

A large, reddish-orange rock formation, likely Uluru, dominates the background. In the foreground, there are green trees and a person walking on a dirt path.

Australia

A dark blue rounded rectangle containing text and icons. At the top left, there is a horizontal bar with colored segments: green, yellow, red, and blue.

Cairns & the Daintree Rainforest

(PDF Chapter)

Edition 18th Edition, Nov 2015

Pages 40

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COVERAGE INCLUDES:

- Cairns
- Great Barrier Reef
- Cape Tribulation
- Cooktown
- Cape York
- Trinity Beach
- Palm Cove
- Green Island
- Fitzroy Island
- Kuranda
- Atherton
- Yungaburra
- Lake Tinaroo
- Crater Lakes National Park
- Port Douglas
- The Daintree
- Cape Tribulation
- Cooktown



Cairns & the Daintree Rainforest

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Best Places to Stay

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Why Go?

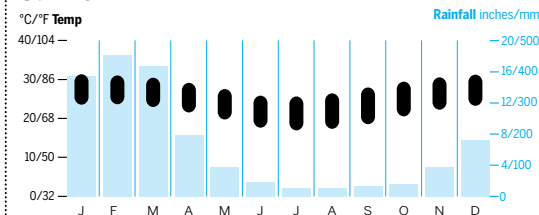
Cairns means R & R – the Reef and Rainforest. Together, they make this far-flung city an East Coast essential. Endless bus- and boatloads of eager beavers shuttle between Cairns and these World Heritage wonders, although upmarket Port Douglas is closer to the outer Reef and the Daintree Rainforest. Sultry, carefree Cairns swings between backpacker samsara and family fun-land. Head to Palm Cove or Port Douglas for upscale retreats. Inland, lush Atherton Tableland's cooler climes, lakes and waterfalls offer welcome relief from Cairns' humidity and crowds.

Highways hug scenic sections of the shoreline to Port Douglas, before meeting the mighty Daintree River's vehicular ferry. From here, the protected rainforest stretches up to Cape Tribulation, tumbling onto seductive white-sand beaches where hidden perils – marine stingers (October to May) and saltwater crocodiles (year-round) – should be taken seriously.

True-blue adventure-seekers head onwards to Cooktown on the 4WD-only Bloomfield Track.

When to Go

Cairns



May Port Douglas pizzazz at Carnivale. Stinger season ends.

Jun Cooktown Discovery Festival's costumed reenactment of Cook's landing.

Nov Divers delight in the reef's annual coral spawning.

Cairns & the Daintree Rainforest Highlights

- 1 Diving, snorkelling and swimming among the fish, turtles and corals of the **Great Barrier Reef** (p407).
- 2 Taking the **Kuku-Yalanji Dreamtime Walk** (p434) alongside the clear waters of the **Mossman Gorge** (p434) section of the Daintree National Park.
- 3 Riding the **Skyrail** (p418) above the rainforest to the markets of Kuranda, returning by the **Kuranda Scenic Railway** (p418).
- 4 Indulging in life's finer pleasures in the romantic restaurants and resorts of pristine **Palm Cove** (p421).
- 5 Savouring a coldie at the iconic **Lion's Den Hotel** (p441) upon

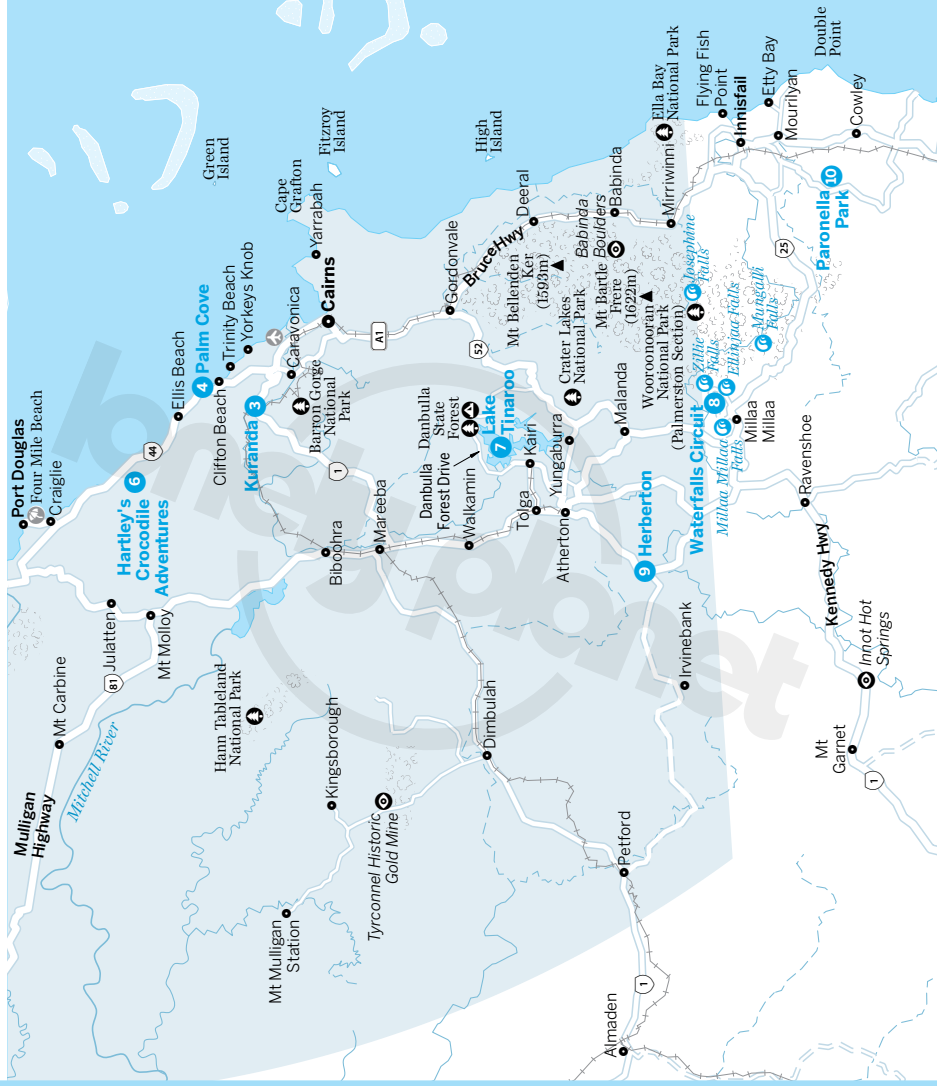


1 Great Barrier Reef

Mossman Gorge 2 Mossman Newell

CORAL SEA

- completion of the bone-shaking 4WD Bloomfield Track.
- 6** Getting educated about our ancient ancestors at **Hartley's Crocodile Adventures** (p423).
- 7** Fishing for barra on **Lake Tinaroo** (p428) then stopping for a coldie at Yungaburra's must-see pub.
- 8** Cooling down amid the lush scenery of the **Atherton Tablelands** (p426), stopping for a swim on the Millaa Millaa **Waterfalls Circuit** (p428).
- 9** Travelling back in time to **Historic Village Herberton** (p427), spending the night in gorgeous Yungaburra.
- 10** Contemplating determination, romance and tragedy at **Paronella Park** (p426).



CAIRNS

POP 165,860

Gateway to the Great Barrier Reef and Daintree Rainforest UNESCO World Heritage sites, and starting point for serious 4WD treks into Cape York Peninsula's vast wilderness, Cairns (pronounced 'Cans') depends on tourism for survival. For many, it marks the end of a long journey up the east coast; for others, the beginning of an Aussie adventure. Whichever way you're swinging, you're bound to meet like-minded nomads.

Old salts claim Cairns – whose bars, clubs and eateries hunger for your tourist dollars – has sold its soul, but with a past life as a rolicking goldfields' port, perhaps it's long been this way. It's easy to spend your riches amid the humid, holiday vibe. Cairns' tidy CBD is more board shorts than briefcases, although there's no beach in town. The lush, meticulously maintained Boardwalk, Esplanade and Lagoon are well loved, while the Great Barrier Reef, the northern beaches and a bot-tomless swag of activities are never far away.

Locals who aren't jaded by a kind of tropical tourism-malaise should welcome you with the kind of hospitality which befits an international gateway of such repute. If this isn't your experience, why not remind them what a magical place they call home?

Sights

★ Cairns Esplanade, Boardwalk & Lagoon

(Map p406; www.cairnesplanade.com.au; ☀ lagoon 6am-9pm Thu-Tue, noon-9pm Wed) **FREE** Sun-

WATERFRONT

and fun-lovers flock to Cairns' Esplanade's spectacular **swimming lagoon** on the city's reclaimed foreshore. The artificial, sandy-edged, 4800-sq-m chlorinated saltwater pool is lifeguard patrolled and illuminated nightly. The adjacent 3km foreshore **boardwalk** has picnic areas, free barbecues and fitness equipment. Families should follow it north to the play-mazing **Muddy's playground**.

Check the website to see what free, fun events are planned.

★ Reef Teach

INTERPRETIVE CENTRE

(Map p406; ☎ 07-4031 7794; www.reefteach.com.au; 2nd fl, Main Street Arcade, 85 Lake St; adult/child \$18/9; ☀ lectures 6.30-8.30pm Tue-Sat) 🍃

Take your knowledge to new depths at this fun, informative centre, where marine experts explain how to identify specific species of fish and coral, and how to approach the reef respectfully.

Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park

CULTURAL CENTRE

(☎ 07-4042 9999; www.tjapukai.com.au; Cairns Western Arterial Rd, Caravonica; adult/child \$40/25; ☀ 9am-5pm) Managed by the area's original custodians, this award-winning cultural extravaganza 15km north of downtown was extensively renovated in 2015. It tells the story of creation using giant holograms and actors. There's a dance theatre, a gallery, boomerang- and spear-throwing demonstrations and turtle-spotting canoe rides. The **Tjapukai by Night** dinner-and-show package (adult/child \$109/59, from 7pm to 9.30pm) culminates in a fireside corroboree.

BEWARE: MARINE STINGERS & CROCODILES

From late October to May, the presence of box jellyfish makes swimming in Far North Queensland's alluring waters a risky proposition. Tiny irukandji jellyfish, usually only 1–2cm in diameter, are almost invisible. Their potentially deadly toxin is excruciatingly painful. If you choose to risk it, *only* swim within patrolled stinger nets. Even then, know that minute irukandji can penetrate the nets, which have been known to trap saltwater (estuarine) crocodiles!

Year-round territorial, predatory salties (as the locals call them) – with lifespans averaging 70-plus years and adult lengths between 4m and 7m (gasp!) – inhabit FNQ's mangroves, estuaries and rivers, and traverse open waterways and beaches: warning signs are posted where crocs are known to reside. While it's true that fatal attacks on humans are relatively uncommon, do heed the warning signs: unwary human interlopers are no match for these swift, intelligent reptiles. Shyer, less-aggressive freshwater crocodiles are smaller (up to 3m in length) and live inland in freshwater systems.

Assume all tropical waterways pose a risk. Never swim in saltwater creeks, in tidal rivers, or on beaches where water clarity is poor. Don't camp or wander by a river's edge, and don't leave food scraps lying around a camp site. Never provoke a crocodile in *any* way. Search 'be croc wise' at www.ehp.qld.gov.au for more.

When in doubt, stick with that lovely resort pool...

BABINDA BOULDERS & WOOROONOORAN NATIONAL PARK

On the Bruce Hwy, 60km south of Cairns, Babinda is a small working-class town that leads 7km inland to the **Babinda Boulders**, where a photogenic creek rushes between 4m-high granite rocks. It's croc-free, but here lurks an equal danger: highly treacherous waters. Dreaming stories say that a young woman threw herself into the then-still waters after being separated from her love; her anguish caused the creek to become the surging, swirling torrent it is today. Almost 20 visitors have lost their lives at the boulders. Swimming is permitted in calm, well-marked parts of the creek, but pay careful heed to all warning signs. Walking tracks give you safe access for obligatory gasps and photographs.

The free **Babinda Boulders Camping Ground** (two-night maximum) has toilets, cold showers and free barbecues. Nearby, you can kayak the clear waters of Babinda Creek with **Babinda Kayak Hire** (☎07-4067 2678; www.babindakayakhire.com.au; 330 Stager Rd; half/full day incl pickups \$55/83).

Part of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, the rainforest of the Josephine Falls section of Wooroonooran National Park creeps to the peak of Queensland's highest mountain, Mt Bartle Frere (1622m), providing an exclusive environment for numerous plant and animal species. The car park for Josephine Falls – a spectacular series of waterfalls and pools – is signposted 6km off the Bruce Hwy, 10km south of Babinda. It's then a steep, paved, 600m walk through the forest to the falls, at the foot of the Bellenden Ker Range.

The Mt Bartle Frere Summit Track (15km, two days return) leads from the Josephine Falls car park to the summit. The ascent is for fit, well-equipped hikers only; rain and cloud can close in suddenly. Camping is permitted along the trail; book ahead with the **NPSRSR** (☎13 74 68; www.npsrsr.qld.gov.au), and drop into the **Babinda Information Centre** (☎07-4067 1008; www.babindaifocentre.com.au; cnr Munro St & Bruce Hwy; ☉9am-4pm) for trail maps.

Flecker Botanic Gardens

GARDENS

(☎07-4032 6650; www.cairns.qld.gov.au; 64 Collins Ave; ☉grounds 7.30am-5.30pm daily, visitor centre 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2.30pm Sat & Sun)

FREE The made-of-mirrors **visitor centre** can advise on free guided walks around these beautiful tropical gardens. Follow the **Rainforest Boardwalk** to Saltwater Creek and Centenary Lakes, a birdwatcher's delight. Uphill from the gardens, **Mt Whitfield Conservation Park** has walking tracks through rainforest climbing to viewpoints over the city.

Enquire for directions to the **Mangrove Boardwalk** and its two revelatory routes into the wetlands.

Crystal Cascades

WATERFALLS

(via Redlynch) About 14km from Cairns, the Crystal Cascades are a series of beautiful waterfalls and idyllic, croc-free swimming holes that locals would rather keep to themselves. The area is accessed by a 1.2km (30-minute) pathway. Crystal Cascades is linked to Lake Morris (the city's reservoir) by a *steep* rainforest **walking trail** (allow three hours return); it starts near the picnic area.

There is no public transport to the pools. Drive to the suburb of Redlynch, then follow the signs to Crystal Cascades.

Cairns Regional Gallery

GALLERY

(Map p406; ☎07-4046 4800; www.cairnsregionalgallery.com.au; cnr Abbott & Shields Sts; adult/child \$5/free; ☉9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) The permanent collection of this acclaimed gallery, housed in the heritage-listed former State Government Insurance Office (1936), has an emphasis on local and Indigenous work. There's also usually a visiting exhibition.

Tanks Arts Centre

GALLERY

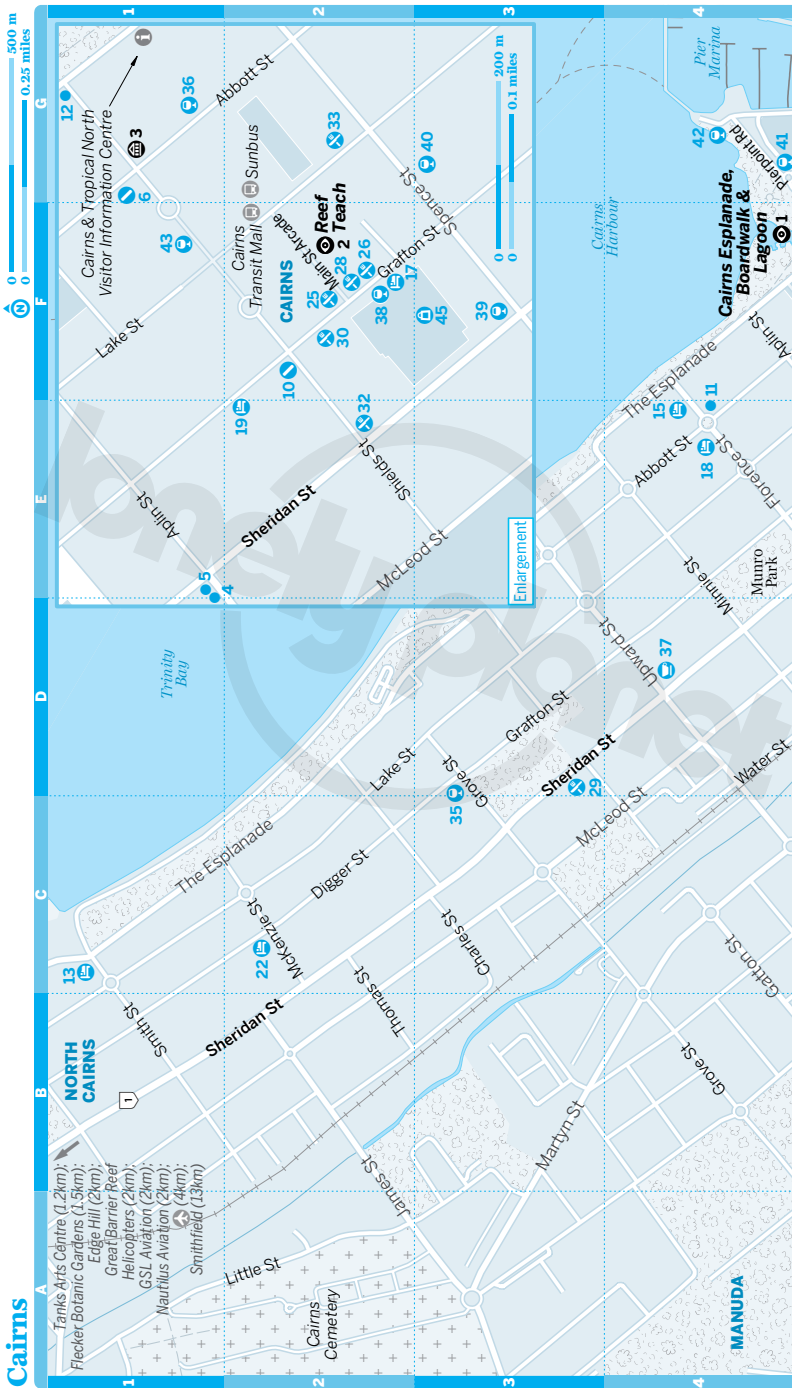
(☎07-4032 6600; www.tanksartscentre.com; 46 Collins Ave; admission varies; ☉9.30am-4pm Mon-Fri) Three gigantic, ex-WWII fuel-storage tanks have been transformed into local galleries and an inspired performing-arts venue. Lively market days are held here on the last Sunday of the month (April to November).

Australian Armour & Artillery Museum

MUSEUM

(☎07-4038 1665; ausarmour.com; 1145 Kamerunga Rd, Smithfield; adult/child \$25/15; ☉9.30am-4.30pm) Military and history buffs will enjoy this, the largest display of armoured vehicles and artillery in the southern hemisphere, opened in September 2014.

CAIRNS & THE DAINTREE RAINFOREST CAIRNS



Activities

Innumerable tour operators run adventure-based activities from Cairns, most offering transfers to/from your accommodation.

AJ Hackett Bungee & Minjin

ADVENTURE SPORTS

(☎ 1800 622 888; www.ajhackett.com; McGregor Rd, Smithfield; bungee \$169, minjin \$129, combos \$249; ☀ 10am-5pm) Bungee jump from the 50m tower or drop 45m and swing through the trees at 120km/h in the unique Minjin harness swing. Pricing includes return transfers from Cairns.

Fishing Cairns

FISHING

(☎ 0448 563 586; www.fishingcairns.com.au; 60 Collinson St, Westcourt; half-day trips from \$95) This experienced operator has a burley-bucket-load of half- to multiday fly, sports and game fishing tours and charters, on calm or open-water. Prices vary accordingly.

Cairns Wake Park

WATER SPORTS

(☎ 07-4038 1304; www.cairnswakepark.com; Captain Cook Hwy, Smithfield; adult/child per hr \$39/34, per day \$74/69; ☀ 10am-6pm) Learn to waterski, wakeboard or kneeboard without the boat at this water-sports park near the Skyrail. Pricing includes basic equipment and coaching.

Tours

An astounding 800+ tours drive, sail and fly out of Cairns daily, making the selection process almost overwhelming. We recommend operators with the benefit of years of experience, and who cover the bases of what visitors are generally looking for, and then some.

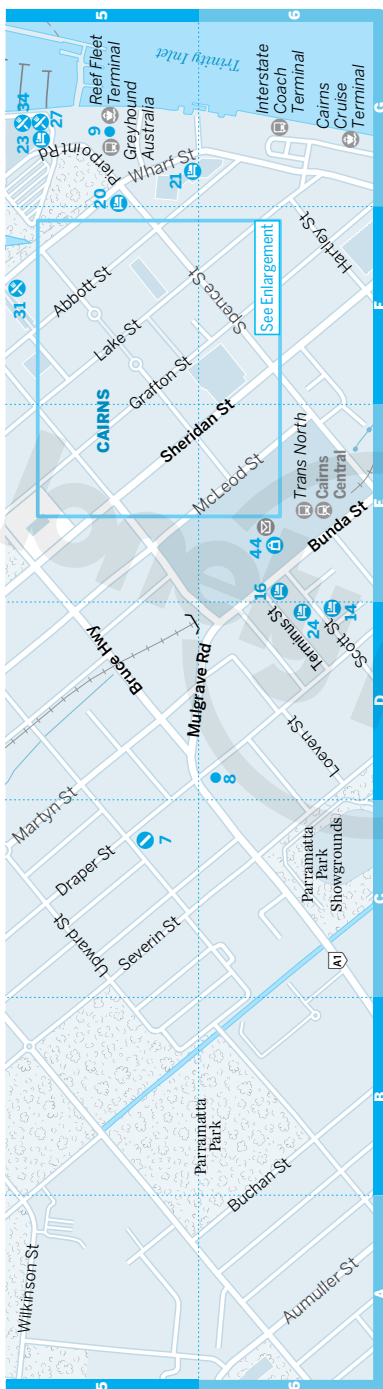
Cairns Discovery Tours

GUIDED TOUR

(Map p406; ☎ 07-4028 3567; www.cairnsdiscoverytours.com; 36 Aplin St; adult/child \$75/40; ☀ Mon-Sat) Half-day afternoon tours run by horticulturists; includes the botanic gardens and Palm Cove. Northern-beaches transfers are an extra \$8 for adults, \$4 for children.

Great Barrier Reef

Reef trips generally include transport, lunch, stinger-suits and snorkelling gear. When choosing a tour, consider the vessel type, its capacity, inclusions and destination: outer reefs are more pristine but further afield; inner reefs can be patchy and show signs of decay. Some prefer smaller, less-crowded vessels, while others go for the wide range of inclusions bigger boats promise.



Cairns

📍 Top Sights

- 1 Cairns Esplanade, Boardwalk & Lagoon.....F4
- 2 Reef Teach.....F2

📍 Sights

- 3 Cairns Regional Gallery.....G1

📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 4 Adventure North Australia.....E1
- 5 Cairns Discovery Tours.....E1
- 6 Cairns Dive Centre.....G1
- 7 Deep Sea Divers Den.....C5
- 8 Down Under Cruise & Dive.....D6
 - Great Adventures.....(see 9)
 - Hot Air Cairns.....(see 9)
 - Ocean Free.....(see 9)
- 9 Passions of Paradise.....G5
- 10 Pro-Dive.....F2
 - Raging Thunder.....(see 9)
- 11 Reef Encounter.....E4
 - Reef Magic.....(see 9)
 - Silverswift.....(see 9)
 - Sunlover.....(see 9)
- 12 Tusa Dive.....G1

📍 Sleeping

- 13 Cairns Plaza Hotel.....C1
- 14 Cairns Sharehouse.....D6
- 15 Doubletree by Hilton.....E4
- 16 Dreamtime Travellers Rest.....E6
- 17 Gilligan's Backpacker's Hotel & Resort.....F2
- 18 Hotel Cairns.....E4
- 19 Northern Greenhouse.....E2

- 20 Pacific Hotel.....G5
- 21 Pullman Reef Hotel Casino.....G5
- 22 Reef Palms.....C2
- 23 Shangri-La.....G5
- 24 Travellers Oasis.....D6

📍 Eating

- 25 Caffiend.....F2
- 26 Candy.....F2
- 27 Dundees.....G5
- 28 Lillypad.....F2
- 29 Little Ricardo's.....D3
- 30 Meldrum's Pies in Paradise.....F2
- 31 Night Markets.....F5
- 32 Ochre.....E2
- 33 Tokyo Dumpling.....G2
- 34 Waterbar & Grill.....G5

📍 Drinking & Nightlife

- 35 Cock 'n' Bull.....D3
- 36 Courthouse Hotel.....G1
- 37 Flying Monkey Cafe.....D4
- 38 G-Spot.....F2
- 39 Jack.....F3
- 40 Lyquid Nightlife.....G3
- 41 Pier Bar & Grill.....G4
- 42 Salt House.....G4
- 43 Woolshed.....F1

📍 Entertainment

- Reef Hotel Casino.....(see 21)

📍 Shopping

- 44 Cairns Central Shopping Centre.....E6
- 45 Rusty's Markets.....F3

Vendors with their own pontoon offer all-round value: pontoons are a great way for families to experience the reef – those who aren't keen on getting in the water can enjoy the pontoon's facilities, or a trip in a glass-bottomed boat or semisubmersible.

Almost all boats depart from the Marlin Wharf (with check-in and booking facilities located inside the Reef Fleet Terminal) around 8am, returning around 6pm. Smaller operators may check-in boat-side at their berth on the wharf itself; check with your operator.

★ Tusa Dive

DIVING, SNORKELLING

(Map p406; ☎07-4047 9100; www.tusadive.com; cnr Shields St & The Esplanade; adult/child day trips from \$185/110) 🍌 A maximum of 60 passengers aboard Cairns' newest, custom-designed reef vessel (the *T6*), a roving outer-reef permit and a high staff-to-passenger ratio make this operator an excellent choice for day trips.

★ Silverswift

DIVING, SNORKELLING

(Map p406; ☎07-4044 9944; www.silverseries.com.au; 1 Spence St; adult/child day trips from \$202/152) High speed, ride comfort (maximum 85 passengers) and facilities make Silverswift one of Cairns' most popular reef cruises for those able to spend a little more. You get around five hours of reef time at three of 16 outer reef locations.

Its sister high-speed cat, the Silversonic, sails from Port Douglas.

Reef Encounter

DIVING, SNORKELLING

(Map p406; ☎07-4037 2700; reefencounter.com.au; 100 Abbott St; 2-day live-aboard from \$410) If one day isn't enough, try an overnight 'reef sleep' with the *Reef Encounter*. Twenty-one air-conditioned, en suite rooms accommodate a maximum of 42 guests. A wide range of programs, including meals and daily departures from Cairns, make this excellent value for those wanting something a little different.

Passions of Paradise

DIVING, SNORKELLING

(Map p406; ☎ 1800 111 346; www.passions.com.au; 1 Spence St; adult/child day trips from \$159/109) ☎ This award-winning, high-speed catamaran takes you to Michaelmas Cay, where you can snorkel from a white sandy beach in the middle of the reef, and then to its exclusive mooring on Paradise Reef, away from the maddening crowds.

Great Adventures

DIVING, SNORKELLING

(Map p406; ☎ 07-4044 9944; www.greatadventures.com.au; 1 Spence St; adult/child day trips from \$218/112; 🚫) With a multilevel pontoon on the edge of the reef, Great Adventures offers fast catamaran reef day trips, and tours to Green Island. Diving add-ons, and glass-bottomed boat and semisubmersible tours are also available.

Reef Daytripper

SAILING

(☎ 07-4036 0566; www.reefdaytripper.com.au; 1 Spence St; adult/child day trips from \$139/100) Backpackers love these small-group sailing trips on an older-style catamaran to Upolu Reef on the outer Great Barrier Reef.

Down Under Cruise & Dive

DIVING, SNORKELLING

(Map p406; ☎ 1800 079 099; www.downunderdive.com.au; 287 Draper St; adult/child day trips from \$159/80) There's a fun Aussie feel to the great-value \$159 basic outer reef snorkel package, with access to two reef sites and a swag of optional extras. PADI dive courses are also available.

Reef Magic

DIVING, SNORKELLING

(Map p406; ☎ 07-4031 1588; www.reefmagic.com.au; 1 Spence St; adult/child day trips from \$195/95) Excellent for families, Reef Magic's high-speed cat sails to its all-weather Marineworld pontoon moored on the edge of the outer reef. If you're water shy, try a glass-bottomed boat ride, chat with the marine biologist or have a massage!

Sunlover

DIVING, SNORKELLING

(Map p406; ☎ 07-4050 1333; www.sunlover.com.au; 1 Spence St; adult/child day trips from \$195/90) This fast family-friendly catamaran glides to a pontoon on the outer Moore Reef. Options include semisubmersible trips and helmet diving.

Coral Princess

CRUISE

(☎ 1800 079 545; www.coralprincess.com.au; 24 Redden St, Portsmouth; d/tw per person from \$1596) Luxury three- to seven-night cruises on the compact, refurbished *Coral Princess I* and *II* between Cairns, Pelorus Island and Lizard Island, including all meals.

Atherton Tableland**Food Trail Tours**

TOUR

(☎ 07-4032 0322; www.foodtrailtours.com.au; Manooora, Cairns; adult/child from \$175/115; ☺ Mon-Sat) Taste your way around the Tableland, visiting farms producing macadamias, tropical fruits, wine, cheese, chocolate and coffee.

DIVE COURSES & TRIPS

Cairns, scuba-dive capital of the Great Barrier Reef, is a popular place to attain Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) open-water certification. A staggering number of courses (many multilingual) are available; check inclusions thoroughly. All operators require you to have a dive medical certificate, which they can arrange (around \$60). Reef taxes (\$20 to \$80) may apply.

Keen, certified divers should look for specialised dive opportunities such as night diving, yearly coral spawning, and trips to Cod Hole, near Lizard Island, one of Australia's premier diving locations.

Pro-Dive (Map p406; ☎ 07-4031 5255; www.prodivercairns.com; cnr Grafton & Shields Sts; day trips adult/child from \$185/110, PADI courses from \$700) One of Cairns' most experienced operators, Pro-Dive has multilingual staff. The comprehensive PADI five-day learn-to-dive course is regarded as one of the best.

Cairns Dive Centre (Map p406; ☎ 1800 642 591; www.cairnsdive.com.au; 121 Abbott St; live-aboard 2/3 days from \$540/680, day trips from \$200) This popular, long-running operator's prices are cheaper due to its affiliation with Scuba Schools International (SSI) rather than PADI.

Deep Sea Divers Den (Map p406; ☎ 07-4046 7333; www.diversden.com.au; 319 Draper St; day trips from \$160, PADI certification from \$640) These passionate locals have been training divers since 1974.

Uncle Brian's Tours

OUTDOORS
(☎ 07-4033 6575; www.unclebrian.com.au; tours \$119; ☺ Mon-Sat) Lively, high-energy, small-group day trips covering the Babinda Boulders, forests, waterfalls and lakes.

Captain Matty's Barefoot Tours

OUTDOORS
(☎ 07-4055 9082; www.barefoottours.com.au; adult \$85) Backpackers love this fun, full-day jaunt around the Tableland, with swimming stops at waterfalls and a natural water slide. Unsuitable for kids.

Organic Experience

TOUR
(☎ 0474-311 885; www.theorganicexperience.com.au; tours from \$175; ☺ 8.30am-5pm Fri) 🌿 This green (green as in new and green as in eco) operator takes you on a journey into a world where sustainable living is a reality. Meet local organic growers and farmers to pick their brains and sample their wares.

☞ Cape Tribulation & the Daintree

After the Great Barrier Reef, visits to Cape Tribulation are the region's next most-popular day trip. Access to the cape is via a well-signposted sealed road, so don't discount hiring your own vehicle, especially if you want to take your time.

Billy Tea Bush Safaris

OUTDOORS
(☎ 07-4032 0077; www.billytea.com.au; day trips adult/child \$205/155) 🌿 This reliable operator offers exciting small-group day trips to Cape Trib in purpose-built 4WD vehicles.

Tropics Explorer

OUTDOORS
(☎ 1800 801 540; www.tropicsexplorer.com.au; day tours from \$110) Purchase your own lunch on these fun Cape Trib trips; overnight tours also available.

☞ Cooktown & Cape York

Adventure North Australia DRIVING TOUR
(Map p406; ☎ 07-4028 3376; www.adventurenorthaustralia.com; 36 Aplin St; 1-day tours adult/child \$260/220) For a jam-packed day, consider these 4WD trips to Cooktown via the coastal route, returning via the inland route. A variety of other tours offer a more relaxed pace: there are two- or three-day tours, fly-drive tours, and Aboriginal cultural tours, including the Bama Way.

GSL Aviation

SCENIC FLIGHTS
(☎ 1300 475 000; gslaviation.com.au; 3 Tom McDonald Dr, Aeroglen; flights per person from \$169)

Those wanting to see the reef from above would do well to consider these scenic flights; they are cheaper than chopper tours, and offer more time in the air.

Nautilus Aviation

SCENIC FLIGHTS
(☎ 07-4034 9000; www.nautilusaviation.com.au; Bush Pilots Ave, Aeroglen; flights per person from \$386) Cairns' newest operator in the luxe helicopter tour market offers a range of packaged 'experiences' and charter services.

Great Barrier Reef Helicopters

SCENIC FLIGHTS
(☎ 07-4081 8888; www.gbrhelicopters.com.au; Bush Pilots Ave, Aeroglen; flights per person from \$165) Offers a wide range of helicopter flights, from a 10-minute soar above Cairns city (\$165) to an hour-long reef and rainforest trip (\$699).

Hot Air Cairns

BALLOONING
(Map p406; ☎ 07-4039 9900; www.hotair.com.au/cairns; 1 Spence St; 30-min flight adult/child from \$235/160) Balloons take off from Mareeba to witness dawn over the Atherton Tablelands. Prices include return transfers from Cairns.

Skydive Cairns

SKYDIVING
(☎ 1300 800 840; www.skydivecairns.com.au; Tom McDonald Dr, Aeroglen; tandem jumps from \$334) See the reef from a whole new perspective with a drop zone encompassing a warm tropical climate, and spectacular views of the reef, World Heritage rainforest and Trinity Inlet.

White-Water Rafting

The thrill level of white-water rafting down the Barron, Russell and North Johnstone Rivers is hitched to the season: the wetter the weather, the whiter the water. The Tully River has rapids year-round. Trips are graded according to the degree of difficulty, from armchair rafting (Grade 1) to white-knuckle (Grade 5).

Foaming Fury

RAFTING
(☎ 1800 801 540; www.foamingfury.com.au; 19-21 Barry St; half-day trip from \$133) Full-day trips on the Russell River (\$200), and half-day trips on the Barron (\$133). Family rafting options are also available.

Raging Thunder

RAFTING
(Map p406; ☎ 07-4030 7990; www.ragingthunder.com.au; 52-54 Fearnley St, Portsmith; half-/full-day trips from \$133/199) Full-day Tully River trips (standard trip \$199, 'xtreme' trip \$235) and half-day Barron trips (\$133). Transfers to Fitzroy Island are available (\$74).

★ Festivals & Events

Cairns Festival

FESTIVAL

(www.cairns.qld.gov.au/festival; ☺ end Aug–early Sep) The Cairns Festival takes over the city with a packed program of performing arts, visual arts, music and family events.

🛏 Sleeping

For a small city, Cairns has a huge volume of tourist traffic and a high turnover of seasonal staff. Room refurbishment is frequently undertaken in the wettest months (January to March). To avoid disappointment, be realistic: Cairns' hotel inventory does not compare to that of New York City or the Côte d'Azur.

Cairns is a backpacker hotspot: there are hostels a-plenty, ranging from intimate converted houses to rowdy resorts. Nondescript, drive-in motels line Sheridan St from Upward St towards the airport, offering a low-cost private alternative. Popular tourist-class hotels vie for the best spots along the Esplanade. Although there's a handful of high-end hotels in town, those seeking a luxurious retreat might consider heading straight to Palm Cove or Port Douglas.

Families and groups should check out **Cairns Holiday Homes** (☎07-4045 2143; www.cairns holidayhomes.com.au). If you plan to stick around, **Cairns Sharehouse** (Map p406; ☎07-4041 1875; www.cairns-sharehouse.com; 17 Scott St; s/d per person, per week from \$160/\$125; 🍷🍷🍷) has around 200 long-stay rooms strewn across the city.

★ Travellers Oasis

HOSTEL \$

(Map p406; ☎1800 621 353; travellersoasis.com.au; 8 Scott St; dm/s/d per person from \$27/49/33; 🍷🍷🍷) Folks love this little hippy hostel, hidden away in a side street behind Cairns Central (p416). It's intimate, inviting and less party-centric than other offerings. A range of room types, from three-, four- and six-bed dorms, to single, twin and deluxe double rooms, are available. Air conditioning is \$1 for three hours.

Gilligan's Backpacker's Hotel & Resort

HOSTEL \$

(Map p406; ☎07-4041 6566; www.gilligansbackpackers.com.au; 57-89 Grafton St; dm/s/d per person from \$22/129/65; 🍷🍷🍷) There's nothing quite like Gilligan's: a loud, proud, party-hardy backpacker's oasis, where all rooms have en suites and most have balconies. Higher-priced rooms come with fridges and TVs. The mammoth bar and adjacent lounge-worthy lagoon pool is where to be

seen. There's more nightly entertainment than you can poke a stick at. Pickup central.

Dreamtime Travellers Rest

HOSTEL \$

(Map p406; ☎1800 058 440; www.dreamtimehostel.com; cnr Bunda & Terminus Sts; dm/s/d per person from \$24/45/29; 🍷🍷🍷) This hostel in a rambling old Queenslander on the city's fringe combines friendly staff with cosy rooms that are bright but not tacky. Cheap pizza, fire twirling and barbecue nights make your stay all the sweeter.

Northern Greenhouse

HOSTEL \$

(Map p406; ☎07-4047 7200; www.northerngreenhouse.com.au; 117 Grafton St; dm/d per person from \$24/48; 🍷🍷🍷) These friendly digs benefit from a relaxed attitude. Rooms range from dorms to neat studio-style apartments with kitchens and balconies. The central deck, pool and games room are great for socialising. Free breakfast and Sunday BBQ seal the deal.

★ Cairns Plaza Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p406; ☎07-4051 4688; www.cairnsplaza.com.au; 145 The Esplanade; d from \$129; 🍷🍷🍷) One of Cairns' original high-rise hotels, the trimphant Plaza is freshly refurbished and under new ownership. Rooms have crisp, clean decor, and functional kitchenettes and balconies; many enjoy stunning views over Trinity Bay. A guest laundry, friendly round-the-clock reception staff, quiet Esplanade location and great rates make it an excellent midrange choice.

Hotel Cairns

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p406; ☎07-4051 6188; www.thehotelcairns.com; cnr Abbott & Florence Sts; d from \$129; 🍷🍷🍷) There's a tropical charm to this boutique hotel, built in traditional Queenslander 'plantation' style, a block back from the Esplanade. Stylish, solid rooms, ageing gracefully, have an understated elegance. Suites offer luxury touches including private balconies. Those with a discerning eye will recognise the opportunity to snag a sizzling deal.

Doubletree by Hilton

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p406; ☎07-4050 6070; doubletree3.hilton.com; 121-123 The Esplanade; d/ste from \$160/296) An enviable location on the northern end of the Esplanade, 24-hour room service and stylish, modern guestrooms with floor-to-ceiling windows define this well-presented chain hotel. Balcony rooms are available for a fee.

Pacific Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p406; ☎07-4051 788; www.pacifichotelcairns.com; cnr The Esplanade & Spence St; d from \$139)

In a prime location at the beginning of the Esplanade, this older hotel has been lovingly maintained and recently refurbished. There's a fun blend of original '70s features and woodwork, with fresh, modern amenities. All rooms have balconies. Friendly, helpful staff make this an excellent midrange choice.

Reef Palms

APARTMENTS \$\$

(Map p406; ☎07 1800 815 421; www.reefpalms.com.au; 41-47 Digger St; apt from \$130; 📶📺📺) Couples and families love the excellent value and friendly service found in these squeaky-clean apartments with cooking facilities, though some might find the decor a little too gaudy. Larger apartments include a lounge area and spa.

Pullman Reef Hotel Casino

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p406; ☎07-4030 8888; www.reefcasino.com.au/hotel; 35-41 Wharf St; d/ste from \$229/319) You'll find some of Cairns' finest rooms and best service in this five-star hotel atop the casino complex in the heart of the CBD. Offers a variety of room types, many with balcony and Jacuzzi, including plush suites.

Shangri-La

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p406; ☎07-4031 1411; www.shangri-la.com/cairns; 1 Pierpoint Rd; d/ste from \$205/365; 📶📺📺) At time of writing, five-star Shangri-La failed to knock our socks off, despite its prime position overlooking the marina, in close proximity to Cairns' finest dining. Ongoing refurbishment means airy, older rooms, with their exceptional outlook, can be nabbed at bargain rates, while freshly renovated rooms offer the opulence (and price) synonymous with this luxury brand.

Eating

With so many hungry tourists and so much choice, Cairns' culinary scene can be hit-and-miss, but there are some stunners to be found. Pubs are known for hearty, good-value grub. The Esplanade has an array of lively eateries, including the **Night Markets** (Map p406; The Esplanade; dishes \$10-15; ☎5-11pm) buffet food court. The boardwalk adjacent to the marina has the fanciest atmosphere, but some of the better finds are back from the water, along Grafton St.

★ Tokyo Dumpling

JAPANESE \$

(Map p406; ☎07-40412848; 46 Lake St; dumplings from \$7, bowls from \$10.80; ☎11.30am-8.30pm) Come to this spotless little takeaway for the best *tantanmen* (a kind of spicy sesame

ramen) outside Japan and some seriously drool-worthy gyoza (dumplings): the cheese and potato variety are to die for. We predict you won't be able to eat here just once.

Meldrum's Pies in Paradise

BAKERY \$

(Map p406; ☎07-4051 8333; 97 Grafton St; pies \$4.70-5.90; ☎7am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to 2.30pm Sat; 📶) Multi-award-winning Meldrum's deserves the accolades bestowed upon its seemingly innumerable renditions of the humble Aussie pie since 1972. From chicken and avocado, to pumpkin gnocchi and tuna mayon. We loved the steak and mushroom-mmm in creamy pepper sauce!

★ Candy

CAFE \$\$

(Map p406; ☎07-4031 8816; 70 Grafton St; ☎7am-2.30pm) This quirky, licensed cafe has some seriously sweet treats on its more-than-tempting menu: eggs Benedict with light, fluffy hollandaise; caramelised French toast with poached pears and mascarpone; and the infamous Wagyu beef candy burger with egg, bacon, beetroot jam and vintage cheddar.

Lillypad

CAFE \$\$\$

(Map p406; ☎07-4051 9565; 72 Grafton St; dishes \$10-14; ☎7am-3pm; 📶) With humongous feasts, from crepes to wraps and a truckload of vegetarian options, this is one of the best-value options in town. It's a little bit hippy, and a whole lot busy: you'll probably have to wait a while. Don't miss the fresh juices.

Caffiend

CAFE \$\$\$

(Map p406; ☎07-4051 5522; www.caffiend.com.au; 5/78 Grafton St; dishes from \$12; ☎7.30am-3pm Mon-Sat, 8am-2pm Sun; 📶) Follow your nose down the Melbourne-esque graffitied alleyway to this cosy cafe for superb barista coffee, all-day breakfast, gourmet lunches, art, beer and the occasional live gig.

Little Ricardo's

ITALIAN \$\$

(Map p406; ☎07-4051 5266; www.littlericardos.com; 191 Sheridan St; pizzas from \$17, mains from \$19; ☎5-10pm Mon-Sat) This romantic little old-school Italian joint serves up all your favourite pizzas, pastas and homestyle favourites, including calamari and veal every which way you can think of. Takeaway available.

★ Waterbar & Grill

STEAKHOUSE \$\$\$

(Map p406; ☎07-4031 1199; www.waterbarandgrill.com.au; Pier Shopping Centre, 1 Pierpoint Rd; mains \$19-42; ☎11.30am-11pm Mon-Sat, to 9pm Sun) Cairns' award-winning steakhouse shouldn't fail to deliver on its promise of succulent, juicy steaks, tender burgers and pricey sides.

In the unlikely event that you do leave a crabby carnivore, be sure to let them know so they can make it right. Save room for the homemade sticky date pudding...

Dundeeds

SEAFOOD \$\$\$

(Map p406; ☎ 07-4051 0399; www.dundeeds.com.au; Harbour Lights, 1 Marlin Pde; mains \$25-79; ☺ 11.30am-9.30pm) This tried-and-true waterfront seafood restaurant comes up trumps for ambience, generous portions and friendly service. The varied menu of appealing appetizers begins with chunky seafood chowder; tempura soft-shell crab and lightly dusted calamari strips, while the main event features pasta, a full grill menu and enormous seafood platters.

Ochre

MODERN AUSTRALIAN \$\$\$

(Map p406; ☎ 07-4051 0100; www.ochrerestaurant.com.au; 43 Shields St; mains \$19-38; ☺ 11.30-2.30pm Mon-Fri, 5.30-9.30pm Mon-Sun; 🍷) The menu at this innovative restaurant utilises native Aussie fauna (such as croc with native pepper, or roo with quandong-chilli glaze) and flora (try wattle-seed damper loaf or lemon-myrtle pannacotta). Can't decide? Try a tasting plate.



Drinking & Nightlife

Cairns is the undisputed party capital of the north. Most venues offer food, booze and some form of entertainment.

To find out what's going on in town, hit www.entertainmentcairns.com and the *Time Out* section in Thursday's *Cairns Post*. If you really want to get raucous, try **Ultimate Party** (☎ 07-4041 0332; www.ultimatepartycairns.com; per person \$35; ☺ Wed & Sat nights), a wild-n-crazy pub crawl that takes in five suitably frenetic venues over six hours.

★ Salt House

BAR

(Map p406; ☎ 07-4041 7733; www.salthouse.com.au; 6/2 Pierpoint Rd; ☺ 9am-2am Fri-Sun, noon-midnight Mon-Thu) By the yacht club, Cairns' coolest and classiest bar caters to a 20-to-30-something crowd. Killer cocktails are paired with occasional live music and DJs. The restaurant serves up excellent modern Australian food. Come with cash to burn.

★ Jack

PUB

(Map p406; ☎ 07-4051 2490; www.thejack.com.au; cnr Spence & Sheridan Sts; ☺ 10am-late) The Jack is a kick-ass pub by any standards, housed in an unmissable heritage Queenslander with an enormous shaded beer garden. There are nightly events, including live music and DJs,

killer pub grub, and an adjacent backpackers, for those who just can't tear themselves away.

Pier Bar & Grill

BAR

(Map p406; ☎ 07-4031 4677; www.pierbar.com.au; Pier Shopping Centre, 1 Pierpoint Rd; ☺ 11.30am-late) Thoroughly refurbished in 2014, this local institution is loved for its killer waterfront location and daily happy hour (5pm to 7pm). The still-going-strong Sunday Sesh is the place to see and be seen, with live music, food and drink specials and an always happening crowd.

Courthouse Hotel

PUB

(Map p406; ☎ 07-4081 7777; www.lanternhotels.com.au/courthouse-hotel; 38 Abbott St; ☺ 9am-late) Housed in Cairns' gleaming-white former courthouse (1921), this classy pub is now a buzzing watering hole with polished timber bar, heaps of outdoor nooks and live music every weekend. None too shabby.

Flying Monkey Cafe

CAFE

(Map p406; ☎ 0411 084 176; 154 Sheridan St; coffee \$4; ☺ 6.30am-3.30pm Mon-Fri, 7am-noon Sat) Fantastic coffee, ever-changing local art exhibitions, colourful buskers and a beyond-affable staff make the Monkey a must-do for caffeine-and-culture hounds.

Cock 'n' Bull

PUB

(Map p406; ☎ 07-4031 1160; www.cocknbull.net.au; 6 Grove St; ☺ 10am-3am Mon-Sat, to midnight Sun) A local favourite near Cairns Hospital, there's something for everyone at this English tavern-themed pub, with a very un-English tropical beer garden. Huge, tasty pub meals are great value, as are regular drink specials at the lively bar.

G-Spot

BAR, CLUB

(Map p406; ☎ 07-4040 2777; www.thegspotcairns.com; 57-89 Grafton St; ☺ 10pm-late) Home of Gilligan's nightclub and the Attic, G-Spot's weekly theme nights and special events go off. Expect a throng of randy backpackers and Cairns' most intense soundsystem.

Lyquid Nightlife

CLUB

(Map p406; ☎ 07-4028 3773; www.lyquid.com.au; 33 Spence St; ☺ 9pm-3am) Cairns sexiest new venue promises to be the hottest ticket in town: dress to impress and party the night away.

Woolshed

BAR, CLUB

(Map p406; ☎ 07-4031 6304; www.thewoolshed.com.au; 24 Shields St; ☺ 7pm-3am Sun-Thu, to 5am Fri & Sat) An eternal backpacker magnet/meat market, where dashing dudes, dive

instructors and nubile nomads get happily hammered and dance on tables.

★ Entertainment

Reef Hotel Casino

CASINO

(Map p406; ☎ 07-4030 8888; www.reefcasino.com.au; 35-41 Wharf St; ☀ 9am-5am Fri & Sat, to 3am Sun-Thu) In addition to table games and pokies, Cairns' casino has four restaurants and four bars, including Vertigo Cocktail Bar & Lounge (with free live music and ticketed shows) and the enormous Casino Sports Arena bar.

🛒 Shopping

Cairns offers the gamut of shopping, from high-end boutiques to garish souvenir barns.

★ Rusty's Markets

MARKET

(Map p406; ☎ 07-4040 2705; www.rustysmarkets.com.au; 57 Grafton St; ☀ 5am-6pm Fri & Sat, to 3pm Sun) No weekend in Cairns is complete without a visit to this fresh produce market where stall holders have mangoes, bananas, pineapples and all manner of tropical fruits piled high, plus farm-fresh honey, hot chips, curries and cold drinks.

Cairns Central Shopping Centre

SHOPPING CENTRE

(Map p406; ☎ 07-4041 4111; www.cairnscentral.com.au; cnr McLeod & Spence Sts; ☀ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat, to 9pm Thu, 10am-4.30pm Sun) Atop Cairns Central Railway Station (p418),

you'll find the region's largest shopping mall. It boasts multiple supermarkets and a huge range of stores selling everything from books to bikinis and sunscreen to SIM cards.

📍 Information

INTERNET ACCESS

Dedicated internet cafes are clustered along Abbott St between Shields and Aplin Sts.

POST

Post Office (Map p406; ☎ 13 13 18; www.auspost.com.au; Shop 112, Cairns Central Shopping Centre; ☀ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat, to 9pm Thu, 10.30am-4pm Sun)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Cairns & Tropical North Visitor Information Centre

(Map p406; ☎ 1800 093 300; www.cairns-greatbarrierreef.org.au; 51 The Esplanade; ☀ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun) There's only one government-run visitor information centre in town offering impartial advice. Hundreds of free brochures, maps and pamphlets are available. Friendly staff can help with booking accommodation and tours. Look for the yellow 'i' on the blue background.

Royal Automobile Club of Queensland (RACQ)

☎ 07-4042 3100; www.racq.com.au; 537 Mulgrave Rd, Earlville; ☀ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Maps and information on road conditions state-wide, including Cape York. For a 24-hour, recorded road-report service, call ☎ 1300 130 595.

📍 Getting There & Away

AIR

Qantas (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au), **Virgin Australia** (☎ 13 67 89; www.virginaustralia.com) and **Jetstar** (☎ 13 15 38; www.jetstar.com.au) arrive and depart Cairns Airport (p1086), located approximately 6km from the CBD, with direct services to all capital cities except Canberra and Hobart, and to regional centres including Townsville, Weipa and Horn Island. Direct international connections include Bali, Shanghai, Guam, Tokyo and Port Moresby.

Hinterland Aviation (☎ 07-4040 1333; www.hinterlandaviation.com.au) has up to three flights daily (Monday to Saturday) to Cooktown (one way from \$175, 40 minutes).

In January 2015 Skytrans, a regional airline which serviced remote communities such as Coen, Bamaga and Lockhart River, ceased operations after 25 years. At the time of writing, it was unknown whether alternative carriers would commence service to these areas.

BOAT

Almost all reef trips from Cairns depart the Marlin Wharf (sometimes called the Marlin Jetty), with booking and check-in facilities located

TOO MUCH (TOURIST) INFORMATION?

Most of Cairns' thousands of tours and activities are bookable from your accommodation's 'tour desk' and from the myriad of purported 'tourist information' agencies around the city. Confused? So were we! Many of these so-called agencies (the ones with a white 'i' on a blue background) are offered incentives daily by affiliated operators to 'beef up' tours with poor booking numbers.

There's only one official, impartial tourist information agency in town, the Cairns & Tropical North Visitor Information Centre. It's the only one with a yellow 'i' on a blue background, and is found at the beginning of the Esplanade, before the lagoon. Friendly, expert staff (most are volunteers who love their city) will do their best to help match you to the right product for your needs.



inside the **Reef Fleet Terminal** (Map p406). A handful of smaller operators may have their check-in facilities boat-side, on the wharf itself. Be sure to ask for the correct berth number.

International cruise ships and SeaSwift (p447) ferries to Seisia on Cape York dock at and depart from the **Cairns Cruise Terminal** (Map p406; ☎ 07-4052 3888; www.cairnscruiselinerterminal.com.au; cnr Wharf & Lake Sts).

BUS

Cairns Cooktown Express (☎ 07-4059 1423; www.cairnsbuscharters.com/services/cairns-cooktown-express) Cairns Bus Charters operate the daily Cairns Cooktown Express (\$79, five hours) along the inland route to Cooktown.

Greyhound Australia (Map p406; ☎ 1300 473 946; www.greyhound.com.au) Departing the **Interstate Coach Terminal** (Map p406); (within the Reef Fleet Terminal), Greyhound has daily services down the coast to Townsville (from \$55, six hours), Airlie Beach (from \$85, 11 hours), Rockhampton (\$201, 18 hours) and Brisbane (\$311, 29 hours). Discount passes are available.

John's Kuranda Bus (☎ 0418 772 953) Runs a service (\$5, 30 minutes) between Cairns (departs Lake St Transit Centre) and Kuranda, two to five times daily.

Premier Motor Service (☎ 13 34 10; www.premierms.com.au) Runs one daily service to Brisbane (\$205, 29 hours) via Innisfail (\$19, 1½ hours), Mission Beach (\$19, two hours), Tully

DON'T MISS

JOURNEY ABOVE & INTO THE RAINFOREST

A trip to Cairns isn't complete without an obligatory rainforest journey through the Barron Gorge National Park to the Tableland village of Kuranda. We recommend taking the Skyrail Rainforest Cableway in one direction and the Kuranda Scenic Railway in the other. Combination deals are available.

At 7.5km long, **Skyrail Rainforest Cableway** (☎ 07-4038 5555; www.skyrail.com.au; cnr Cook Hwy & Cairns Western Arterial Rd, Smithfield; adult/child one way \$49/24.50, return \$73/36.50; ☀ 9am-5.15pm) is one of the world's longest gondola cableways, offering a bird's-eye view over the tropical rainforest. Allow about 90 minutes for the one-way trip, including two stops en route, featuring rainforest boardwalks with interpretive panels and lookouts over the mighty Barron Falls. Upgrading to a glass-floored 'diamond view' gondola (adults an extra \$10, children an extra \$5) is recommended, but real adventure seekers can't go past the amazing, open-air Canopy Glider (an extra \$100 or more per person).

The last departures from Cairns and Kuranda are at 3.45pm; transfers to and from the terminals are available. For a deeper perspective, consider a 40-minute **Djabugay Aboriginal Guided Rainforest Walking Tour** (adult/child \$24/12) from Barron Falls Station.

Winding 34km from Cairns to Kuranda through picturesque mountains, the track used by the **Kuranda Scenic Railway** (☎ 07-4036 9333; www.ksr.com.au; adult/child one way \$49/25, return \$79/37) was completed in 1891: workers dug tunnels by hand, battling sickness, steep terrain and venomous creatures. The 1¾-hour pleasure trip departs Cairns at 8.30am and 9.30am daily, returning from delightful Kuranda station at 2pm and 3.30pm.

(\$26, 2½ hours), Cardwell (\$30, three hours), Townsville (\$55, 5½ hours) and Airlie Beach (\$90, 10 hours). Enquire for available discounts.

Trans North (Map p406; ☎ 07-4095 8644; www.transnorthbus.com; Cairns Central Railway Station) Has five daily bus services connecting Cairns with the Tablelands, including Kuranda (\$8, 30 minutes, four daily), Mareeba (\$18, one hour, one to three daily) and Atherton (\$23.40, 1¾ hours, one to three daily). Departs from Cairns Central Railway Station; buy tickets when boarding.

Sun Palm (☎ 07-4087 2900; www.sunpalmtransport.com.au) Operates scheduled and charter services between Cairns CBD, the airport (\$15, 20 minutes) and Port Douglas (from \$40, 1½ hours) via Palm Cove and the northern beaches (from \$20).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Major car-rental companies have downtown and airport branches. Daily rates start around \$45 for a compact auto and \$80 for a 4WD.

Cairns Older Car Hire (☎ 07-4053 1066; www.cairnsoldercarhire.com; 410 Sheridan St; per day from \$25) and **Rent-a-Bomb** (☎ 07-4031 4477; www.rentabomb.com.au; 144 Sheridan St; per day from \$30) have cheap rates on older model vehicles. If you're looking for a cheap campervan, **Jucy** (☎ 1800 150 850; www.jucy.com.au; 55 Dutton St, Portsmith; per day from \$40), **Spaceships** (☎ 1300 132 469; www.spaceshipsrentals.com.au; 3/52 Fearnley St, Portsmith; per day from \$59) and **Hippie Camper Hire**

(☎ 1800 777 779; www.hippiecamper.com; 432 Sheridan St; per day from \$40) have quality wheels at budget prices.

If you're in for the long haul, check hostels, www.gumtree.com.au and the big noticeboard on Abbott St for used campervans and ex-backpackers' cars.

If you prefer two wheels to four, hire a Harley (from \$210 per day) or a head-turning Honda VTR (from \$110 per day), from **Choppers Motorcycle Tours & Hire** (☎ 1300 735 577; www.choppersmotorcycles.com.au; 150 Sheridan St). A swag of tours are also available.

TRAIN

New in 2015, **Queensland Rail's** (☎ 1800 872 467; www.traveltrain.com.au) scenic, state-of-the-art Spirit of Queensland train, offers Railbed class, reminiscent of business class on a plane, and standard Premium Economy class seats, with personal entertainment systems. Departs **Cairns Central Railway Station** (Bunda St) on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday, for Brisbane (one way from \$222, 24 hours).

The Kuranda Scenic Railway runs daily.

i Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

The airport is about 6km north of central Cairns; many accommodation places offer courtesy pickup. Sun Palm meets all incoming flights and

runs a shuttle bus (adult/child \$15/7.50) to the CBD. The cheapest shuttle service (from \$12 per person) is operated by **Cairns Airport Shuttle** (☎ 0432 488 783; www.cairnsairportshuttle.com.au; per person from \$12); the more passengers, the cheaper the fare – online bookings recommended.

Taxis to the CBD are around \$25.

BICYCLE & SCOOTER

Bike Man (☎ 07-4041 5566; www.bikeman.com.au; 99 Sheridan St; per day/week \$15/60) Hire, sales and repairs.

Cairns Scooter & Bicycle Hire (☎ 07-4031 3444; www.cairnsbicyclehire.com.au; 47 Shields St; scooters/bikes per day from \$95/35) Zip around on a nifty-fifty, or take it slow on a pushie. Also sells used scooters.

BUS

Sunbus (Map p406; ☎ 07-4057 7411; www.sunbus.com.au; rides from \$2.20) runs regular services in and around Cairns from the **Cairns Transit Mall** (Map p406) on Lake St, where schedules are posted. Useful routes include: Flecker Botanic Gardens/Edge Hill (route 131), Holloways Beach and Yorkeys Knob (route 113), Trinity Beach (route 111) and Palm Cove via Clifton Beach (route 110). Most buses heading north go via Smithfield. All routes are served by the late-running night service (N). Heading south, Bus 140 runs as far south as Gordonvale. Single tickets cost from \$2.20, day passes from \$4.40.

TAXI

Cairns Taxis (☎ 13 10 08; www.cairnstaxis.com.au) Ranks are dotted throughout the city, including at Abbott St and Cairns Central Shopping Centre.

CAIRNS' NORTHERN BEACHES

Surprisingly, few visitors realise before arrival that Cairns' beaches are 15-minutes' drive from the CBD. A string of lovely beach communities known as the northern beaches, each with their own character, awaits. Yorkeys Knob is popular with sailors, Trinity is big with families, and Palm Cove is a swanky honeymoon haven in its own league entirely.

All beaches can be reached via well-marked turn-offs from the Cook Hwy.

Once you're there, **Northern Beaches**

Bike Hire (☎ 0417 361 012; cairnsbeachesbikehire.com; 41 Iridescent Dr, Ellis Beach; per day from \$20) can deliver rental bikes to most northern beaches accommodation options, and collect them when you're done!

Yorkeys Knob

Yorkeys Knob (giggle once, then move on) is a low-key settlement known for its Half Moon Bay and marina. A proposed megacasino (aquiscasino.com) would change the town irrevocably and has many locals (who've already lost their apostrophe) up in arms. For now, it's business (or lack thereof) as usual.



Activities

Kite Rite

WATER SPORTS

(☎ 07-4055 7918; www.kiterite.com.au; Shop 9, 471 Varley St; per hr \$79) Offers kite- and windsurfing instruction, unique to Yorkeys, including gear hire, and a two-day certificate course (\$499).

Sleeping & Eating

Villa Marine

APARTMENT \$\$

(☎ 07-4055 7158; www.villamarine.com.au; 8 Rutherford St; apt from \$99-189; ♿ ☎ ☎) Friendly owner Peter makes you feel at home in his collection of retro, single-storey self-contained apartments arranged around a pool, just a short stroll from the beach.

York

APARTMENTS \$\$

(☎ 07-4055 8733; www.yorkapartments.com.au; 61-63 Sims Esplanade; apt from \$165) Directly opposite the beach you'll find these low-rise, airy apartments with high-quality furnishings, tiled floors, full kitchen facilities and balconies.

★Yorkeys Knob Boating Club

SEAFOOD \$\$

(☎ 07-4055 7711; www.ykbc.com.au; 25-29 Buckley St; mains from \$16; ☺ noon-3pm & 6-9pm; ☎) A diamond find for fresh seafood, and for delightful views of the marina's expensive floating toys from its expansive dining deck. You can't go past Lobster Fridays (\$35 including bubbles) and Oyster Saturdays (\$12 per dozen!), as well as the daily specials. Perfect for lunch, it's well worth the trip from Cairns.

Getting There & Away

If you don't have a car, Sunbus' route 113 will get you from Cairns to Yorkeys in about 40 minutes.

Trinity Beach

One of the region's better-kept secrets, Trinity Beach, with its gorgeous stretch of sheltered sand, pretty esplanade, and sensibly priced

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

THE BAMA WAY

Running between Cairns and Cooktown, the Bama Way is a tourist route designed by the traditional custodians of the region, the Aboriginal nations of the Kuku Yalanji and Guugu Yimithirr people. The term Bama (pronounced Bumma) is widely used throughout tropical North Queensland, and means 'Aboriginal person'. For the Kuku Yalanji and Guugu Yimithirr, it means 'person' or 'all people'. A variety of guided tours are available for those seeking the most enlightening cultural experience. The **Walker family tours** (p441) of the Bloomfield Track and Willie Gordon's enlightening **Guurrbi Tours** (p442) in Cooktown are highly recommended. If you're interested in self-driving, pick up a Bama Way map from a visitor centre, or download it from the Bama Way homepage: www.bamaway.com.au.

dining and accommodation, has managed to stave off the tourism vibe, despite being a holiday hotspot and popular dining destination for Cairns locals in the know. There's not much to do here except eat, sleep and chill-out, but Trinity Beach's central position makes it easy to get out and about when you are feeling active.

Sleeping

A wealth of wonderful, affordable apartment-style accommodation makes Trinity an excellent alternative to sleeping in Cairns for families and those travelling in groups.

Comfort Inn & Suites Trinity Beach Club

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎ 07-4055 6776; www.choicehotels.com.au; 19-23 Trinity Beach Rd; apt from \$195) This property offers hotel-style management and service. Its one- and two-bedroom, apartment-style accommodation has full kitchen facilities, and is just 200m from Trinity Beach.

Sea Change Beachfront Apartments

APARTMENTS \$\$\$

(☎ 07-4057 5822; www.seachange-beachfront-apartments.com; 31-35 Vasey Esplanade; apt from \$290) These professionally managed luxury apartments benefit from a quiet position on the southern end of Trinity's spectacular beach.

Apartments range in size from one to four bedrooms. Some offer swim-out pool access or a private roof deck. A high rate of repeat guests speaks for itself. Minimum three-night stay.

Eating

Trinity may seem top-heavy on Italian restaurants, but, when in Rome...

★ Chianti's

ITALIAN \$\$

(☎ 07-4057 5338; www.chianttis.com; 81 Vasey Esplanade; mains from \$18; ☺ 4-10pm) We love the unpretentious, old-school romance of this feisty, family-run business that's grown on word-of-mouth recommendations; don't expect silver service. Eat on the cosy verandah for the best views and vibe. Pizzas and pastas are homestyle and hearty, and the daily early-bird dinner special is great value.

Fratelli on Trinity

ITALIAN \$\$\$

(☎ 07-4057 5775; www.fratelli.net.au; 47 Vasey Esplanade; mains from \$20; ☺ 7am-10pm Thu-Sun, from 5.30pm Mon-Wed) Don't let the easy-breezy beach shack vibe fool you into thinking the food here is anything less than top-class. Pastas are superb, and dishes like slow-cooked lamb shoulder and garlic-and-rosemary rolled pork-belly roast might even distract you from the million-dollar views.

Blue Moon Grill

MODERN AUSTRALIAN \$\$\$

(☎ 07-4057 8957; Shop 6, 22-24 Trinity Beach Rd; mains \$26-39; ☺ 7-11am & 4-10pm Fri-Sun, 4-10pm Mon-Thu) A slightly overwhelming menu of creative, original dishes are presented with passion at this cosy, family-run bistro two blocks back from the beach. Where else can you try crocodile popcorn?

L'Unico Trattoria

ITALIAN \$\$\$

(☎ 07-4057 8855; www.lunico.com.au; 75 Vasey Esplanade; mains from \$22; ☺ noon-10pm; ☎) Opening to a wrap-around, beachfront deck, upscale L'Unico Trattoria serves stylish Italian cuisine. Items include bugs (crayfish) with garlic, chilli and white wine, homemade four-cheese gnocchi and wood-fired pizzas, paired with a stellar wine list.

Getting There & Around

Renting a car upon arrival into Cairns is highly recommended. Trinity Beach is about 20-minutes' drive from the airport, and 30 minutes from downtown Cairns. Otherwise, Sunbus (p419) route 111 services Trinity Beach.

Palm Cove

Best known of Cairns' northern beaches, Palm Cove has grown into a destination in its own right. More intimate than Port Douglas and more upmarket than its southern neighbours, Palm Cove is a cloistered coastal community with a beautiful promenade along the paperbark-lined Williams Esplanade. Its gorgeous stretch of white-sand beach and its sprinkling of fancy restaurants do their best to lure young lovers from their luxury resorts, and, inevitably, they succeed.

Unlike Port Douglas, you can walk everywhere. Unlike Cairns, you'll hardly notice the presence of other sun and reef seekers. If you can afford to stay here, you won't flinch at the extra expense of a rental car, which you'll need if you plan on leaving paradise for some thrill seeking.

Sights & Activities

Cairns Tropical Zoo

ZOO

(☎07-4055 3669; www.cairnstropicalzoo.com.au; Captain Cook Hwy; adult/child \$34/17; ☀8.30am-4pm) This zoo offers an up-close wildlife experience with crocodiles and snakes, koala photo sessions and kangaroo feeding. Its Cairns Night Zoo experience includes a barbecue dinner and entertainment (adults \$105, children \$52.50). Transfers are available for an additional cost.

Palm Cove Watersports

KAYAKING

(☎0402 861 011; www.palmcovewatersports.com; kayak hire per hr from \$20) Organises two-hour sunrise sea-kayaking trips (\$55) and half-day paddles to offshore Double Island (adult/child \$110/80). Gear hire is also available.

Beach Fun Co.

WATER SPORTS

(☎0411-848 580; www.beachfunco.com; cnr Williams Esplanade & Harpa St) Hires catamarans (\$50 per hour), jet skis (per 15 minutes single/double \$60/80), paddle boats (\$30) and SUP boards (\$30). Also organises jet-ski tours around Double Island and Haycock - aka Scouts Hat - Island (30-minute single/double from \$150/200). Advance phone bookings recommended.

Sleeping

There are over 30 places to stay in this small village - many require a minimum two-night stay. If you're lucky with the weather, you could snap up a real bargain during low-season.

Palm Cove Holiday Park

CAMPGROUND \$

(☎1800 736 640; www.palmcovehp.com.au; 149 Williams Esplanade; unpowered/powered sites from \$20/28; ☀) The only way to do Palm Cove on the cheap, this beachfront campground near the jetty has tent and van sites, a barbecue area, a laundry and wi-fi hotspots.

Reef Retreat

APARTMENTS \$\$

(☎07-4059 1744; reefretreat.com.au; 10-14 Harpa St; apt from \$145; ☀) We're confident the new management of this delightful property will continue to uphold its reputation for excellent service. In a peaceful forested setting around a shaded pool, the well-maintained one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments feature an east-meets-west theme with lots of rich timbers, durable high-quality furnishings and wide, airy balconies.

Silvester Palms

APARTMENTS \$\$

(☎07-4055 3831; www.silvesterpalms.com.au; 32 Veivers Rd; apt from \$125; ☀☀☀) These bright, self-contained one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments are an affordable alternative to Palm Cove's city-sized resorts. Think family holiday over romantic resort retreat.

Sanctuary Palm Cove

APARTMENTS \$\$\$

(☎07-4059 2200; www.sanctuarypalmcove.com.au; 6 Cedar Rd; apt from \$175; ☀) At the northern end of the strip, just a hop, skip and jump from the beach, Sanctuary's enticing one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments turn heads. A host of delights await discerning guests: wide open spaces, tiled floors, plantation shutters, stylish high-end furnishings, balconies, Jacuzzis, and a beautiful 25m pool shaded by melaleucas and lush tropical gardens.

Peppers Beach Club & Spa

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎07-4059 9200; www.peppers.com.au; 123 Williams Esplanade; d from \$275; ☀☀☀☀) Step into a world of relaxation and retreat. You'll find it difficult to get out of the enormous sand-edged lagoon pool (with swim-up bar), unless you feel inspired to try the secluded leafy rainforest pool, play tennis or indulge in a spa treatment. All rooms have private balcony spas, and the penthouses (from \$720) have individual rooftop lap pools.

Reef House Resort & Spa

BOULIQUE HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎07-4080 2600; www.reefhouse.com.au; 99 Williams Esplanade; d from \$239; ☀☀☀☀) Once the private residence of an army brigadier, Reef House is more intimate

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

WHY ALL THE STAIRS?

Visitors to Palm Cove and Port Douglas are often shocked to find their accommodation is sans elevator. Strict height limits in Palm Cove and Port Douglas apply – buildings must be no higher than the tallest palm tree, generally three storeys – and it's costly and design-restrictive to incorporate elevators into low-rise complexes. Additionally, salty ocean air means elevators require regular, expensive maintenance. If mobility is a concern, confirm your accommodation has an elevator, or request a ground-floor room, when you book.

and understated than most of Palm Cove's resorts. The whitewashed walls, wicker furniture and big beds romantically draped in muslin all add to the air of refinement. The Brigadier's Bar works on an honesty system; complimentary punch is served by candlelight at twilight.

Eating

The cafes and restaurants lining the scenic Esplanade are generally pricey, but fabulous. Most resorts open their restaurants to nonguests. If your wallet is suffering, consider eating like the locals: **Clifton Village Shopping Centre** in neighboring Clifton Beach has some excellent casual dining options, and a supermarket for self-caterers. Otherwise, Trinity Beach is just 10 minutes' down the road.

Deli Adrift CAFE \$
(☎ 07-4055 3354; 2 Veivers Rd; sandwiches from \$9; ☺ 7am-3.30pm) Friendly service and a relaxed, casual vibe make this a great little spot for coffee, breakfast or flavoursome, freshly made sandwiches. Devour on-site or carry to the beach for a picnic.

Chill Cafe CAFE \$\$
(☎ 0402 665 523; www.chillcafepalmcove.com.au; Shop 1, 41 Williams Esplanade; mains from \$15; ☺ 7am-4pm Sun-Thu, to 8pm Fri & Sat) The *el-primo* position on the corner of the waterfront Esplanade, combined with fun, friendly and attentive service, sexy tunes and a huge airy deck, are all great reasons to try the oversized, tasty bites (think fish tacos and chunky club sandwiches) of this hip

cafe. You can also just chill in the sunshine with a juice or a beer.

A Taste of Italy PIZZA \$\$
(☎ 07-4059 2727; www.atasteofitaly.com.au; Clifton Village Shopping Centre, Clifton Beach; pizzas from \$13; ☺ 11am-9pm) If you just want to kick back and eat pizza in paradise, you can. Whizz over to neighbouring Clifton Beach to pickup, or dial-in for delivery: hundreds do (minimum order \$20, delivery fee \$5). And yes, the pizzas are gooooooood.

★ Vivo Bar & Grill MODERN AUSTRALIAN \$\$\$
(www.vivo.com.au; 49 Williams Esplanade; mains from \$28; ☺ 7.30am-9pm) The most beautiful restaurant on the Esplanade is also one of the finest. Menus (breakfast, lunch and dinner) are inventive and well executed using fresh local ingredients, service is second to none, and the outlook is superb. When you've got those three elements down pat, Palm Cove pricing is justified. Daily set menus are excellent value.

Beach Almond ASIAN, SEAFOOD \$\$\$
(☎ 07-4059 1908; www.beachalmond.com; 145 Williams Esplanade; mains from \$30; ☺ 5.30-10pm Mon-Tue & Thu-Sat, 12-3pm & 5.30-10pm Sun) Awesome and unmissable – the rustic, ramshackle, beachhouse-on-sticks exterior belies the fine dining experience that awaits within. Black-pepper prawns, Singaporean mud crab and Balinese barra are among the fragrant innovations here, combining Asian flavours and spices.

Drinking & Nightlife

Surf Club Palm Cove BAR
(☎ 07-4059 1244; www.surfclubpalmcove.com.au; 135 Williams Esplanade; ☺ 6pm-late) A great locale for a drink in the sunny garden bar, bargain-priced seafood and decent kids' meals.

Apres Beach Bar & Grill BAR
(☎ 07-4059 2000; www.apresbeachbar.com.au; 119 Williams Esplanade; ☺ 7.30am-11pm) The most happening place in Palm Cove, with a zany interior of old motorcycles, racing cars, and a biplane hanging from the ceiling, plus regular live music. Big on steaks of all sorts, too.

Information

Commercially run tour-booking companies are strung along Williams Esplanade; the Cairns & Tropical North Visitor Information Centre (p416) in Cairns can help with bookings.

Palm Cove Shopping Village (113 Williams Esplanade; ☎7am-10pm) has a post office (with internet access, \$4 per hour), small supermarket and newsagent.

i Getting There & Away

Palm Cove is ideally positioned halfway between Cairns and Port Douglas – about a 30 minute drive in either direction. Having your own wheels will open up a myriad of possibilities for exploration. It's possible to pick up a car at Cairns Airport and drive straight here, bypassing Cairns.

Otherwise, Sunbus (p419) route 110 services Clifton Beach and Palm Cove via Smithfield.

Ellis Beach

Little Ellis Beach is the last of Cairns' northern beaches and the closest to the highway, which runs right past it. The long sheltered bay is a stunner, with a palm-fringed, patrolled swimming beach, and a stinger net in summer.

h Activities

★ Hartley's Crocodile Adventures

ANIMAL SANCTUARY
(☎07-4055 3576; www.crocodileadventures.com; Captain Cook Hwy, Wangetti Beach; adult/child \$35/17.50; ☎8.30am-5pm daily) **h** North of Ellis Beach, towards Port Douglas, Hartley's Crocodile Adventures is stealing the limelight from a bunch of other attractions. Their daily range of exciting events includes tours of this croc farm, along with feedings, 'crocodile attack' shows and cruises. Rest assured, you will see crocodiles up close and personal. Not for the squeamish!

h Sleeping & Eating

Ellis Beach

Oceanfront Bungalows

CARAVAN PARK \$
(☎1800 637 036; www.ellisbeach.com; Captain Cook Hwy; unpowered sites \$32, bungalows from \$155; **h** **@** **h**) This low-key, palm-shaded, beachfront slice of paradise, has camping, cabins and contemporary bungalows, all of which enjoy wide-screen ocean views in full high definition.

Ellis Beach Bar 'n' Grill

PUB FOOD \$\$
(☎07-4055 3534; ellisbeachbarandgrill.com.au; Captain Cook Hwy; mains from \$16; ☎8am-8pm) Just try to drive past the Ellis Beach Bar 'n' Grill and not stop for a beer and a burger. Oh, and did we mention \$1 oysters and live music on Sundays?

This is the only place in Ellis to get a meal.

ISLANDS OFF CAIRNS

Green Island

Showing some of the scars that come with fame and popularity, this pretty coral cay, only 45 minutes from Cairns, retains much of its beauty, though more spectacular coral can be viewed on outer reef excursions. The island has a rainforest interior with interpretive walks, a fringe of white-sand beach, and snorkelling just offshore: great for kids. You can walk around the island (which, along with its surrounding waters, is protected by national- and marine-park status) in about 30 minutes.

h Sights & Activities

Great Adventures (p409) and **Big Cat** (☎07-4051 0444; www.greenisland.com.au; adult/child from \$86/43) run day trips, with optional glass-bottomed boat and semisubmersible tours. Alternatively, hop aboard **Ocean Free** (Map p406; ☎07-4052 1111; www.oceanfree.com.au; 1 Spence St; adult/child from \$195/110), and spend most of the day offshore at Pinnacle Reef, with a short stop on the island.

Marineland Melanesia

AQUARIUM
(☎07-4051 4032; www.marinelandgreenisland.com.au; Green Island; adult/child \$18.50/8.50) This family-owned, tropical-themed aquarium has plenty of fish, turtles, stingrays and crocodiles, including Cassius, the largest in captivity: he's thought to be over 100 years old and is 5.5m long! Crocs are fed at 10.30am and 1.30pm daily. There's also a collection of Melanesian artefacts. Your ticket entitles you to reentry throughout the day.

h Sleeping

Green Island Resort

RESORT \$\$\$
(☎1800 673 366; www.greenislandresort.com.au; Green Island; ste from \$670; **h** **@** **h**) Luxurious Green Island Resort maintains a sense of privacy and exclusivity despite having some sections opened to the general public, including restaurants, bars, the ice-cream parlour and water-sports facilities. Spacious, refurbished, split-level suites feature tropical themes, timber furnishings, and inviting balconies. Room rates include breakfast, sunset drinks, guided walks, free nonmotorised water-sports equipment hire, and round-trip high-speed catamaran transfers from Cairns.

Fitzroy Island

A steep mountaintop rising from the sea, Fitzroy Island has coral-strewn beaches, woodlands and walking tracks, one of which ends at a now inactive lighthouse. The most popular snorkelling spot is around the rocks at Nudey Beach, which, despite its name, is not officially clothing optional. Unlike the rest of the island, Nudey actually has some sand on it.

The **Fitzroy Island Turtle Rehabilitation Centre** (www.saveourseaturtles.com.au; Fitzroy Island; adult/child \$5.50/2.20; ☺ tours 2pm) looks after sick and injured sea turtles before releasing them back into the wild. Daily educational tours (maximum 15 guests) visit the new turtle hospital. Book through the **Fitzroy Island Resort** (☎ 07-4044 6700; www.fitzroyisland.com; Fitzroy Island; studios/cabins from \$155/300, 1-/2-bedroom ste from \$215/325; ♿ ♿), where tropi-cool accommodation ranges from sleek studios and beachfront cabins through to luxurious self-contained apartments. The resort's restaurant, bar and kiosk are open to day trippers. It offers excellent value for a Reef Island stay. The resort also manages the **Fitzroy Island Camping Ground** (☎ 07-4044 6700; www.fitzroyisland.com; Fitzroy Island; camp sites \$32): idyllic and isolated, with showers, toilets and barbecues. Advance bookings essential.

To get here, take the 45-minute **Fast Cat** (www.fitzroyisland.com/getting-here; adult/child return \$72/36) departing Cairns Marlin Wharf (berth 20) at 8am, 11am and 1.30pm (bookings essential), or do a day trip with Raging Thunder (p412) and bounce off their ocean trampoline!

Frankland Islands

If the idea of hanging out on one of five uninhabited, coral-fringed islands with excellent snorkelling and stunning white-sand beaches appeals – how can it not? – cruise out to the Frankland Group National Park.

Camping is available on the rainforested High and Russell Islands; contact the **NPRSR** (☎ 13 74 68; www.nprsr.qld.gov.au; permits \$5.45) for advance reservations and seasonal restrictions.

Frankland Islands Cruise & Dive (☎ 07-4031 6300; www.franklandislands.com.au; adult/child from \$159/89) runs excellent day trips which include a cruise down the Mulgrave River, snorkelling gear, tuition and lunch.

Guided snorkelling tours with a marine biologist and diving packages are also offered. Transfers for campers to/from Russell Island are available. Boats depart from Deeral, about 45km south of Cairns; transfers from Cairns and the northern beaches cost \$16 per person.

You'll need to organise your own boat or charter to reach High Island.

ATHERTON TABLELAND

Climbing back from the coast between Innisfail and Cairns is the fertile food bowl of the far north, the Atherton Tableland. Quaint country towns, eco-wilderness lodges and luxurious B&Bs dot greener-than-green hills between patchwork fields, pockets of rainforest, spectacular lakes and waterfalls, and Queensland's highest mountains, Bartle Frere (1622m) and Bellenden Ker (1593m).

Four main roads lead in from the coast: the Palmerston Hwy from Innisfail, the Gillies Hwy from Gordonvale, the Kennedy Hwy from Cairns, and Rex Range Rd between Mossman and Port Douglas.

Getting There & Around

Trans North (p417) has regular bus services connecting Cairns with the Tableland, departing from Cairns Central Railway Station and running to Kuranda (\$8, 30 minutes), Mareeba (\$18, one hour) and Atherton (\$23.40, 1¾ hours) at least once daily, and to Herbovine (\$31, two hours) and Ravenshoe (\$36, 2½ hours) on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

That said, it's worth hiring your own wheels or doing a day tour from Cairns.

Kuranda

POP 2966

Nestled in the rainforest, arty Kuranda is one of Cairns' most popular day trips.

Sights

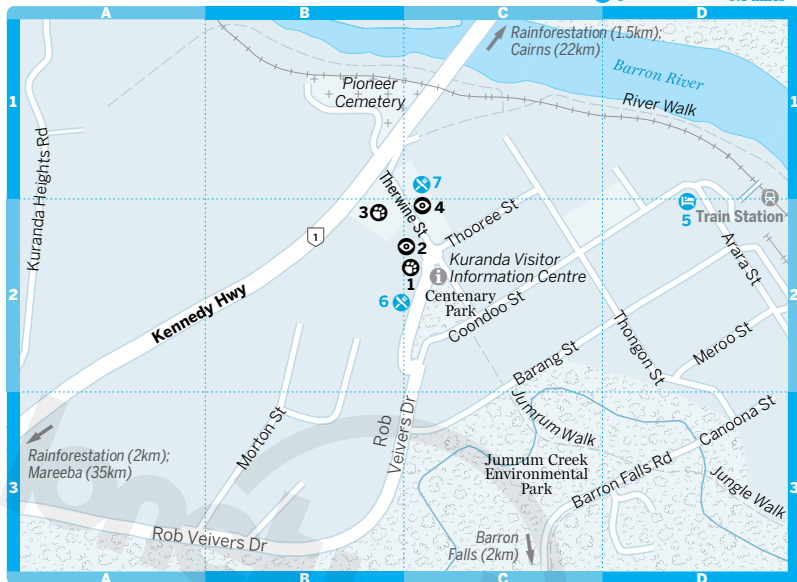
During the Wet, the mighty, must-see Barron Falls are in full thunder; they're a 3km walk down Barron Falls Rd.

Kuranda Original Rainforest Markets

MARKET

(☎ 07-4093 9440; www.kurandaoriginalrainforestmarket.com.au; Thervine St; ☺ 9.30am-3pm) Operating since 1978, these markets are the best place to see local artists at work and hippies at play. Pick up all manner of folksy arts and crafts, and sample local honey and fruit wines.

Kuranda



Heritage Markets

MARKET

(☎07-4093 8060; www.kurandamarkets.com.au; Rob Veivers Dr; ☎9.30am-3.30pm) These markets hawk Australiana souvenirs by the busload, and are home to a handful of wildlife sanctuaries. If they're feeling friendly, you can cuddle a koala (or pat wombats and wallabies) at the **Kuranda Koala Gardens** (☎07-4093 9953; www.koalagardens.com; Rob Veivers Dr; adult/child \$17/8.50, koala photos extra; ☎9.45am-4pm). The **Australian Butterfly Sanctuary** (☎07-4093 7575; www.australianbutterflies.com; Rob Veivers Dr; adult/child/family \$19/9.50/47.50; ☎9.45am-4pm) is Australia's largest butterfly aviary, with over 1500 tropical butterflies: half-hour tours are available. **Birdworld** (☎07-4093 9188; www.birdworldkuranda.com; Rob Veivers Dr; adult/child \$17/8.50; ☎9am-4pm) re-creates the habitats of over 80 species in its unique rainforest environment.

Combination Wildlife Experience tickets cost \$46/23 (adult/child).

Rainforestation

PARK

(☎07-4085 5008; www.rainforest.com.au; Kennedy Hwy; adult/child \$44/23; ☎9am-4pm) Kuranda's rainforest twitters, growls and snaps with all manner of creatures. To get a sense of it, take a shuttle bus (adults \$10, children \$5) to this enormous tourist park outside of town, with

Kuranda

Sights

- 1 Australian Butterfly SanctuaryC2
- Birdworld(see 3)
- 2 Heritage MarketsC2
- 3 Kuranda Koala GardensB2
- 4 Kuranda Original Rainforest MarketsC2

Sleeping

- 5 Kuranda Hotel MotelD2

Eating

- 6 Kuranda Cyber CafeB2
- 7 Petit CafeC1

its wildlife section, rainforest/river tours and interactive Aboriginal experience.

Sleeping & Eating

There are endless eateries catering to the tourist dollar. Kuranda becomes a ghost town at night, once the last train and Skyrail have departed.

Kuranda Hotel Motel

MOTEL \$\$

(☎07-4093 7206; www.kurandahotel.com.au; cnr Coondoo & Arara Sts; s/d \$95/100; ☎☎) Locally known as the 'bottom pub', the back of the convenient Kuranda Hotel Motel has spacious

DON'T MISS

ONE MAN'S DREAM: PARONELLA PARK

One of Cairns' most popular day trips, **Paronella Park** (☎ 07-4065 0000; www.paronella-park.com.au; Japoonvale Rd, Mena Creek; adult/child \$42/21) is actually closer to Innisfail, about 90-minutes drive south. When construction of this art deco castle with its own hydro-electric power system was completed in 1935, the world was an entirely different place. Self-made Spanish immigrant José Paronella built the place as a gift to his wife Margarita. He opened the incongruously sited property and pleasure gardens to a grateful public shortly after their construction. He died in 1948, and the park is now privately owned and National Trust listed. The magic and mystery of this phenomenal property, with more nooks, crannies and sources of fascination then can be described here, await your custom. Nearby camping and quaint on-site cabins are available.

Northern Experience Eco Tours (☎ 07-4058 0268; www.northernexperience.com.au; 77 Kamerunga Rd; tours from adult/child \$120/82) runs day trips from Cairns to the park; a variety of itineraries are available.

'70s-style motel rooms with modern accents. Open for lunch daily and dinner Thursday to Saturday.

Cedar Park Rainforest Resort RESORT \$\$
(☎ 07-4093 7892; www.cedarparkresort.com.au;
250 Cedarpark Rd; s/d from \$130/150; @ ☎)

🌿 Set deep in the bush (a 20-minute drive from Kuranda towards Mareeba), this unusual property is part Euro-castle, part Aussie-bush-retreat. In lieu of TV, visitors goggle at wallabies, peacocks and dozens of native birds; there are hammocks aplenty, creek access, a fireplace, and a gourmet restaurant with well-priced meals and free port wine.

Petit Cafe CREPERIE \$
(www.petitcafekuranda.com; Shop 35, Kuranda
Original Rainforest Markets; crepes \$10-17; ☺ 8am-
3pm) Duck out the back of the original markets for a mouth-watering range of crepes with savoury or sweet fillings. Winning combinations such as macadamia pesto and feta cheese will entice *le drool*.

Kuranda Cyber Cafe CAFE \$
(☎ 07-4093 7576; 8/12 Rob Veivers Dr; meals from
\$8; ☺ 11am-9pm Tue-Sun, from 3pm Mon) Drop in to see the friendly kids at the Kuranda Cyber Cafe for cheap delicious pizzas, barra burgers and the best caramel milkshake we've had in a long time. One of the few eateries in town that remains open after dark.

Petit Cafe CREPERIE \$
(www.petitcafekuranda.com; Shop 35, Kuranda
Original Rainforest Markets; crepes \$10-17; ☺ 8am-
3pm) Duck out the back of the original markets for a mouth-watering range of crepes with savoury or sweet fillings. Winning combinations such as macadamia pesto and feta cheese will entice *le drool*.

i Information

Kuranda Visitor Information Centre (☎ 07-4093 9311; www.kuranda.org; Centenary Park; ☺ 10am-4pm) The knowledgeable staff at the unmissable, map-laden visitor centre in Centenary Park are happy to make recommendations.

i Getting There & Away

Kuranda is as much about the journey as the destination: the Skyrail (p418) and Kuranda Scenic Railway (p418) are where it's at. If you're on a budget, you can also get to Kuranda with Trans North (p417) and John's Kuranda Bus (p418).

Atherton

POP 7288

The largest town of the same-named Tableland offers year-round picking jobs and a handful of attractions. Contact the **Atherton Visitor Information Centre** (☎ 07-4091 4222; www.itablelands.com.au; cnr Main & Silo Rds) for up-to-date work info and self-drive itineraries.

👁 Sights & Activities

Serious mountain bikers rate the area's well-maintained trails. For details visit www.nprsr.qld.gov.au/parks/herberton-range/mountain-bike.html.

Hou Wang Miao TEMPLE
(☎ 07-4091 6945; www.houwang.org.au; 86 Herberton Rd; adult/child \$10/5; ☺ 11am-4pm Wed-Sun) Thousands of Chinese migrants came to the region in search of gold in the late 1800s. All that's left of Atherton's Chinatown now is this corrugated-iron temple museum, run by the National Trust. Admission includes a guided tour.

Hou Wang Miao TEMPLE
(☎ 07-4091 6945; www.houwang.org.au; 86 Herberton Rd; adult/child \$10/5; ☺ 11am-4pm Wed-Sun) Thousands of Chinese migrants came to the region in search of gold in the late 1800s. All that's left of Atherton's Chinatown now is this corrugated-iron temple museum, run by the National Trust. Admission includes a guided tour.

Crystal Caves MUSEUM
(☎ 07-4091 2365; www.crystalcaves.com.au; 69 Main St; adult/child \$22.50/10; ☺ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun, closed Feb)

Crystal Caves is a gaudy mineralogical museum that houses the world's biggest amethyst geode (more than 3m high and weighing 2.7

tonnes). Crack a geode and take home your own glittery, gazillion-year-old souvenir.

Sleeping

Barron Valley Hotel

HOTEL \$

(☎07-4091 1222; www.bvhotel.com.au; 53 Main St; dm \$40, s/d with bathroom \$60/85; 🍷🍷) This hotel is an art deco beauty, with tidy rooms and a **restaurant** (mains \$18-35) serving hearty meals, including giant steaks.

Yungaburra

POP 1150

If you have limited time, head straight to lovable Yungaburra, Queensland's largest National Trust village. A local platypus colony, 19 heritage-listed sites and stunning surrounds make it a popular retreat for those in the know. Abundant, quality accommodation means it's the perfect place to lay one's head in the Tableland.

Sights & Activities

Curtain Fig

NATURE

(☎07-4091 4222; Fig Tree Rd, East Barron) The sacred, 500-year-old Curtain Fig tree (sign-posted 3km out of town) is a spectacular example of a parasitic fig with a gigantic curtain of dangling roots.

Avenue of Honour

MEMORIAL

(www.avenueofhonour.com.au; Tinaburra Dr) By Lake Tinaroo, this touching memorial to Australian soldiers lost in conflict in Afghanistan opened in 2013, and features a spectacular grove of Illawarra flame trees.

Yungaburra Markets

MARKET

(www.yungaburramarkets.com; Gillies Hwy; ☎7.30am-12.30pm 4th Sat of the month) On the fourth Saturday of every month the town is besieged by day trippers hunting for crafts and local produce at these vibrant markets.

Platypus Viewing

WILDLIFE WATCHING

(Gilles Hwy) **FREE** If you're very quiet, you might catch a glimpse of a timid monotreme at this platypus viewing platform on Peterson Creek. Dusk and dawn give you your best chance.

Festivals

Tablelands Folk Festival

MUSIC

(www.tablelandsfolkfestival.org) This fabulous community event held each October in Yungaburra and neighbouring Herberton features music, workshops, performances and a market.

Sleeping

★ On the Wallaby

HOSTEL \$

(☎07-4095 2031; www.onthewallaby.com; 34 Eatham Rd; camping \$10, dm/d with shared bathroom \$24/55; 🍷) This cosy hostel features hand-made timber furniture and mosaics, spotless rooms and no TV! Nature-based tours (\$40) include night canoeing; tour packages and transfers (one way \$30) are available from Cairns.

Eden House Retreat

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎07-4089 7000; www.edenhouse.com.au; 20 Gillies Hwy; d from \$175; 🍷🍷🍷) Set among gardens behind an historic homestead in the village centre are romantic cottages with large spa baths and raised beds, and family-oriented villas. An on-site restaurant serves dinner Tuesday through Saturday.

Eating & Drinking

Nick's Restaurant

SWISS, ITALIAN \$\$

(☎07-4095 9330; www.nicksrestaurant.com.au; 33 Gillies Hwy; mains from \$8.50; ☎11.30am-3pm Sat & Sun, 5.30-11pm Tue-Sun) Friendly and fun – think Swiss chalet with costumed staff, beer steins, a piano-accordion serenade and maybe some impromptu yodelling. Food spans schnitzels to smoked pork loin with sauerkraut, plus several vegetarian options.

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

HISTORIC VILLAGE HERBERTON

Historic Village Herberton (☎07-

4097 2002; www.herbertonhistoricvillage.com.au; 6 Broadway; adult/child \$25/12;

☎9am-5pm, last entry 3.30pm) A must-see on any comprehensive Tablelands trip is this fascinating and unique village, comprised of over 50 heritage buildings, restored and relocated to their current location. Exhibits range from the school to the sawmill, the bank to the Bishop's house, the coach-house to the camera store and everything in between. Memorabilia includes working farm equipment, antique cars and a printing press. There's nothing quite like it anywhere else in Australia.

The village is 90-minutes' drive from Cairns in the sweet, sleepy Tablelands township of Herberton.

DON'T MISS

MALANDA & THE MILLAA MILLAA WATERFALLS CIRCUIT

If you need to escape the heat, the shady, croc-free Malanda Falls, about 75km southwest of Cairns, have been tamed into a kind of public swimming pool. **Guided rainforest walks** (per person \$16; ☀️ 9.30am & 11.00am Sat & Sun, bookings essential), led by members of the Ngadjonji community, can be organised through the **Malanda Falls Visitor Centre** (📞 07-4096 6957; www.malandafalls.com; Malanda-Atherton Rd; ☀️ 9.30am-4.30pm), opposite the falls. Enquire here for the low-down on the Millaa Millaa **Waterfalls Circuit** (www.millaamillaa.com.au), a picturesque loop 25km further south, near the dairy community of Millaa Millaa.

Take in four of the Tableland's picturesque waterfalls on a leisurely 15km circuit, beginning 1km east of Millaa Millaa off the Palmerston Hwy. You'll soon arrive at the 'most-photographed', 12m Millaa Millaa Falls, the best for swimming. Zillie Falls, 8km further on, are reached by a short trail leading to a lookout above the falls. Next, at Ellinjaa Falls a 200m walking trail leads down to a rocky swimming hole at the base of the falls. A further 5.5km down the Palmerston Hwy there's a turn-off to Mungalli Falls.

Hungry? Warm your bones by the fireplace at the **Falls Teahouse** (📞 07-4097 2237; www.fallsteahouse.com.au; 6 Theresa Creek Rd; meals from \$9; ☀️ 10am-5pm), or soak up rolling farmland views on the back verandah, as you hove into dishes like pan-fried barra and local beef pies. Accommodation is available.

If you dig the serenity, midway between Malanda and Millaa Millaa you'll find the **Canopy Treehouses** (📞 07-4096 5364; www.canopytreehouses.com.au; Hogan Rd, Tarzali, via Malanda; d from \$199; 📶) 🌿. These luxuriously appointed treehouses are nestled among 100 acres of old-growth rainforest, with abundant inquisitive wildlife to observe. Two-night minimum stay.

Lake Eacham Hotel

PUB

(📞 07-4095 3515; 6-8 Kehoe Pl; ☀️ 11am-11pm) Better known as the 'Yungaburra Pub', the downstairs dining room and swirling wooden staircase of this grand old dame are original and inspirational: we hope they don't change a thing. Cheap and cheery accommodation is available upstairs; enquire at the bar.

i Information

Yungaburra Visitor Information Centre

(📞 07-4095 2416; www.yungaburra.com; 16 Cedar St) The utterly delightful volunteers at Yungaburra's immaculate Visitor Information Centre can help recommend accommodation. Be sure to pick up the *Old Town Loop* walking guide. If Syb's around, see if she'd be happy to have a yarn about the town through Indigenous eyes. Internet access is available.

i Getting There & Away

You'll need your own wheels to get to Yungaburra, and two feet and a heartbeat once you're here. Access is via the steep and windy Gilles Hwy, heading south from Cairns, or on the Palmerston Hwy (via Kuranda, Mareeba and Atherton) from the north. Either way, it's about an hour's drive.

Lake Tinaroo

Lake Tinaroo was allegedly named when a prospector stumbled across a deposit of alluvial tin and, in a fit of excitement, shouted 'Tin! Hurroo!'. The excitement hasn't died down since, with locals fleeing the swelter of the coast for boating, waterskiing and shoreline lolling. **Barramundi fishing** is permitted year-round, though you'll need to pick up a permit. Or you might like to head out for a fish, a BBQ or a glass of wine during a sunset cruise aboard a super-comfy 'floating lounge room', skipped by **Lake Tinaroo Cruises** (📞 0457 033 016; www.laketinaroocruises.com.au; 2/4hr boat charters \$200/300).

The 28km **Danbulla Forest Drive** winds its way through rainforest and softwood plantations along the north side of the lake. There are five Queensland Parks campgrounds in the Danbulla State Forest. All have water, barbecues and toilets; contact **NPSRS** (📞 13 74 68; www.npsr.qld.gov.au; permits \$5.45) for essential advance bookings. Otherwise, **Lake Tinaroo Holiday Park** (📞 07-4095 8232; www.laketinaroholidaypark.com.au; 3 Tinaroo Falls Dam Rd, Tinaroo Falls; unpowered/powerd sites \$27/31, cabins from \$89; 📶📶📶) has mod-cons and rents out boats (\$90 per half day) and canoes (\$10 per hour).

Crater Lakes National Park

Part of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, the two mirrorlike, croc-free crater lakes of **Lake Eacham** and **Lake Barrine** are easily reached by sealed roads off the Gillies Hwy. Camping is not permitted.

Lake Barrine is the largest of the lakes, and is cloaked in thick old-growth rainforest; a 5km walking track around its edge takes about 1½ hours. Stop for Devonshire tea at the charming **Lake Barrine Rainforest Tea House**, (☎07-4095 3847; www.lakebarrine.com.au; Gillies Hwy; mains from \$8; ☺9am-3pm) perched over the lakefront. Lake Eacham's clear waters are idyllic for swimming and turtle spotting; there are sheltered picnic areas, a pontoon and a boat ramp. The 3km lake-circuit track is an easy one-hour walk.

Each of the four individually themed **Crater Lakes Rainforest Cottages** (☎07-4095 2322; www.craterlakes.com.au; Lot 17, Eacham Close; d \$240; ☼☺) is a romantic hideaway in its own private patch of rainforest, replete with candles, fresh flowers, wood stoves, spa baths, full kitchens with breakfast hampers and fruit to feed the birds! For something more basic, the **Lake Eacham Tourist Park** (☎07-4095 3730; www.lakeeachamtouristpark.com; Lakes Dr; unpowered/powered sites \$22/25, cabins \$90-110; ☼) has shady camp sites and cute cabins.

PORT DOUGLAS

POP 3205

From its humble origins as a sleepy 1960s fishing village, Port Douglas has grown into a sophisticated alternative to Cairns' hectic tourist scene. With the outer Great Barrier Reef less than an hour offshore, the Daintree Rainforest practically in the backyard, and more resorts than you can poke a stick at, a growing number of flashpackers, cashed-up couples and fiscally flush families now choose Port Douglas as their base, leaving Cairns at the airport.

The town's main attraction is Four Mile Beach, a pristine strip of palm-fringed, white sand which begins at the eastern end of Macrossan St, the main drag for shopping, wining and dining. On the western end of Macrossan you'll find the picturesque Dickson Inlet and Reef Marina, where the rich and famous park their aquatic toys.

Sights

Trinity Bay Lookout

VIEWPOINT

(Island Point Rd) Head to Trinity Bay Lookout for spectacular views of the Coral Sea and nearby coral cays.

St Mary's by the Sea

CHURCH

(☎0418 456 880; 6 Dixie St) **FREE** Worth a peek inside (when it's not overflowing with wedding parties), this quaint, nondenominational, white timber church was built in 1911.

Wildlife Habitat Port Douglas

ZOO

(☎07-4099 3235; www.wildlifehabitat.com.au; Port Douglas Rd; adult/child \$33/16.50; ☺8am-5pm) This sanctuary endeavours to keep and showcase native animals in enclosures that mimic their natural environment, while allowing you to get up close to koalas, kangaroos, crocs, cassowaries and more. Tickets are valid for three days. It's 4km from town; head south along Davidson St.



Activities

Ballyhooley Steam Railway

MINIATURE TRAIN

(☎07-4099 1839; www.ballyhooley.com.au; 44 Wharf St; adult/child day passes \$10/5; ☺Sun) Kids will get a kick out of this cute miniature steam train. Every Sunday (and some public holidays), it runs from the little station at Reef Marina to St Crispins Station. A round trip takes about one hour; discounts are available for shorter sections.

Port Douglas Yacht Club

SAILING

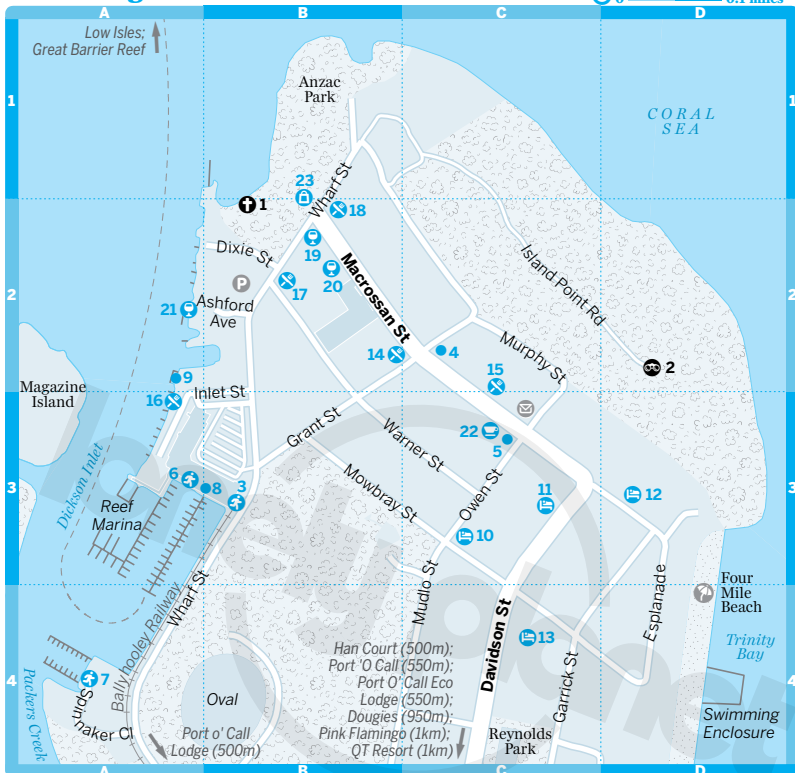
(☎07-4099 4386; www.portdouglasyachtclub.com.au; 1 Spinnaker Ct; ☺from 4pm Wed) Free sailing

YEEE-HAA: MAREEBA RODEO

Mareeba revels in a Wild West atmosphere, with local merchants selling leather saddles, handcrafted bush hats and the oversized belt buckle of your bronco-bustin' dreams. July's **Mareeba Rodeo** (www.mareebarodeo.com.au) is one of Australia's biggest and best, with bull riding, a 'beaut ute' muster and boot scootin' country music. The **Mareeba Heritage Museum & Tourist Information Centre** (☎07-4092 5674; www.mareebaheritagecentre.com.au; Centenary Park, 345 Byrnes St; ☺9am-5pm) **FREE** has info on the rodeo, the town's history, and it's handful of local attractions.

Port Douglas

0 200 m
0 0.1 miles



Port Douglas

📍 Sights

- 1 St Mary's by the Sea B2
2 Trinity Bay Lookout D2

🚣 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 3 Ballyhooley Steam Railway B3
4 Blue Dive C2
5 BTS Tours C3
6 Port Douglas Boat Hire A3
7 Port Douglas Yacht Club A4
8 Quicksilver B3
9 Reef Sprinter A2

🏠 Sleeping

- 10 Hibiscus Gardens C3
11 Mantra Aqueous on Port C3
12 Martinique on Macrossan D3
13 Peppers Beach Club C4

🍴 Eating

- 14 Cafe Fresq B2
15 Little Larder C2
16 On the Inlet A3
17 Salsa Bar & Grill B2
18 Sassi Cucina e Bar B2

🍷 Drinking & Nightlife

- 19 Court House Hotel B2
20 Iron Bar B2
Port Douglas Yacht Club (see 7)
21 Tin Shed A2
22 Whileaway Bookshop Cafe C3

🛒 Shopping

- 23 Port Douglas Markets B1

with club members every Wednesday afternoon: sign on from 4pm. Those chosen to go sailing are expected to stay for dinner and drinks in the club postsailing.

Port Douglas Boat Hire

BOATING

(☎07-4099 6277; www.pdboathire.com.au; Berth C1, Reef Marina; rentals from \$33) Rents dinghies (per hour \$33) and canopied, family-friendly pontoon boats (per hour \$43), plus fishing gear.

Lady Douglas

(☎ 07-4099 1603; www.ladydouglas.com.au; 1½hr cruises adult/child \$30/20) Lovely paddle steamer running croc-spotting tours (including a sunset cruise) along the Dickson Inlet.

CRUISES

Bike N Hike

(☎ 0477-774 443; www.bikenhiketours.com.au; bike adventures from \$99) Mountain bike down the aptly named Bump Track on a cross-country bike tour, or take on a beserk night tour.

CYCLING

Fishing Port Douglas

(☎ 0409 610 869; www.fishingportdouglas.com.au; share/sole charters per half day from \$90/320) Private and shared charters on the river and reef. Gear and bait included.

FISHING

Tours

Port Douglas is a hub for tours. Many tours based out of Cairns, including some white-water rafting and hot-air ballooning trips, also offer pickups from Port Douglas, and vice versa.

Great Barrier Reef

The outer reef is closer to Port Douglas than it is to Cairns, and the unrelenting surge of visitors has had a similar impact on its condition here. You will still see colourful corals and marine life, but it is patchy in parts.

Most day tours depart from Reef Marina. Tour prices usually include reef tax, snorkelling, transfers from your accommodation, lunch and refreshments. An introductory, controlled scuba dive, with no certification or experience necessary, costs around \$250, with additional dives around \$50; certified divers will pay around \$260 for two dives with all gear included.

Several operators visit the Low Isles, a small, idyllic group of islands surrounded by beautiful coral reef just 15km offshore; you've got a great chance of spotting turtles here.

★ Quicksilver

(☎ 07-4087 2100; www.quicksilver-cruises.com; Reef Marina; adult/child \$225/113) Major operator with fast cruises to its own pontoon on Agincourt Reef. Try an 'ocean walk' helmet dive (\$158) on a submerged platform. Also offers 10-minute scenic helicopter flights (\$165, minimum two passengers).

CRUISE

Poseidon

(☎ 07-4087 2100; www.poseidon-cruises.com.au; Reef Marina; adult/child \$226/158) Now part of the Quicksilver group, this luxury cata-

SNORKELLING

maran specialises in trips to the Agincourt Ribbon Reefs.

Blue Dive

(☎ 0427 983 907; www.bluedive.com.au; 32 Macrossan St; reef intro diving courses from \$285) Port Douglas' most acclaimed dive operator offers a range of programs including live-aboard trips and PADI certification. Private, guided scuba dives of the reef are available.

DIVING

Sailaway

(☎ 07-4099 4200; www.sailawayportdouglas.com; adult/child \$225/155) Runs a popular sailing and snorkelling trip to the Low Isles that's great for families. Also offers 90-minute twilight sails (\$60) off the coast of Port Douglas.

SAILING, SNORKELLING

Sail Tallarook

(☎ 07-4099 4070; www.sailtallarook.com.au; adult/child half-day sails \$120/100) Sunset cruises (from \$60, Tuesday and Thursday), including cheese platters, on an historic 30m yacht.

SAILING

Reef Sprinter

(☎ 07-4099 6127; www.reefsprinter.com.au; Shop 3, Reef Marina; adult/child \$120/100) This 2¼-hour round trip gets to the Low Isles in just 15 minutes for one to 1½ hours in the water. Half-day outer reef trips are also available (from \$200).

SNORKELLING, BOATING

Tours The Daintree & Around

There are 4WD tours from Cairns via Port Douglas to Cooktown and Cape York.

★ Tony's Tropical Tours

(☎ 07-4099 3230; www.tropicaltours.com.au; Lot 2, Captain Cook Hwy; day tours from \$185) This luxury, small-group (eight to 10 passengers) tour operator specialises in trips to out-of-the-way sections of the Mossman Gorge and Daintree Rainforest (Tour A, adult/child \$185/155), and Bloomfield Falls and Cape Trib (Tour B, adults only \$210 – good mobility required). Highly recommended.

OUTDOORS

COME TO CARNIVALE!

For 10 days at the end of May, Port Douglas comes alive to the tune of its own **Carnivale** (www.carnivale.com.au): there's a parade, live music, performances galore and lashings of good food and wine. Check the website for details and be sure to book in advance if your visit coincides with the festival. Rooms fill fast and rates go through the roof!

Daintree Discovery Tours

OUTDOORS
(☎ 07-4098 2878; www.daintreediscoverytours.com.au; 12 Thooleer Close, Mossman; half-day tours adult/child from \$90/70) Runs half- and full-day tours (adult/child \$180/160) of Mossman Gorge, Cassowary Falls and Cape Trib, including waterfalls, river cruises and friendly, knowledgeable guides.

Back Country Bliss Adventures

SNORKELLING
(☎ 07-4099 3677; www.backcountryblissadventures.com.au; trips \$99) Go with the flow as you drift-snorkel down the Mossman River. Expect to see turtles and freshwater fish. Kid-friendly. A range of tours are available.

BTS Tours

OUTDOORS
(☎ 07-4099 5665; www.btstours.com.au; 49 Macrossan St; adult/child from \$83/52) Tours to the Daintree Rainforest and Cape Trib, including canoeing, swimming and rainforest walks.

🛏 Sleeping

Port Douglas' main drawback is that much of its accommodation is located off the 5km-long Port Douglas Rd, while almost all restaurants, bars, pubs and the marina are on the main drag, Macrossan St. Taxis aren't superfluous; walking home after a night on the tiles can be a real drag.

★ Port O' Call Eco Lodge

HOSTEL \$
(☎ 07-4099 5422; www.portocall.com.au; cnr Port St & Craven Close; 5-4-bed dm from \$25/30, d from \$69; 🍷🍷🍷🍷) 🌿 Under friendly new

management, this fabulous, chilled-out hostel has colourful spick-and-span dorms and private rooms, iPod docks, free tablets and wi-fi for guest use, a lovely pool and a kick-ass bar and bistro. All rooms have en suite bathrooms. Highly recommended.

Dougies

HOSTEL \$
(☎ 07-4099 6200; www.dougies.com.au; 111 Davidson St; camp sites per person \$17, dm \$26, d \$68; 🍷🍷🍷🍷) It's easy to hang about Dougies' sprawling grounds in a hammock by day and move to the bar at night. If you can summon the energy, bikes and fishing gear are available for rent. Free pickup from Cairns on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday.

★ Pink Flamingo

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$
(☎ 07-4099 6622; www.pinkflamingo.com.au; 115 Davidson St; d from \$135; 🍷🍷🍷🍷) Flamboyantly painted rooms, private walled courtyards (with hammocks, outdoor baths and outdoor showers) and a groovy al fresco bar make the Pink Flamingo Port Douglas' hippest digs. Outdoor movie nights, gym and bike rental are also on offer.

Mantra Aqueous on Port

APARTMENTS \$\$
(☎ 07-4099 0000; www.mantra.com.au; 3-5 Davidson St; d from \$140; 🍷) You can't beat the location of this unique resort with four individual pools. All ground floor rooms have swim-up balconies, and all rooms have outdoor Jacuzzi tubs! Studio, one- and two-bedroom apartments are available. Great rates and a fresh new colour scheme in 2015 make this an excellent all-rounder and good for romancin'. Longer stays attract cheaper rates.

TURTLE COVE BEACH RESORT

Turtle Cove Beach Resort (☎ 07-4059 1800; www.turtlecove.com; Captain Cook Hwy; d/ste from \$157/279; 🍷🍷🍷🍷) Midway between Palm Cove and Port Douglas, this resort earns props for being the only gay venue in Tropical Far North Queensland: there's not even a gay bar in Cairns! Lucky locals are free to frequent this fun little resort with its own, stunning, private beach. There's a beautiful pool shaded by gum trees, lazy hammocks and a relaxed, welcoming vibe. Clothing is optional.

Rooms have been recently refurbished, and rates include continental breakfast. Of course, the on-site bar and bistro is open for lunch, dinner and pina colodas, darling! Stay longer, pay less.

Martinique on Macrossan

APARTMENTS \$\$
(☎ 07-4099 6222; www.martinique.com.au; 66 Macrossan St; r from \$129; 🍷🍷) This terracotta block contains lovely, tiled one-bedroom apartments, each with a small kitchen, a private balcony, colourful accents and plantation shutters. Wonderful hosts and an excellent main street location near the beach seal the deal. The pool has six coves and is supervised by a lavish elephant and dolphin shrine. Great value.

QT Resort

RESORT \$\$
(☎ 07-4099 8900; www.qtportdouglas.com.au; 87-109 Port Douglas Rd; d from \$159; 🍷🍷🍷🍷) Fresh, fun and funky, this one is aimed at a trendy, 20-to-30-something crowd. There's a lagoon pool and swim-up bar, retro-kitsch rooms with free wi-fi, all-round good-lookin' staff, and DJs spinning lounge beats in Estil-

io, the cocktail lounge. We rate the breakfast buffet as one of the best we've seen: you really have to see it...and eat it.

Hibiscus Gardens

RESORT \$\$

(☎ 07-4099 5995; www.hibiscusportdouglas.com.au; 22 Owen St; d from \$170; 🍷🍷🍷) Balinese influences such as teak furnishing and fixtures and plantation shutters – plus the occasional Buddha – give this stylish resort an exotic ambience. Their day spa is renowned as one of the best in town.

★ Peppers Beach Club

RESORT \$\$\$

(☎ 1300 987 600; www.peppers.com.au/beach-club; 20-22 Davidson St; d from \$207; 🍷🍷) A killer location and an exceptional, enormous, sandy lagoon-pool. Luxurious, airy apartments with high-end furnishings and amenities. Surround sound systems, Jacuzzis and swim-up access in some rooms. For all this plus a management team that doesn't miss a trick, Peppers earns our top choice in the hotly contested Port Douglas luxury resort category. Family friendly, but recommended for young romantics.



Eating

Port Douglas has some fittingly sophisticated dining; reservations are advised. Self-caterers will find a large supermarket in the **Port Village Shopping Centre** (Macrossan St).

★ Port 'O Call

AUSTRALIAN \$\$

(☎ 07-4099 5422; www.portocall.com.au; cnr Port St & Craven Close; mains from \$16; ☺ 6pm-9.30pm Tue-Sun) The kitchen of this equally regarded hostel turns out some seriously good grub at reasonable prices, in a cheery casual environment. Standard staples of fish, steak, pastas and salads are anything but ordinary, and the talented chef's daily specials (including Mexican nights!) are well worth a look-see. Fettuccine carbonara, which can so often be way too creamy, is just right.

Cafe Fresco

CAFE \$\$

(☎ 07-4099 6111; 27 Macrossan St; breakfast from \$10, mains from \$15; ☺ 7.30am-3pm) Best for breakfast (though you'll likely have to wait for a table) this al fresco cafe on Macrossan serves up big helpings of deliciousness, killer coffee and kick-start-your-day fresh juices.

Little Larder

CAFE \$\$

(☎ 07-4099 6450; Shop 2, 40 Macrossan St; breakfast from \$6, sandwiches \$12.50; ☺ 7.30am-3pm

Wed-Mon) Brekky until 11.30am then serious sandwiches from noon: take your pick – we bet you'll be happy either way. The coffee is great and you can also try freshly brewed and super healthy kombucha tea.

Han Court

CHINESE \$\$\$

(☎ 07-4099 5007; 85 Davidson St; mains from \$16; ☺ noon-2pm & 5-10pm) If Port's fancy buzzword-du-jour menus are wearing you out, head to Han for good old-fashioned comfort food. They've been in town forever, and dish up familiar – but very tasty – staples, such as honey chicken and black-bean beef, on a lovely candlelit deck. The dumplings are amazing.

★ Flames of the Forest

MODERN AUSTRALIAN \$\$\$

(☎ 07-4099 5983; www.flamesoftheforest.com.au; Mowbray River Rd; dinner with show, drinks & transfers from \$182) This unique experience goes way beyond the traditional concept of 'dinner and a show', with diners escorted deep in to the rainforest for a truly immersive night of theatre, culture and gourmet cuisine. Bookings essential.

Salsa Bar & Grill

MODERN AUSTRALIAN \$\$\$

(☎ 07-4099 4922; www.salsaportdouglas.com.au; 26 Wharf St; mains from \$22.50; ☺ noon-3.00pm & 5.30-9.30pm; 🍷) Salsa is a stayer on Port's fickle scene. For something a little different try the Creole jambalaya (rice with prawns, squid, crocodile and smoked chicken), or the roo with tamarillo marmalade. We think you'd like a cocktail with that.

On the Inlet

SEAFOOD \$\$\$

(☎ 07-4099 5255; www.portdouglassseafood.com; 3 Inlet St; mains from \$24; ☺ noon-11.30pm) Jutting out over Dickson Inlet, tables here are spread out along a huge deck, where you can await the 5pm arrival of George the 250kg groper, who comes to feed most days. Take up the bucket-of-prawns-and-a-drink deal (\$18 from 3.30pm to 5.30pm).

Sassi Cucina e Bar

ITALIAN \$\$\$

(☎ 07-4099 6744; www.sassi.com.au; cnr Wharf & Macrossan Sts; mains from \$26; ☺ noon-10pm) You may have to scrimp and save to splurge on an authentic Italian feast at this legendary local eatery. It's the brainchild of owner-chef Tony Sassi, who hails from Abruzzo in the mother country. His spin on seafood is world renowned: the balanced flavours of each dish should linger longer than your Four Mile Beach tan.

MOSSMAN GORGE

Mossman, 20km north of Port Douglas, is an obligatory stop on a visit to **Mossman Gorge** (www.mossmangorge.com.au), and a good place to fill up and stock up if you're heading further north.

Just 5km west of town, in the southeast corner of Daintree National Park, Mossman Gorge forms part of the traditional lands of the Kuku Yalanji people. Carved by the Mossman River, the gorge is a boulder-strewn valley where sparkling water washes over ancient rocks. From the fantastic **Mossman Gorge Centre** (☎07-4099 7000; www.mossmangorge.com.au; Dreaming walk adult/child \$50/25; ☀8am-6pm), which houses an art gallery and bush-tucker restaurant, walking tracks loop along the river to a refreshing swimming hole – take care, as the currents can be swift. There's a picnic area, but no camping. The complete circuit takes over an hour, or you can get a shuttle bus (every 15 minutes; adults \$8.50, children \$4.25) into the heart of the gorge. Bookings for the unforgettable 1½-hour Indigenous-guided **Kuku-Yalanji Dreamtime Walks** (adult/child \$50/25; ☀9am, 11am & 3pm) can be made through the Mossman Gorge Centre.



Drinking & Nightlife

Tin Shed

BAR
(☎07-4099 5553; www.thetinshed-portdouglas.com.au; 7 Ashford Ave; ☀10am-10pm) Port Douglas' Combined Services Club is a rare find: bargain dining on the waterfront. Even the drinks are cheap.

Iron Bar

PUB
(☎07-4099 4776; www.ironbarportdouglas.com.au; 5 Macrossan St; ☀11am-3am) Wacky outback decor sets the scene for a wild night out. Nightly 8pm cane-toad races (\$5) are a must.

Court House Hotel

PUB
(☎07-4099 5181; courthousehotelpordouglas.com.au; cnr Macrossan & Wharf Sts; ☀11am-late) Elegant and unmissable, the old 'Courty' is a lively local, with bands on weekends. There's good pub grub, too.

Whileaway Bookshop Cafe

CAFE
(☎07-4099 4066; whileaway.com.au; 2/43 Macrossan St; ☀7am-6pm) For smart coffees in literary surrounds.

Port Douglas Yacht Club

BAR
(☎07-4099 4386; www.portdouglasyachtclub.com.au; 1 Spinnaker Close; ☀4-10pm Mon-Fri, noon-10pm Sat & Sun) There's a spirited nautical atmosphere at the PDYC. Inexpensive meals are served nightly.



Entertainment

Moonlight Cinema

CINEMA
(www.moonlight.com.au/port-douglas; QT Resort, 87-109 Port Douglas Rd; adult/child \$16/12; ☀Jun-Oct) Bring a picnic or hire a bean bag for outdoor twilight movie screenings. Check website for details.



Shopping

Port Douglas Markets

MARKET
(Anzac Park, Macrossan St; ☀8am-1pm Sun) These Sunday markets feature handmade crafts and jewellery, local tropical fruits and fresh produce.

Information

The *Port Douglas & Mossman Gazette* comes out every Thursday, and has heaps of local info, gig guides and more.

There's no impartial, government-accredited visitor information centre in Port Douglas.

Douglas Shire Historical Society (☎07-4098 1284; www.douglashistory.org.au; Wharf St, Port Douglas; admission \$2; ☀10am-1pm Tue, Thu, Sat & Sun) Download DIY historical walks through Port Douglas, Mossman and Daintree, or chat with a local at the on-site Court House museum.

Post Office (☎07-4099 5210; 5 Owen St; ☀8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat)

Getting There & Away

About half of the 65km drive between Cairns and Port Douglas hugs the coast, affording magical vistas: drivers, keep your eyes on the road!

Port Douglas Bus (☎07-4099 5665; www.portdouglasbus.com.au; one way adult/child \$34/20) Operates daily services (\$34, 1½ hours) between Port Douglas and Cairns via Palm Cove and Cairns Airport.

Coral Reef Coaches (☎07-4098 2800; www.coralreefcoaches.com.au; adult from \$44) Connects Port Douglas with Cairns (\$44, 1¼ hours) via Palm Cove and Cairns Airport, and offers a local shuttle around town.

Sun Palm (☎07-4087 2900; www.sunpalmtransport.com.au; adult from \$44) Has fre-

quent daily services between Port Douglas and Cairns (\$44, 1½ hours) via the northern beaches and the airport.

i Getting Around

Major car-rental chains have branches here, or try

Paradise Wheels (☎ 07-4099 6625; www.paradisewheels.com.au; 7 Warner St) and keep it local.

Port Douglas Bike Hire (☎ 07-4099 5799; www.portdouglasbikehire.com.au; cnr Wharf & Warner Sts; per day from \$19) Has high-performance bikes for hire as well as tandems (\$32 per day). Free delivery and pickup.

THE DAINTREE

The Daintree represents many things: World Heritage rainforest, a river, a reef, a village and the home of its traditional custodians, the Kuku Yalanji people. It encompasses the coastal lowland area between the Daintree and Bloomfield Rivers, where the rainforest meets the coast. It's a fragile, ancient ecosystem, once threatened by logging but now protected as a national park.

Daintree River to Cape Tribulation

Part of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, the spectacular region from the Daintree River north to Cape Tribulation features ancient rainforest, sandy beaches and rugged mountains. North of the Daintree River, electricity is supplied by generators or, increasingly, solar power. Shops and services are limited, and mobile-phone reception is largely nonexistent. The **Daintree River Ferry** (douglas.

qld.gov.au/community/daintree-ferry; car/motorcycle \$13.50/5, bicycle & pedestrian \$1; ☀6am-midnight, no bookings) carries wanderers and their wheels across the river every 15 minutes or so.

👁 Sights & Activities

On the steep, winding road between Cape Kimberley and Cow Bay the **Walu Wugiriga Lookout** offers sweeping views beyond the Daintree River inlet; it's especially breathtaking at sunset.

The white-sand **Cow Bay Beach**, at the end of Buchanan Creek Rd, rivals any coastal paradise.

Daintree Discovery Centre NATURE RESERVE (☎ 07-4098 9171; www.discoverthedaintree.com; Tulip Oak Rd; adult/child/family \$32/16/78; ☀8.30am-5pm) This award-winning attraction's **aerial walkway**, which includes a 23m tower used to study carbon levels, takes you high into the forest canopy. A theatre screens films on cassowaries, crocodiles, conservation and climate change. An excellent Aboriginal audio-guide tour is included in the admission fee; tickets are valid for seven days.

Daintree Rainforest Tours TOUR (☎ 07-4098 9126; www.daintreerainforest.net.au; Cape Tribulation Rd; guided walks \$55-300) Book ahead for expert guided rainforest walks which include a dip in Cooper Creek. A variety of itineraries are available.

Cape Tribulation Wilderness Cruises CRUISE (☎ 0457 731 000; www.capetribcruises.com; Cape Tribulation Rd; adult/child from \$30/22) Join the only tour boat permitted in the Cape Trib section of the Daintree National Park for insightful mangrove and croc-spotting tours.

DAINTREE NATIONAL PARK: THEN & NOW

The greater Daintree Rainforest is protected as part of Daintree National Park, but this protection is not without controversy. In 1983, despite conservationist blockades, what's now the Bloomfield Track was bulldozed through lowland rainforest from Cape Tribulation to the Bloomfield River. Ensuing publicity led to the federal government nominating Queensland's wet tropical rainforests for World Heritage listing, generating state government and timber industry opposition. In 1988 the area was inscribed on the World Heritage List and commercial logging here was banned.

UNESCO World Heritage listing (whc.unesco.org) doesn't affect ownership rights or control. Since the 1990s the Queensland Government and conservation agencies have attempted to buy back and rehabilitate freehold properties in the area, adding them to the Daintree National Park. Sealing the road to Cape Tribulation in 2002 triggered the buy back of even more land, which, coupled with development controls, now bears the fruits of forest regeneration. Check out **Rainforest Rescue** (www.rainforestrescue.org.au) for more information.

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

SOMETHING SPECIAL:
BLOOMFIELD LODGE

Bloomfield Lodge (☎ 07-4035 9166; www.bloomfieldlodge.com.au; Weary Bay Rd, Cape Tribulation; d per person incl all meals from \$350; ♿ ♿ ♿) Backing on to the Daintree Rainforest, deliciously all-inclusive Bloomfield Lodge is one of FNQ's best-kept secrets. Friendly staff pull out all the stops to make you feel special, from your arrival greeting to a warm farewell as the boat pulls away from the dock. Rooms are airy and simple, with stunning views out to sea – some have Jacuzzis on the deck.

Mouthwatering meals are a communal affair and feature fresh local seafood, delicious salads and hearty breakfasts.

This is one for that special occasion, or for when you really need to get away from it all. Access is by water only, from tiny Ayton wharf.

🛏 Sleeping

Lync-Haven

Rainforest Retreat

CAMPGROUND \$

(☎ 07-4098 9155; www.lynhaven.com.au; Lot 44, Cape Tribulation Rd; unpowered/power sites \$14/32, d from \$99; ♿) This family-friendly retreat is set on a 16-hectare property on the main road, about 5km north of Cow Bay, and has walking trails and hand-reared kangaroos. Its **restaurant** serves robust steaks, good pasta and fish.

Thornton Beach Bungalows

BUNGALOW \$\$

(☎ 07-4098 9179; www.thorntonbeach.com; Cape Tribulation Rd; cabins/houses \$95/250) Paradise found: two adorable teeny-weeny cabins with verandahs, and a modern house with an amazing tub and beds for four, just across the road from the beach. Two-night minimum.

Epiphyte B&B

B&B \$\$

(☎ 07-4098 9039; www.rainforestbb.com; 22 Silkwood Rd; s/d/cabins from \$80/110/150) This laid-back place is set on a lush 3.5-hectare property. Individually styled rooms are of varying sizes, but all have their own verandah. A spacious, private cabin features a patio, kitchenette and sunken bathroom.

Daintree Rainforest
Bungalows

BUNGALOW \$\$

(☎ 07-4098 9229; www.daintreerainforestbungalows.com; Lot 40, Spurwood Rd; bungalows from

\$105) Great value accommodation comprising simple, freestanding cabins with covered decks in a tropical orchard close to the beach, forest and swimming holes. Two-night minimum stay.

★ Heritage Lodge

LODGE \$\$\$

(☎ 07-4098 9321; www.heritagelodge.net.au; Lot 236/R96 Turpentine Rd, Diwan; cabins from \$250; ♿ ♿) The friendly, accommodating owners of this wonderful retreat in the forest will do their best to make sure you feel at home here. Their comfortable, tastefully renovated cabins have air conditioning and free wi-fi. The crystal clear waters of their Cooper Creek swimming hole are something to behold. On-site dining is superb.

🍴 Eating

South of Cooper Creek, **Rainforest Village** (☎ 07-4098 9015; www.rainforestvillage.com.au; Cape Tribulation Rd; ☺ 7am-7pm) sells groceries, ice and fuel.

Daintree Ice Cream Company

ICE CREAM \$

(☎ 07-4098 9114; Lot 100, Cape Tribulation Rd; ice creams \$6; ☺ 11am-5pm) We dare you to drive past this all-natural ice-cream producer with a palette of flavours that changes daily.

Thornton Beach Kiosk

KIOSK \$

(☎ 07-4098 9118; Cape Tribulation Rd; mains \$12-25; ☺ 9am-4pm) Grab a beer and a burger and enjoy the breathtaking views from the sprawling deck of this on-the-beach kiosk; better still, grab the \$10 fish-and-chips special and eat 'em on the beach.

Cow Bay Hotel

PUB FOOD \$\$

(☎ 07-4098 9011; Cape Tribulation Rd; mains from \$14; ☺ 11am-9.30pm) If you're craving a decent counter meal, a coldie and that Aussie country pub atmosphere, the Cow Bay (adjacent to the turn-off to the beach) is your only option: thankfully, it delivers on expectations.

On the Turps

MODERN AUSTRALIAN \$\$\$

(☎ 07-4098 9321; Lot 236/R96 Turpentine Rd, Diwan; mains from \$18; ☺ 12-2pm & 5.30-9pm) The restaurant of the Heritage Lodge serves up some of the Daintree's finest cuisine in a delightfully atmospheric indoor/outdoor setting by the babbling crystal waters of Cooper Creek. Inventive dishes include kangaroo fillet steak, crocodile dumplings and gourmet pies.

Cape Tribulation

This isolated piece of paradise retains a frontier quality, with road signs alerting drivers to cassowary crossings, and croc warnings that make beach strolls a little less relaxing.

The rainforest tumbles right down to magnificent Myall and Cape Tribulation beaches, which are separated by a knobby cape. The little village here marks the end of the road: beyond here, the strictly 4WD-only Bloomfield track continues to Cooktown.

There is no public transport to Cape Tribulation, nor airport shuttles to any accommodation beyond the Daintree River. To get here, rent your own wheels or join a day tour.

Sights

Bat House

WILDLIFE CENTRE

(☎ 07-4098 0063; www.austrop.org.au; Cape Tribulation Rd; admission \$5; ☀ 10.30am-3.30pm Tue-Sun) A nursery for injured or orphaned fruit bats (flying foxes), run by conservation organisation Austrop.

Mt Sorrow

WALKING

Fit walkers should lace up early for the strenuous but rewarding Mt Sorrow Ridge walk (7km, five-to-six hours return, start no later than 10am). The marked trail begins about 150m north of the Kulki picnic area car park.

Tours & Activities

★ Ocean Safari

SNORKELLING

(☎ 07-4098 0006; www.oceansafari.com.au; Cape Tribulation Rd; adult/child \$128/82) Ocean Safari leads small groups (25 people maximum) on

snorkelling cruises to the Great Barrier Reef, just half an hour offshore.

Jungle Surfing

OUTDOORS, HIKING

(☎ 07-4098 0043; www.junglesurfing.com.au; ziplines \$90, night walks \$40, combo \$120; ☀ night walks 7.30pm) Get right up into the rainforest on an exhilarating flying fox (zipline) ride through the canopy. Guided night walks follow biologist-guides, who shed light on the dark jungle. Rates include pickup from Cape Trib accommodation (self-drive not allowed).

D'Arcy of the Daintree

DRIVING TOUR

(☎ 07-4098 9180; www.darcyofdaintree.com.au; 116 Palm Rd, Diwan; tours adult/child from \$129/77) Exciting, entertaining small-group 4WD trips up the Bloomfield Track to Wujal Wujal Falls and as far as Cooktown.

Paddle Trek Kayak Tours

KAYAKING

(☎ 07-4098 0062; www.capeTRIBpaddletrek.com.au; Lot 7, Rykers Rd; kayak hire per hr \$16-55, trips \$69-79) Guided sea-kayaking trips and kayak hire.

Cape Trib Horse Rides

HORSE RIDING

(☎ 07-4098 0043; www.capeTRIBhorserides.com.au; per person from \$99; ☀ 8am & 2.30pm) Leisurely rides along the beach and into the forest.

Sleeping

★ Cape Trib Beach House

HOSTEL, RESORT \$

(☎ 07-4098 0030; www.capeTRIBbeach.com.au; 152 Rykers Rd; dm from \$29, cabins from \$150; 🍷 @ 🍷) This is a great choice for everyone, from backpackers to couples and families. Expect friendly management and staff,

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

DAINTREE VILLAGE

You may be racing to the beaches of Cape Trib, but for wildlife lovers it's worth taking the 20km each-way detour to tiny Daintree village. Croc-spotting cruises on the Daintree River are the main event. Try **Crocodile Express** (☎ 07-4098 6120; www.crocodileexpress.com; 1hr cruises adult/child \$23/12; ☀ from 8.30am) or **Daintree River Wild Watch** (☎ 0447 734 933; www.daintreeriverwildwatch.com.au; 2hr cruises adult/child \$60/35), which has informative sunrise birdwatching cruises and sunset photography nature cruises.

The 15 boutique banyans (treehouses) of **Daintree Eco Lodge & Spa** (☎ 07-4098 6100; www.daintree-ecolodge.com.au; 20 Daintree Rd; treehouses from \$215; 🍷 @ 🍷) sit high in the rainforest a few kilometres south of the village. Nonguests are welcome at its superb **Julaymba Restaurant** (☎ 07-4098 6100; www.daintree-ecolodge.com.au; 20 Daintree Rd; mains \$26.50-40; ☀ breakfast, lunch & dinner), where the menu makes tasty use of local produce.

No fuel is available in Daintree village.

Cape Tribulation Area

0 2.5 miles 5 km



Cape Tribulation Area

📍 Sights

- 1 Bat House C2
 2 Daintree Discovery Centre B6
 3 Daintree Rainforest B3

🚗 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 4 Cape Tribulation Wilderness Cruises C4
 5 Daintree Rainforest Tours B4
 6 Ocean Safari C2

🛏 Sleeping

- 7 Cape Trib Beach House C1
 8 Cape Tribulation Camping C2
 9 Daintree Rainforest Bungalows C6
 10 Epiphyte B&B B6
 Ferntree Rainforest Resort (see 6)
 11 Heritage Lodge B4
 12 Lync-Haven Rainforest Retreat B5
 13 PK's Jungle Village C2
 14 Rainforest Hideaway C2
 15 Thornton Beach Bungalows C4

🍴 Eating

- 16 Cow Bay Hotel B6
 17 Daintree Ice Cream Company B5
 18 Mason's Store & Cafe C2
 Sandbar (see 8)
 19 Thornton Beach Kiosk C4
 20 Whet C2

🛍 Shopping

- 21 Rainforest Village B5

📍 Information

- Mason's Store (see 18)

and a wide range of accommodation options, from dorms to romantic almost-beachfront cabins. Highlights include a pristine private stretch of beach, a tidy communal kitchen, and a kick-ass open-deck licensed restaurant and bar.

PK's Jungle Village

HOSTEL \$

(☎ 07-4098 0040; www.pksjunglevillage.com; Cape Tribulation Rd; unpowered sites per person \$15, dm from \$25, d from \$125; 🗺 📶 📺 📺) You can reach Myall Beach by boardwalk from this longstanding backpackers' hub. The on-site Jungle Bar is Cape Trib's entertainment epicentre.

Rainforest Hideaway

B&B \$\$

(☎ 07-4098 0108; www.rainforesthidaway.com; 19 Camelot Close; d from \$129) 🌿 This colourful B&B was single-handedly built by its owner, artist and sculptor 'Dutch Rob' – even the

furniture and beds are handmade. A sculpture trail winds through the property.

Ferntree Rainforest Resort

RESORT \$\$

(☎ 07-4098 0000; www.ferntreerainforestlodge.com.au; Camelot Close; dm from \$28, d from \$130; 🗺 📶 📺 📺) Cape Trib's only resort-style accommodation could do with some TLC, but the key elements are all in place. There's a lovely pool area in the manicured grounds, free wi-fi in the lobby, and airy rooms and cabins with plantation shutters.

🍴 Eating

Whet

AUSTRALIAN \$\$

(☎ 07-4098 0007; www.whet.net.au; 1 Cape Tribulation Rd; mains from \$16.50; ☺ 11.30am-3pm & 5.30-9.30pm) Cape Trib's coolest address and undisputed best dining, offering trendy Mod-Oz cuisine and occasional themed nights and events.

Sandbar

PIZZA \$\$

(☎ 07-4098 0077; Lot 11, Cape Tribulation Rd; pizzas from \$14; ☺ 5-9pm Apr-Nov) The wood-fired pizzas and general good-vibes at **Cape Tribulation Camping** (☎ 07-4098 0077; www.capetribcamping.com.au; Lot 11, Cape Tribulation Rd; unpowered sites from \$15; 📶) are turning heads. Refreshing beverages are available!

Mason's Store & Cafe

CAFE \$\$

(☎ 07-4098 0016; 3781 Cape Tribulation Rd; mains from \$15; ☺ 10am-4pm Sun-Thu, to 7pm Fri & Sat) This laid-back local does good fish and chips and huge steak sarnies. There's a small general and liquor store, a tourist information counter and, best of all, a crystal-clear, croc-free swimming hole (admission by gold coin donation) out the back.

📍 Information

Mason's Store (☎ 07-4098 0070; Cape Tribulation Rd; ☺ 8am-6pm) Has regional info including Bloomfield Track conditions.

North to Cooktown

There are two routes to Cooktown from the south: the coastal route from Cape Tribulation via the 4WD-only Bloomfield Track, and the inland route, sealed all the way via the Mulligan Hwy.

Inland Route

The inland route skirts along the western side of the Great Dividing Range for 332km

IF YOU CAN AFFORD IT: LIZARD ISLAND

The five islands of the Lizard Island Group lie 33km off the coast about 100km north from Cooktown. Lizard – the main island – has rocky, mountainous terrain, glistening white beaches and spectacular fringing reefs for snorkelling and diving. Most of the island is national park, teeming with wildlife. Sumptuous accommodation and dining epitomise five-star luxury at the *ultra*-exclusive **Lizard Island Resort** (☎1300 863 248; www.lizardisland.com.au; Anchor Bay; d from \$1699; ♿@☎☎), decimated by Cyclone Ita in April 2014 and exquisitely rebuilt and refurbished in 2015. There's limited bush camping at the island's **camp site** (☎13 74 68; www.nprs.qld.gov.au/parks/lizard-island/camping.html; Watsons Bay; per person \$5.75). There are no shops on the island. Book air transfers to/from Cairns (return \$670, one hour) through the resort.

Daintree Air Services (☎1800 246 206; www.daintreeair.com.au; day tours from \$750) offers spectacular full-day tours from Cairns including gourmet lunch, snorkelling gear, transfers and a local guide to take you to some of the most magnificent spots in this pristine ecosystem.

(about 4½ hours' drive) from Cairns to Cooktown.

If you're coming from Port Douglas, you'll pass through **Julatten**. This village is home to the romantic, sensationally designed and deliciously isolated, luxury, self-contained cabins of **Sweetwater Lodge** (☎07-4094 1594; www.sweetwaterlodge.com.au; 2472 Mossman-Mt Molloy Rd, Julatten; d from \$225), where the rainforest meets the bush. Sweetwater is popular with birdwatchers and those seeking solace. Minimum two-night stay.

About 40km north of Mareeba, and 45km southwest of Port Douglas, **Mt Molloy** (population 274) marks the start of the **Mulligan Highway** and journeys north. Since its mining heyday, the township has shriveled to comprise a pub, bakery, post office and cafe serving allegedly world-famous burgers: they are certainly enormous. It's about 30km from here to don't-blink-or-you'll-miss-it **Mt Carbine**; if you turn off the Mulligan Hwy about 8km before that (when you see the signs), you'll find the purpose-built camp sites, restored tobacco-workers cottages and delightful B&B accommodation of **Bustard Downs Organic Farm** (☎07-4094 3094; www.bustarddowns.com.au; 61-03 East Mary Rd, Maryfarms; camping \$12.50, cottages \$220, B&B s/d \$135/220).

If you have a high-clearance 4WD and are interested in exploring some fascinating ruins, the ghost town of **Maytown**, once the glorious centre of the Palmer River gold rush (1873–83), is about 80km inland from the highway. It's an extreme but rewarding drive, complete with river crossings, and not for the inexperienced. The turn-off is 17km south of the **Palmer River Roadhouse**

(☎07-4060 2020; Peninsula Development Rd; unpowered sites \$20, cabins \$45-90), one of your last stops for tucker and fuel before things get rough. There's a nice campground and cheery cabins for those ready to bed-down. Check out the quaint local history museum inside and ask Andrew anything about journeys further north.

It's another 15km to **Lakeland**, where the Mulligan meets the legendary **Peninsula Developmental Rd**. Take it west and you're on your way to **Laura**. Beyond Laura, it's unsealed, seriously hard going, not-for-the-faint-hearted 4WD-ing to **Cape York**. Most folks stay on the Mulligan for another 80km to Cooktown: about 30km before you arrive, the eerie, awe-inspiring and other-worldly **Black Mountain National Park**, comprising thousands of black granite boulders formed 260 million years ago, marks the northern end of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. The sacred mountain is cloaked in mystery and legend: ask a local!

Coastal Route

The legendary 4WD-only Bloomfield Track connecting Cape Tribulation to Cooktown traverses creek crossings, diabolically steep climbs and patchy surfaces. It can be impassable for weeks on end during the Wet, and even in the Dry you should check road conditions, as creek crossings are affected by tide times. It's unsuitable for trailers. The track is a contentious one: bulldozed through pristine forest in the early '80s, it was the site of fierce battles between protestors and police. Unsubstantiated rumours abound that the track is soon to be sealed.

It's 8km from Cape Trib to **Emmagen Creek**, from where the road climbs and dips steeply, and turns sharp corners, then follows the broad Bloomfield River before crossing it 22km further in. Turn left immediately after the bridge to see the **Bloomfield Falls**. Crocs inhabit the river – the site is significant to the local Indigenous Wujal Wujal community. The half-hour **Walker Family Walking Tours** (☎07-4040 7500; www.bamaway.com.au; adult/child \$25/12.50; ☺by reservation) of the falls and surrounding forest are highly recommended.

About 5km north of Wujal Wujal, the **Bloomfield Track Takeaway & Middle-shop** (☎07-4060 8174; dishes from \$10; ☺8am-10pm Tue-Sat, to 8pm Sun & Mon) sells fast food, fuel, fishing tackle and groceries. North of Bloomfield, several walks begin from **Home Rule Rainforest Lodge** (☎07-4060 3925; www.home-rule.com.au; Rossville; unpowered sites per adult/child \$10/5, r adult/child \$35/20), at the end of a bumpy 3km driveway. Spotless facilities include shared cabins and a communal kitchen; meals and canoe hire are also available. Home Rule is ground zero for the weekend-long **Wallaby Creek Festival** (www.wallabycreekfestival.org.au; ☺end Sep), a three-day, multicultural, family-friendly festival featuring roots, blues and Indigenous music.

Soldier on another 9km to the fun-tastic **Lion's Den Hotel** (☎07-4060 3911; www.lionsdenhotel.com.au; 398 Shiptions Flat Rd, Helenvale; unpowered/powerd sites per person \$12/28, s/d \$45/65; ☺☺): an iconic oasis with a tangible history dating back to 1875. You'll find fuel, ice-cold beer, strong coffee, awesome pizzas and pub grub. If you can, spend a night camping or in one of the pole-tent cabins. Don't miss a swim in the croc-free creek.

Explore the surrounding rainforest and waterfall at **Mungumby Lodge** (☎07-4060 3158; www.mungumby.com; Helenvale; s/d \$260/279; ☺☺) ☑. En suite bungalows are scattered among the lawns and mango trees. Rates include breakfast. Nature tours available. About 4km further north, the Bloomfield Track meets the sealed Mulligan Hwy, from where it's 28km to Cooktown.

COOKTOWN

POP 2339

At the southeastern edge of Cape York Peninsula, Cooktown is a small place with a big history: for thousands of years, Waymbuurr

was the place the local Guugu Yimithirr and Kuku Yalanji people used as a meeting ground, and it was here that on 17 June 1770, Lieutenant (later Captain) Cook beached the *Endeavour*, which had earlier struck a reef offshore from Cape Tribulation. Cook's crew spent 48 days here repairing the damage, making Cooktown Australia's first (albeit transient) non-Indigenous settlement.

Today, it's a hotspot for history hounds, work-hungry World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farm-ers (WWOOFers), and those for whom happiness is a fishing rod and an esky of coldies.

👁 Sights & Activities

Cooktown's main street, Charlotte St, has some beautiful 19th-century buildings.

After-dark, the town centre can feel a little disconcerting, especially for single female travellers, and for everyone on Friday and Saturday nights. It's tough country up here; exercise reasonable caution.

Grassy Hill

VIEWPOINT

Cook climbed this 162m-high hill looking for a passage through the reefs. At dusk and dawn the 360-degree views of the town, river and ocean are truly spectacular! Easy vehicular access is up a steep road from town. Walkers can ascend via bush trail from Cherry Tree Bay.

Nature's Powerhouse

INTERPRETIVE CENTRE

(☎07-4069 6004; www.naturespowerhouse.com.au; off Walker St; admission by donation; ☺9am-5pm) Incorporating adjacent **Cooktown Botanical Gardens**, this fantastic environmental centre is home to two excellent galleries: the **Charlie Tanner Gallery**, with pickled and preserved creepy-crawlies, and the **Vera Scarth-Johnson Gallery**, displaying botanical illustrations of the region's native plants.

James Cook Museum

MUSEUM

(☎07-4069 5386; www.nationaltrust.org.au/qlld/JamesCookMuseum; cnr Helen & Furneaux Sts; adult/child \$10/3; ☺9.30am-4pm) Cooktown's finest building (an 1899 convent) houses well-preserved relics including journal entries, the cannon and anchor from the *Endeavour*, and displays on local Indigenous culture.

Bicentennial Park

PARK

Home to a much-photographed bronze **Captain Cook statue** and nearby **Milbi Wall** – a 12m-long mosaic depicting the history of the local Gungarde (Guugu Yimithirr) people,

from creation stories through to attempts at reconciliation. Just out in the water there's a rock marking the spot where Cook ran aground.

Fishing Cooktown

FISHING

(☎ 07-4069 5980; www.fishingcooktown.com; Lot 4 Wilkinson St; per person from \$115) Fishing and heli-fishing trips plus croc-spotting, bird-watching, mud-crabbing and eco-tours.

Tours

There are no regular diving or snorkelling trips to the nearby reef. Water-based tours depart from the wharf. Many operators have reduced hours during the Wet.

★ Guurrbi Tours

CULTURAL TOUR

(☎ 07-4034 5020; guurrbitours.blogspot.com.au; tours 2/4hr from \$95/120, self-drive from \$65/85; ☺ Mon-Sat) Nugal-warra family elder Willie Gordon runs revelatory tours using the physical landscape to describe the spiritual one, providing a powerful insight into Aboriginal culture and lore.

Maaramaka Walkabout Tours

CULTURAL TOUR

(☎ 07-4045 6328; www.maaramaka.com.au; tours 1/2hr from \$84/42) Aboriginal cultural stories, rainforest walks, bush tucker and home cooking in a gorgeous setting near Hopevale; call for arrangements.

Cooktown Tours

TOUR

(☎ 1300 789 550; www.cooktowntours.com; tours from adult/child \$60/35) Offers two-hour town tours, and half-day trips to Black Mountain National Park and the Lion's Den Hotel.

★ ★ Festivals & Events

Cooktown Discovery Festival

CULTURAL

(www.cooktowndiscoveryfestival.com) This festival in early June commemorates Cook's landing in 1770 with a costumed reenactment, fancy-dress grand parade and Indigenous events.

Sleeping & Eating

Pam's Place Hostel &

Cooktown Motel

HOSTEL, MOTEL \$

(☎ 07-4069 5166; www.cooktownhostel.com; cnr Charlotte & Boundary Sts; dm \$30, s & d \$60, motel d from \$95; 🏠 🍷 🍷) Cooktown's YHA-associated hostel offers the cheapest sleeps in town. Friendly managers can help find harvest work.

Seaview Motel

MOTEL \$\$

(☎ 07-4069 5377; www.cooktownseaviewmotel.com.au; 178 Charlotte St; d from \$95, townhouses \$235; 🏠 🍷 🍷) A great location opposite the wharf, with tasteful, modern rooms (some with private balconies).

Sovereign Resort Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎ 07-4043 0500; www.sovereign-resort.com.au; cnr Charlotte & Green Sts; d from \$180; 🏠 🍷 🍷) Cooktown's swishest digs have tropical-style rooms, gorgeous gardens, the biggest pool in town and on-site wining and dining.

The Italian

ITALIAN \$\$

(☎ 07-4069 6338; 95 Charlotte St; mains \$13-22; ☺ 4-10pm Tue-Sat) Generous, satisfying portions of hearty Italian fare served in an inviting al fresco atmosphere with occasional live music and efficient service. There's even Chinese on the menu: go figure.

Cooktown Bowls Club

BISTRO \$\$

(☎ 07-4069 5819; 129 Charlotte St; mains from \$15; ☺ 11.30am-2.30pm Wed-Fri, 5.30-10pm daily; 🍷) Big bistro meals. Join the locals in social bowls Wednesday and Saturday afternoons.

Restaurant 1770

MODERN AUSTRALIAN \$\$\$

(☎ 07-4069 5440; 3/7 Webber Esplanade; mains from \$28; ☺ 7.30-9.30am, 11.30am-2pm & 6-9.30pm Tue-Sat; 🍷) Opening on to a romantic waterside deck, Restaurant 1770 gives fresh local fish top billing. Save space for mouth-watering desserts.

Information

Tourist Information Centre (☎ 07-4069

6004; www.naturespowerhouse.com.au; Walker St; ☺ 9am-5pm) In the Nature's Powerhouse complex, friendly staff dispense maps and advice. Ask for John!

Getting There & Around

Cooktown's airfield is 7.5km west of town along Mclvor Rd. **Hinterland Aviation** (☎ 07-4040 1333; www.hinterlandaviation.com.au) has up to three flights daily (Monday to Saturday) to Cairns (one way from \$175, 40 minutes).

Cairns Bus Charters operate the daily **Cairns Cooktown Express** (☎ 07-4059 1423; www.cairnsbuscharters.com/services/cairns-cooktown-express) along the inland route to Cairns (\$79, five hours).



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