

Cairns

Eguide

Cairns, located in the North of Queensland is just over 2 hours by plane from Brisbane. Cairns tourism means the Great Barrier reef, tropical rainforest, restaurants, spas and many Cairns adventures. Cairns business district stretches from the Esplanade facing the ocean inland to Sheridan Street and at the sides Wharf and Alpin streets.

The main industry in Cairns is tourism so the Cairns CBD is full of restaurants, bars, shops, banks and tour companies. The main Cairns attraction is the Great Barrier Reef that is a short boat trip away. Cairns cruises depart from the Reef Fleet Terminal in the centre of Cairns. Cruise liners arrive at Trinity Wharf that is a further along Wharf Street.

The main Cairns beaches are to the north of Cairns and start beyond Cairns airport. The beaches stretch up a strip that is some 26km long. The Cairns beaches are each off the main Captain Cook highway which runs north from Cairns up to Port Douglas. The first beach to the north of Cairns is Machans beach and followed by Holloways beach, Yorkeys Knob, Trinity beach, Clifton beach and Palm Cove. Inland from Cairns is the Atherton Tableland which rises at the highest point to 1657m at Bartle Frere.

The Atherton Tableland has many small bed and breakfast places and much retreat style accommodation. The main town that is easily reached from Cairns is Kuranda which is connected to Cairns on the Kuranda Cairns railway. Lake Tinaroo is an artificial lake with some good rainforest walks. Offshore from Cairns are a number of islands. Green Island is a popular day visit with many boats from Cairns. Fitzroy Island is a national park with a resort on the island. The Frankland Islands are five uninhabited islands that form the Frankland Group National Park.

Cairns History

The City of Cairns is sited on Trinity Beach which was named by Captain James Cook in 1770. The Aboriginal name for the area was Gimuy. In 1873 George Dalrymple led a Government expedition to survey Trinity inlet and reported favourably on its potential. Once the gold was discovered at the Hodginson Goldfield in 1876 the inlet developed as a seaport. Cairns was proclaimed a port settlement on 7 October 1876 by the Governor of Queensland William Wellington Cairns. Cairns was made a town on the 28th May 1885 and in 1923 a city. There is a very useful Cairns Heritage City Walk map available from the Visitor Information Centre at 51 The Esplanade. The walk takes you around some of the historical buildings within the Shield Street, Lake Street area.

Cairns Attractions

Flecker Botanic Gardens
The Flecker Botanic Gardens located 5km from the heart of the city are a tropical oasis with 38 hectares of native Australian gardens. Many plants found here cannot be seen elsewhere. Next to the botanical gardens is Centenary Lakes, offering an extensive natural experience, including boardwalks & rainforest walks. *Collins Avenue (07 4044 3398)*

Cominos House

A traditional Queenslanders built in 1877 and one of the oldest in the city. *27 Greenslopes Street, (07 4032 1368).*

Cairns Museum

Cairns museum is located in the School of Arts building, Cnr Lake & Shields St, City Place. Displays and collections which include local history, Aboriginal culture, mining natural history and other collections are available for viewing. *(07 4051 5582)*



Shipwreck Museum

The museum has good displays on the early exploration of the Great Barrier Reef. *Pier Marketplace. (07 4031 0102).*

The Esplanade

The most interesting street in Cairns is the Esplanade, with the sea on one side and a row of restaurants, hotels and backpackers lodges on the other. This area comes to life in the evenings, especially with the Night Market now held here.

The Esplanade ended with a wall and mud flats below, not quite the romantic image which the city wished to propagate.

The solution, it seemed, was evident and simple - construct a beach. What was once a grassy park is now a world class facility, featuring an outdoor amphitheatre, a large sandy swimming lagoon, grassy picnic areas, walking tracks, free public barbeques, children's playground, shops, restaurants, a Great Barrier Reef cruise departure terminal & an environmental interpretation centre, all right in the heart of the city.

Pier Marketplace

Next to the New Esplanade Project is the Pier Marketplace, a combination of marina and shopping areas. It boasts a diverse range of shopping, restaurants, a food court, tour booking lounge and much more.

It also includes Undersea World, a living reef aquarium and is also the home of the weekend Mud Markets.



Royal Flying Doctor Service Visitor Centre

The RFDS centre has a former RFDS aircraft on display along with a range of medical instruments. The film "A day in the life of the RFDS" is also screened. *1 Junction Street, Cairns. (07 4053 1952)*

Cairns Rainforest Dome

The Cairns Rainforest Dome is a wildlife exhibit encased by a 20 metre high glass dome on the rooftop of the Reef Hotel Casino. Approximately 60 species of rainforest animals are able to wander freely throughout the enclosure that replicates their natural environment. 35 - 41 Wharf Street, Cairns. (07 4031 7250).

Cairns Tropical Zoo

Cairns Tropical Zoo is a "hands on" wildlife experience. The philosophy at Cairns Tropical Zoo is that personal interaction with animals encourages a greater understanding of native wildlife and promotes the need to preserve their natural habitats. Cairns Tropical Zoo is about 20 minutes drive north of Cairns close to Palm Cove. Cairns Tropical Zoo is set in 6 hectares of gardens. Lots of opportunities to interact with the animals. The Cairns Zoo also has a night zoo which includes an Aussie BBQ. (07 4055 3669).

Hartley's Crocodile Adventures

Hartley's Crocodile Adventures has a daily crocodile feeding session and crocodile cruises. Hartley's also has other animals you can learn about, such as snakes, koalas and the endangered cassowary. Located 40 minutes north of Cairns on the Captain Cook Highway. (07 4055 3576).

Reef Teach

Reef Teach is a live 2 hour presentation about the wonders of the Great Barrier Reef. 14 Spence Street (07 4031 7794).

Undersea World

Undersea World is a small aquarium offering the opportunity to swim with the sharks. Pier Marketplace, (07 4041 1777)

Cairns Beaches

There are various beaches, all north of the city and nearly all accessible by local bus. They vary in character, with Palm Cove the most developed, but all are relatively quiet and unpopulated.

Machans Beach

The first beach beyond Cairns.

Holloways Beach

Close to Cairns airport and good for canoeing, fishing, golfing and sailing and has a few shops

Yorkey's Knob

About 10 north of Cairns Airport with a marina and boat club. Accommodation is along the beach and there are restaurants, a shopping centre and water sports.

Kewarra Beach

20 minutes drive from the Cairns International airport with some accommodation.

Palm Cove

Palm Cove is a very well developed beach resort about 30 minutes north of Cairns airport. Palm Cove is designed to make you relax.

For many in Australia, Palm Cove is your idyllic place to be married or spend your honeymoon.

Palm Cove stretches along a beach and restaurants and bars face out over the sea.

Some Palm Cove accommodation is on Williams Esplanade facing the ocean and Great Barrier Reef and the rest a few streets back.



Trinity Beach

Trinity Beach is 15 minutes drive north from the Cairns International airport. Plenty of accommodation, beachfront restaurants, shopping and activities.

Clifton Beach

20km north of airport with a shopping centre and some accommodation.

Around Cairns

Atherton Tableland

A scenic one hour drive in the Highlands west from Cairns is the Atherton Tableland. Tropical North Queensland's own mountain getaway. Situated between the Bellenden Ker Range and the Great Dividing Range, it is regarded as one of the region's best kept secrets.

For people visiting the Tablelands there are great opportunities for bush walking, bird watching, a wildlife cruise, marsupial spotting, hot air ballooning and water sports as diverse as fishing and white water rafting.

There are spectacular lookouts and waterfalls, including Australia's widest waterfall, Millstream Falls. Lake Barrine and Lake Eacham are deep blue waters of extinct volcano crater lakes. Lake Barrine has a teahouse overlooking the lake and lake cruises.

Yungaburra is a tranquil village situated 2500 feet above sea level and located in a pocket of open rainforest. Around the village are waterfalls, craters and lakes. Located about one hour from Cairns on the Atherton Tablelands. A major attraction is the curtain fig tree which is only 5 minutes from Yungaburra.

Barron Gorge

Barron Gorge National Park extends from the mid-altitude Atherton Tableland uplands near Kuranda down the steeply sloping range to the low-altitude coastal area northwest of Cairns. Barron Gorge National Park extends from the mid-altitude Atherton Tableland uplands near Kuranda down the steeply sloping range to the low-altitude coastal area northwest of Cairns.

The Gorge is one of the most visited sites in the World Heritage Area, with visitors choosing between several modes of

transport through the park, including the historic Kuranda train and the Skyrail cableway. They provide spectacular views of the Gorge and the Barron including the historic Kuranda train and the Skyrail cableway. They provide spectacular views of the Gorge and the Barron River far below. At the top of the Gorge near Kuranda are the Barron Falls.

Daintree

The Daintree and Cape Tribulation is about 90 minutes north of Cairns. It is an area of spectacular scenery with tropical rainforest and ocean. The Daintree Cape Tribulation coast is where the Great Barrier Reef and the Daintree rainforest meet, the only place on earth where two World Heritage areas exist side by side.



Green Island

A coral cay on the Great Barrier Reef. The island is almost 30 kilometres from Cairns, but nowadays modern catamarans cover this distance in 45 minutes. The main attraction on Green Island is Marineland Melanesia which is an art gallery, aquarium and crocodile farm. At the end of the Jetty is the Marine Observatory, a good place to see corals.

Fitzroy Island

Fitzroy Island is larger than Green Island and 45 minutes from Cairns. Fitzroy has a resort with less obvious coral and much more vegetation than Green Island.

Great Barrier Reef

The Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest World Heritage Area extending over 2000 kilometres and covering an area of over 350,000 sq km. The Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest World Heritage Area extending over 2000 kilometres and covering an area of over 350,000 sq km.

It is probably the best known marine protected area in the world including over 2800 individual reefs and more than 1000 islands. The Great Barrier Reef's great diversity reflects the maturity of the ecosystem, which has evolved over hundreds of thousands of years. It is the world's most extensive coral reef system and is one of the world's richest areas in terms of faunal diversity.

Kuranda

The settlement of Kuranda is located approximately 30 kilometres north west of Cairns. Kuranda's difference in altitude, together with its much smaller size, gives it a completely different feeling from Cairns, its city neighbour.

In the market area you can also find Birdworld with many exotic species of Australian and overseas birds, including the cassowary. You can also find there a Butterfly Sanctuary, the largest in Australia, with some 2,000 butterflies. There are also various rainforest walks of greater and lesser lengths and there is a bat rehabilitation home on the edge of town.

Lake Barrine

One hour from Cairns is the volcanic crater filled with crystal clear water. There is a pleasant teahouse overlooking the lake and lake cruises.

Kuranda Scenic Railway

The trip by train to Kuranda is described by Queensland Railways as a 34 kilometre long picture postcard. It is a route which must rank amongst the world's best short journeys and is a ride which you will always remember. Construction of this route was commenced in 1882, but Kuranda Station was not opened until 1891. The builders had to surmount the tremendous challenge of rising from sea level to an elevation of 328 metres through rugged, inhospitable and thickly forested terrain. It was a great engineering achievement, necessitating the construction of fifteen tunnels and 37 bridges and viaducts.



The train starts out from Cairns on the flat through the residential parts of the city, stopping at Freshwater, if required, and Redlynch. This part of the journey, although pretty, gives little hint of what is to follow. Now we start to climb, and this is no ordinary climb, for there was nowhere to put a railway here.

It follows the creek bed, twisting and turning with its host, but even here ledges have had to be carved to support the track. Where such engineering works proved impossible, tunnels were constructed, and soon we start to negotiate them.



The original plan incorporated nineteen tunnels, but in the end it was decided to convert four of them into deep cuttings, through which we shall pass. Fifteen tunnels remain. They vary in length between 60 metres and 430 metres and all have a gradient of approximately one in sixty. They were all opened to traffic on 15th June 1891. Particularly in the Wet Season, between December and April, this area receives heavy rainfall, which not only hampered construction of the line, but caused landslides, destroying work already completed and causing several fatal accidents.

The difficulties of working in such conditions can be imagined as we crawl up the forested slopes and thread our way through the tunnels. Several times we obtain panoramic views back over the foothills to the coastal plain and the Coral Sea glistening beyond. Stoney Creek station comes at approximately the mid-point of the climb.

If one had to pick a single highlight of this journey, it would be the lofty curving viaduct which carries the railway in front of Stoney Creek Falls. It is the scene most often displayed on leaflets advertising this service and, during the construction of the railway, it was the spot

chosen for a banquet held in celebration of the visit of the Governor in April 1890. It is said that the location chosen also eliminated the need for speeches, since nothing could be heard above the noise of the waterfall. On the section of line between Stoney Creek and Barron Falls we pass through the last two tunnels, the second of which is by far the longest on the line, at 430 metres.

If precedent is followed, the train will be stopped at Barron Falls Station, a signal passed and water allowed to escape from the dam on the Barron River in order to permit Barron Falls to flow for the benefit of railway passengers, a charming custom.

Kuranda Station, at the end of our journey, is, in itself, something of a tourist attraction. Constructed in 1915, it has somehow managed to transform itself into a railway botanical garden.

Much as stationmasters were once famed for their horticultural instincts, you will never have seen anything on a railway platform quite like this verdant and luxuriant growth. The train used for this journey consists of refurbished 1920s carriages hauled by a modern diesel locomotive.



Cairns Skyrail

Skyrail is a 7.5km gondola ride over the rainforest to Kuranda. Two midway stations provide good views of the rainforest and the Barron falls. The ropeway carries you above the treetops of the dense rainforest here, causing no disturbance to it. The journey itself takes about 45 minutes, but there are two places on the way at which to stop.

The first is Barron Falls Station, where walkways lead to three lookouts over the Barron River, the Barron Gorge and Barron Falls. Located there is also the Rainforest Interpretive Centre. Since you have already paid plenty for this journey, there is no extra charge for this museum.

The route then continues to Red Peak Station, where a twenty-minute guided tour of the rainforest environment is available. The Skyrail is located at the corner of Kamerunga Road and the Captain Cook Highway. (07 4038 1555)



Tjapukai

Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park is a most awarded tourist attraction in Australia.

It is located on 25 acres of land owned by the Tjapukai people at Caravonica, near Smithfield, 15 minutes north of Cairns along Captain Cook highway next to the Skyrail terminal.

Seven separate areas allow visitors to experience every facet of the rainforest people's culture.

This is a multi theatre experience, open daily. There are numerous packages available including transport or just entry to all park attractions. (07 4042 9999).

The print version of Cairns eGuide is produced by Eguide. And it is free! Please just do not copy or distribute, just tell others to collect their free copy from CairnsEguide.com. If you have a website then please do link to us, that we do encourage! We will apply the copyright laws strictly and enforce any illegal copying. There is a lot more on CairnsEguide.com, in fact all that you need to have for a great visit to Cairns. And to help us pay for it all please support our advertisers and book using our partners on CairnsEguide.com.

© Eguide Pty Ltd 2008
PO Box 1131
Noosaville DC
Queensland 4566
Australia