and galleries

Hit the road

Though there are many fantastic guided tours of local attractions, Tropical North Queensland is a great place to self-drive. Many of the region's best sights are within two to three hours of Cairns. For something more epic considering driving the Pacific Coast Highway south to Brisbane, or the Savannah Way, west all the way to Darwin.



Forest treasure

At 135 million years old, the World-Heritage listed Daintree Rainforest is the planet's oldest surviving tropical rainforest. Just two hours' drive from Cairns, Daintree is also home to the world's largest range of animals and plants including 430 species of birds, 13 of which are found nowhere else in the world. Take a walk along traditional tracks of Mossman Gorge with a guide from the Kuku Yalanji people and learn how they've used the rainforest for food, shelter, medicine and spiritual guidance for more than 9000 years. And make your way to Cape Tribulation where the rainforest meets Great Barrier Reef – the only place where two World Heritage sites meet. To see Daintree really come alive, visit in when temperatures are pleasant and the wet season has yet to arrive. Take a day trip from Cairns or stay overnight in an **eco lodge** in the rainforest or Daintree Village on the River and be woken by the astonishing dawn chorus.

For more info, see www.escapewinter.co.nz

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