

CAIRNS & SURROUNDS



With its marina, international airport facilities and proximity to the rainforest and the reef, Cairns is the major access point for adventures on the Great Barrier Reef, the World Heritage Wet Tropics Rainforests and Atherton Tablelands.

DAY ONE: CAIRNS

MORNING

Get your heart pumping early by zooming over a crocodile on a zip line at the [Cairns Zoom](#) then walk on the outside of the glass rainforest dome at Cairns' newest adrenalin attraction. Cool off in the expansive lagoon on Cairns Esplanade before checking out the galleries at KlickArts and the Canopy Artspace, which also offer printmaking



studios and workshops for Indigenous artists. If you are here on Friday, Saturday or Sunday check out Rusty's Markets for fresh and abundant tropical fruit and vegetables, gourmet bush tucker, local seafood and fresh plantation coffee and tea, Thai and Indian food stalls, hand-made soaps and chocolates, crafts and bric-a-brac.

AFTERNOON

Take a picnic to Crystal Cascades, a popular local swimming spot in the rainforest where the cool mountain water tumbles over boulders into picturesque pools. Then test your nerve at the AJ Hackett bungy tower, the first of his bungy jumps outside of New Zealand, or explore the tropical gardens, rainforest and mangrove parkland at Cairns Botanic Gardens. Check out its [Tank Arts Centre](#), a multi-use, contemporary arts facility creatively housed in three converted World War II naval oil storage tanks.

Drive 30 minutes to nearby [Palm Cove](#) and have a swim in the netted enclosure or enjoy a massage treatment with Thai-trained massage therapists at [Angsana Resort and](#)

[Spa](#). Relax over a cool tropical drink or an early dinner at one of the many alfresco cafes dotted along the palm tree and ancient paperbark tree-lined main street, which overlooks the Coral Sea. [Nu Nu](#) is a Mod Oz spot that ranges far and wide with its superlative offerings, from Hanoi-style pork ribs to red fish curry.

ALL DAY

Alternatively, you can do an all-day package tour with the [Sky Rail](#) Rainforest Cableway and the [Kuranda Scenic Railway](#) to see the lush hinterland of the Atherton Tableland and get fabulous views across the Coral Sea. Then learn about the traditional culture of the indigenous people of the rainforest at the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park.

EVENING

Go shopping for local crafts at the [Cairns Night Markets](#). Enjoy a night visit to the [Cairns Tropical Zoo](#) to see its huge collection of reptiles, koalas, wombats and other nocturnal animals.



DAY TWO: CAIRNS TO PORT DOUGLAS

MORNING

Drive the Captain Cook Highway, a stunning coastal road between Palm Cove and Port Douglas. It winds for 67 kilometre around the tropical coastline offering fabulous views of rainforested hillsides reaching all the way to white sandy beaches and aquamarine waters. If you arrive in Port Douglas on a Sunday morning, check out the colourful markets in Market Park for local produce and crafts. Go for a wander and a swim at Four Mile Beach. Browse the boutiques of Macrossan Street and enjoy a tropical lunch at one of the many cafes.

AFTERNOON

Visit the **Mossman Gorge Centre**, a new \$20 million eco-tourism development at the Mossman Gorge World Heritage Site. You can also enjoy one of two Dreamtime Gorge Walks led by experienced

interpretive Indigenous guides who demonstrate traditional plant use, identify bush food sources and tell stories about rainforest. The large granite boulders in the river are also fun to check out. If you'd like to get in the river, you can even do a drift snorkeling adventure in the upper reaches of the Mossman River, which is too cold for crocodiles. Also in Mossman, create an authentic Aboriginal boomerang while listening to Mossman Aboriginal artist and co-owner of Janbal Gallery, Brian "Binna" Swindley, tell stories about local Indigenous culture. If you want more, try hunting mud crab and spearing coral trout the traditional way on a Kuku Yalanji Cultural Habitat Tour at nearby Cooya Beach.

EVENING

Take advantage of the remarkable local seafood and tropical fruits and produce at one of Port Douglas' fine restaurants. **Sassi Cucina** is a classy Italian spot while **Harrison's**



offers French-inspired dining with fresh tropical flavours in a pretty Queenslander style house.

Alternatively, enjoy dinner beneath the rainforest canopy at Flames of the Forest (10 minutes' drive from Port Douglas), an evening of entertainment and fine dining where on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, two local indigenous brothers share their culture with you in performance and storytelling.

DAY THREE: PORT DOUGLAS TO DAINTREE



MORNING

Have breakfast with the birds, wander around the tropical bird enclosure, visit the koalas, spotted tail quolls and cassowaries at the **Wildlife Habitat** in Port Douglas then head north to explore the Daintree World Heritage Wilderness Area.

Older than the Amazon, the Daintree rainforest is a living museum of flora and fauna dating back at least 135 million years and the largest continuous area of tropical rainforest in Australia. Its tropical rainforest ecosystem is one of the most complex on earth. Thirty plant species grow nowhere else on the planet. It is also home to a number of rare and endangered

species, including the Southern Cassowary and Bennett's tree-kangaroo. Even more appealing to visitors is its exceptional coastal scenery where tropical rainforest extends to white sandy beaches with fringing coral reefs. Rugged mountain peaks have gorges carved by swiftly flowing rivers and spectacular waterfalls.

See the rainforest from horseback at Wonga Beach. Explore a trail in the rainforest and canter along the water's edge. Cruise the Daintree River to spot crocodiles, snakes and an array of birds and insects along its banks. Join the birds at the top of the rainforest with a walk along the Aerial Walkway to the Canopy Tower at the **Daintree Discovery Centre**.

AFTERNOON

Fly through the rainforest on zip lines at **Jungle Surfing Canopy Tours** then take to the boardwalk trails to explore the **Cape Tribulation** section of the Daintree. Visit the Cape Trib Exotic Fruit Farm to discover black sapote fruit that tastes like chocolate pudding, try rollinia and be amazed by

its likeness to lemon meringue pie or eat your fill of luscious rambutans. Try an exotic ice-cream made with tropical fruits such as mango, black sapote, soursop, and wattle seed. Enjoy a mangrove discovery tour with **Cape Tribulation Wilderness Cruises** in search of the estuarine crocodile along Cooper Creek. Devoid of tourist infrastructure, freehold subdivision and agriculture, Cooper Creek is unspoiled by development and remains a perfect picture of prehistoric times.

EVENING

Head back to Cairns, which is roughly a 2½ hour drive away or if you'd like to extend for another night, immerse yourself in Aboriginal culture at **Daintree Eco Lodge and Spa** where you can experience Aboriginal-inspired spa treatments, art and culture workshops or join an Aboriginal guide to learn about the healing powers of their waterfall. Watch the rainforest come to life at night spotlighting possums, bats and other nocturnal creatures on a Daintree night walk.