

# Welcome to Coastal Queensland

*Let it all hang out in Queensland:  
Australia's holiday haven offers  
beaches, reefs, jungles, uptempo locals  
and a laid-back tropical pace of life.*

## Landscape Diversity

Queensland's most famous 'landscape' is actually underwater: the astonishing 2000km-long Great Barrier Reef. Also off-shore are hundreds of islands, harbouring giant dunes and surreal forests growing in the sand. Back on the mainland, bewitching national parks protect lush rainforests, sparkling lakes and wildlife that ranges from cute and cuddly (koalas) to downright fearsome (crocs). Skyscrapers define the landscape in Surfers Paradise and Brisbane: everywhere else you'll find laid-back beach towns and sugar-cane fields rattling under the Queensland sun.

## Big Adventures

Outdoor Queensland is truly 'great'. Take the Great Barrier Reef for starters: slip on some goggles and ogle one of the most amazing underwater landscapes on earth. There's also white-water river rafting and easygoing kayaking along the coast. Bushwalking here is first-rate: propel yourself along a multiday 'Great Walk', or take a shorter hike through a rainforest gorge or up a mountainside. Sail across the azure Whitsunday waters, or tackle a 4WD adventure along Fraser Island's 'beach highway'. There's also great surfing, skydiving, mountain biking, fishing and hang-gliding to be had.

## On Your Plate & in Your Glass

With a hip caffeine scene, rambling farmers markets and fabulous riverside restaurants, Brisbane has reinvented itself as a foodie destination. The city's alter ego shows up at sunset, when clubs, pubs and small city bars light up the night. Elsewhere in the state – including foodie haunts such as Noosa, Cairns and Port Douglas – you'll find culinary rewards great and small, from fish and chips to sizzling steaks. Wash it down with Queensland's ubiquitous XXXX beer, or hunt down some fine wine from the little-known Granite Belt wine region.

## Urban Enticements

Wrapped around river bends, boom town Brisbane is a glamorous patchwork of neighbourhoods, each with a distinct cultural flavour: bohemian West End; party-central Fortitude Valley; affluent Paddington; exclusive New Farm...explore and soak up the vibes. The Gold Coast should also be high on your list: nightclubs and surf clubs in equal measure. Other hubs include Cairns (gateway for the Daintree and Great Barrier Reef), Noosa (on the Sunshine Coast) and Airlie Beach (to access the Whitsundays). Urban essentials abound: cafes, bars, restaurants, galleries, shops and more.



## Why I Love Coastal Queensland

By Charles Rawlings-Way, Writer

Growing up in a chilly southern Australian city, the very notion of Queensland – with its beaches, islands, sunshine and swaying palms – was irresistible in my imagination. Towns like Mission Beach, Noosa and Port Douglas assumed near-mythical status, demanding to be investigated at the first opportunity. Then, when the time came to actually explore the Sunshine State, the reality didn't disappoint. And I haven't stopped exploring since! From the tropical north to the booming southeast, Queensland is an essential Australian destination.

**For more about our writers, see p320**