



Whitsunday Coast

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Best Places to Eat

- » Bommie Restaurant (p420)
- » Alain's Restaurant (p415)
- » Fish D'vine (p414)

Best Places to Stay

- » Qualia (p420)
- » Paradise Bay (p417)
- » Hayman Island Resort (p420)
- » Platypus Bushcamp (p406)
- » Water's Edge Resort (p412)

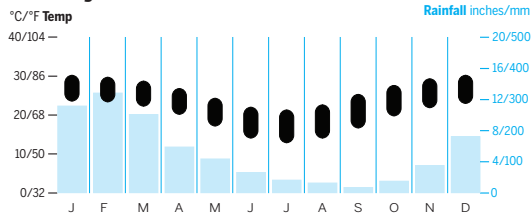
Why Go?

Opal-jade waters and white sandy beaches fringe the forested domes of the stunning subtropical archipelago of the Whitsunday Islands. Sailing through the calm waters of the Coral Sea is simply magical, but there are many ways to savour the island's natural beauty: camping in secluded bays as a modern-day castaway, lazing in a tropical island resort, snorkelling or diving the pristine coral reef.

The gateway to the islands, Airlie Beach, is a vibrant backpacker hub with a continual parade of changing faces and a throbbing nightlife. South of Airlie, overlooking a sea of waving sugar cane, Mackay is the region's major centre, a typical Queensland coastal town with pleasant palm-lined streets. It's a handy base for trips to Finch Hatton Gorge and Eungella National Park – lush, green hinterland oases where platypuses play in the wild.

When to Go

Mackay



June–October

The perfect time to enjoy sunny skies, calm days, mild weather and stinger-free seas.

August Sailboats skim across the water, and parties are held during Airlie Beach Race Week.

September–October Optimal conditions for kayaking around the islands.



Whitsunday Coast Highlights

- 1 Being dazzled by the bright-white silica sand at stunning **Whitehaven Beach** (p421)
- 2 Sailing through the magnificent aquamarine waters of the **Whitsunday Islands** (p407)
- 3 Camping under the stars, hiking nature trails and making

- like an island castaway in the **Whitsunday Islands National Park** (p409)
- 4 Diving and snorkelling the fringing reefs or the outer **Great Barrier Reef** (p408)
- 5 Sipping cocktails by the pool at the luxurious tropical island resort of **Hayman Island** (p420)

- 6 Waiting patiently for a glimpse of a shy platypus and walking in the misty rainforest at **Eungella National Park** (p405)
- 7 Getting wet, swilling beer and partying hard in fun-lovin' **Airlie Beach** (p412)