

The exciting tourist town of Cairns can be found in Queensland's tropical far north! Cairns is a tourist's paradise with endless things to do and see from stunning rainforest, the amazing Great Barrier Reef, the relaxed Atherton Tablelands to extreme adventure activities of all sorts! Cairns has a local population of nearly 100,000 people, with many more forming a transient population that come and go with the defined wet and dry seasons.

Cairns has an international airport that attracts thousands of visitors to this tropical paradise all year round. Consequently the network of tourism operators here is well defined, so you'll find accommodations and tours to suit all travelers, from 5 star luxury resorts to basic cheap and cheerful backpacker hostels, limousine touring to budget safaris.

Apart from the endless options for accommodation, markets, shopping and coastal tropical culture, Cairns is mostly famous for its proximity to the Great Barrier Reef. Cairns is the closest point along the 2300 kilometre reef system that follows Queensland's coast. Cairns is also a great base from which to explore Cape Tribulation, the Atherton Tableland, Port Douglas and Cooktown.

Sights & Attractions

Cairns is famous for the 'reef and rainforest' experience. Cape Tribulation is only an hour's drive north of Cairns and is home to the spectacular, world heritage listed Daintree National Park. A rainforest that boasts the largest range of flora and fauna found any place on earth and has some species found nowhere else. The Daintree is a great place for bushwalking with many dedicated boardwalks for viewing the forest (night or day) and its native animals. Tours to Cape Tribulation for the day or longer can be organized from Cairns.

The Great Barrier Reef is the main attraction for visitors to Cairns. There are countless day trips on offer, learn to dive courses, liveaboard dive trips and extended trips to the outer Coral Sea and Cod Hole. The reef is a one hour boat trip from Cairns, which explains the popularity of live aboard dive trips, where divers can stay out on custom built dive boats to 3-5 days. The Great Barrier Reef is a world heritage listed Marine Park and is the largest reef system in the world, so large it can be seen from the moon! Its home to 400 types of coral, 4000 breeds of mollusk and 1500 types of fish! Any diver or snorkeler's paradise!

The Atherton Tableland is often overlooked on people's travels to Cairns, though it should definitely be on all itineraries. The tablelands are a stunning region that boasts beautiful lakes, waterfalls, limestone caves, rainforest, mountains and quaint villages that host markets, and are famous for the local music, arts and craft. The Atherton Tableland can be visited easily from Cairns in a day or over a few days with a car. Some local tour companies also offer budget backpacker trips that involve mountain biking, canoeing on lakes and swimming in rainforest waterfalls. Hot air ballooning is a popular activity from Cairns and is mostly done over the picturesque scenery of the Atherton tableland.

Cairns is the adventure capital of Australia, offering extreme and thrilling experiences every day of the year! Try your hand at skydiving, parasailing, scuba diving, snorkeling, bungee jumping, sea kayaking, white water rafting, hot air ballooning, hang gliding, jet boating, mountain biking, quad biking, deep sea fishing, horse riding or take a helicopter flight over the reef. The adventure operators in Cairns are professional and safe, working under tight industry controls, providing quality experiences. Due to the number of operators you may find Cairns offers the most competitive rates for your chosen adventure activities in Australia.

While Cairns itself, has a manmade beach on the esplanade at which to cool off, for some spectacular palm tree fringed beaches, head north. About 15 minutes drive north of Cairns there is Palm Cove, Yorkey's Knob and Holloways, Trinity and Kewarra Beaches. There are also many places to stay at these locations, particularly if you want the true relaxing seaside holiday. Port Douglas a small seaside town can be found about 70 kilometres north of Cairns. It has a natural harbor which includes excellent shopping and restaurants on one side of the peninsula and the stunning Four Mile Beach on the other. Port Douglas is renowned for its relaxed vibe and resort style accommodation and facilities, as well as its close proximity to the reef!

The opportunity to experience some Aboriginal culture is also available out of Cairns. There are interactive cultural centres within a short drive of Cairns. Kuranda is a pretty rainforest town not far from Cairns in the highlands. Kuranda has fantastic markets to visit and many rainforest walks to take part in.

Climate

Cairns has a typical tropical climate, with the wet season from December to March being hot and very humid, with downpours most days. The dry season from May to October is by far the best time to visit, when the temperatures are warm in the mid 20's (°C) and the days are sunny and clear, with low humidity. The 'buildup' refers to the time after the dry and before the wet starts (October-November) when the temperature and humidity build to high, often uncomfortable levels before the rain. If you can plan it, the best time to visit, is obviously the dry season, though Cairns is popular with tourists all year round. During the wet season, dangerous stinging jellyfish can be found in the ocean off the Queensland coast as far down as Rockhampton, so if you're swimming it's recommended to wear a stinger suit or stick to swimming pools.

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