



Whitsunday Coast

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Mr Bones (p411)
- ➔ Spice n Flavour (p398)
- ➔ Fish D'vine (p410)
- ➔ Jochheims Pies (p416)
- ➔ Kevin's Place (p399)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Qualia (p414)
- ➔ Whitsunday Island camping grounds (p416)
- ➔ Platypus Bushcamp (p402)
- ➔ Kipara (p408)
- ➔ Fernandos Hideaway (p400)

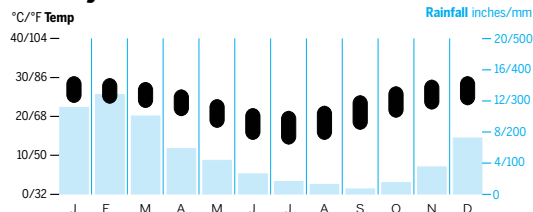
Why Go?

Speckling the calm waters of the Coral Sea, the superlative Whitsunday Islands are one of Australia's greatest natural attractions. Opal-jade waters and pure-white beaches fringe the forested domes of these 'drowned mountains', where you can camp in secluded bays, laze in resorts, snorkel, dive or island-hop through the archipelago. Beneath the shimmering seas, tropical fish swarm through the world's largest coral garden in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The gateway to the islands, Airlie Beach, is a happening backpacker hub with a continuous parade of tanned, happy faces zinging between boats, beaches and banging nightclubs.

South of Airlie, Mackay is a typical coastal Queensland town with palm-lined streets framed by art deco buildings. There's not a lot to do here, but Mackay is a handy base for trips to Finch Hatton Gorge and Eungella National Park – lush hinterland oases where platypuses cavort in the wild. To the north, Bowen has secret beaches and historical street art.

When to Go

Mackay



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

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

Sep–Oct Optimal conditions for kayaking around the islands.



Whitsunday Coast Highlights

- 1 Being dazzled by the bright-white silica sand at stunning **Whitehaven Beach** (p415).
- 2 Sailing through the magnificent aquamarine waters of the **Whitsunday Islands** (p403).
- 3 Camping under the stars, hiking nature trails and making

like an island castaway in the **Whitsunday Islands National Park** (p407).

- 4 Diving and snorkelling the fringing reefs or the outer **Great Barrier Reef** (p404).
- 5 Sipping cocktails by the pool at the luxurious tropical island resort of **Hayman Island** (p415).

6 Waiting patiently for a glimpse of a shy platypus and walking in the misty rainforest at **Eungella National Park** (p401).

7 Getting wet, swilling beer and partying hard in fun-lovin' **Airlie Beach** (p408).