

Queensland

HIGHLIGHTS

- Rolling beneath a toothy skyline of rock in the castaway **Numinbah Valley** (p291)
- Threading between the abstract peaks of the **Glass House Mountains** (p304)
- Hitting your stride amidst the throngs on **Cairns' foreshore promenade** (p316)
- Meeting the past preserved in the mining and mill towns of the **Atherton Tableland** (p322)
- Crossing paths with a cassowary on the rainforest road to **Cape Tribulation** (p317)

TERRAIN

Coast-hugging ranges make for a good mix of plains and hills, with most rides in this chapter at least banking onto the slopes.

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You have to love a place where cycling in your boardshorts or bikini is considered *de rigueur*. Queensland is that place. Australia's reef and beef state is an enormous chunk of land, five times larger than Japan and twice the size of Texas, with a strip of coast that has become one of Australia's major tourist features, luring beach bums, sailors, divers, bushwalkers and a steady trickle of touring cyclists.

West of the Great Dividing Range, Queensland is a place for the frontier cyclist but east of the range, against the coast that launched 1000 postcards, there's some fantastic cycling. The rides in this chapter showcase some of the state's finest natural features – the Gold Coast hinterland, the Glass House Mountains, Magnetic Island, the World Heritage-listed Daintree – mostly from the comfort of back roads, away from the Bruce Hwy, which might be one of Australia's most unsuitable cycling roads (think large trucks and tiny road verges).

More than half of Australia's east coast is in Queensland, with the Great Barrier Reef running offshore for much of its length, so it's little surprise that popping in and out of beaches is one of the great pleasures of cycling here – Cape Tribulation and Horseshoe Bay will be proof enough of that. But it's the hinterland that is Queensland's surprise packet, with torrential waterfalls draining from the Atherton Tableland and sharp-tipped lava plugs piercing through rainforest and pineapple plantations behind the Gold and Sunshine Coasts.

Come for the beaches, but expect so much more.

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