



Cairns, Islands & Highlands

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Why Go?

Cairns has a heady reputation as Australia's reef-diving capital – with the Great Barrier Reef's dazzling marine life and coral-fringed islands a short boat ride offshore – and as tropical Far North Queensland's party-central. But although you could easily spend your entire trip here, some spectacular natural attractions lie just beyond the city limits.

Lush rainforest, waterfalls, volcanic-crater lakes, and a winding coastline of coves, bays and beach communities are all within a couple of hours of Cairns, as are the rich pastoral Atherton Tableland's gourmet food producers, farms and orchards.

The entire region is impressively – and at times overwhelmingly – geared for tourism. Tour operators are an art form in themselves: as well as scuba diving or snorkelling the reef, you can sail, kayak, skydive, fish, golf, bird-watch, hot-air balloon, horse-ride... The only limitations are your budget and your imagination (not necessarily in that order!).

Best Places to Eat

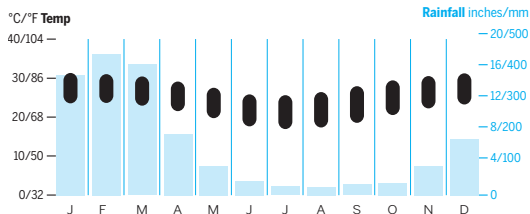
- » Yorkeys Knob Boating Club (p332)
- » Ochre (p316)
- » L'Unico Trattoria (p333)
- » Beach Almond (p334)

Best Places to Stay

- » Crater Lakes Rainforest Cottages (p352)
- » Tropic Days (p313)
- » Sebel Reef House (p334)

When to Go

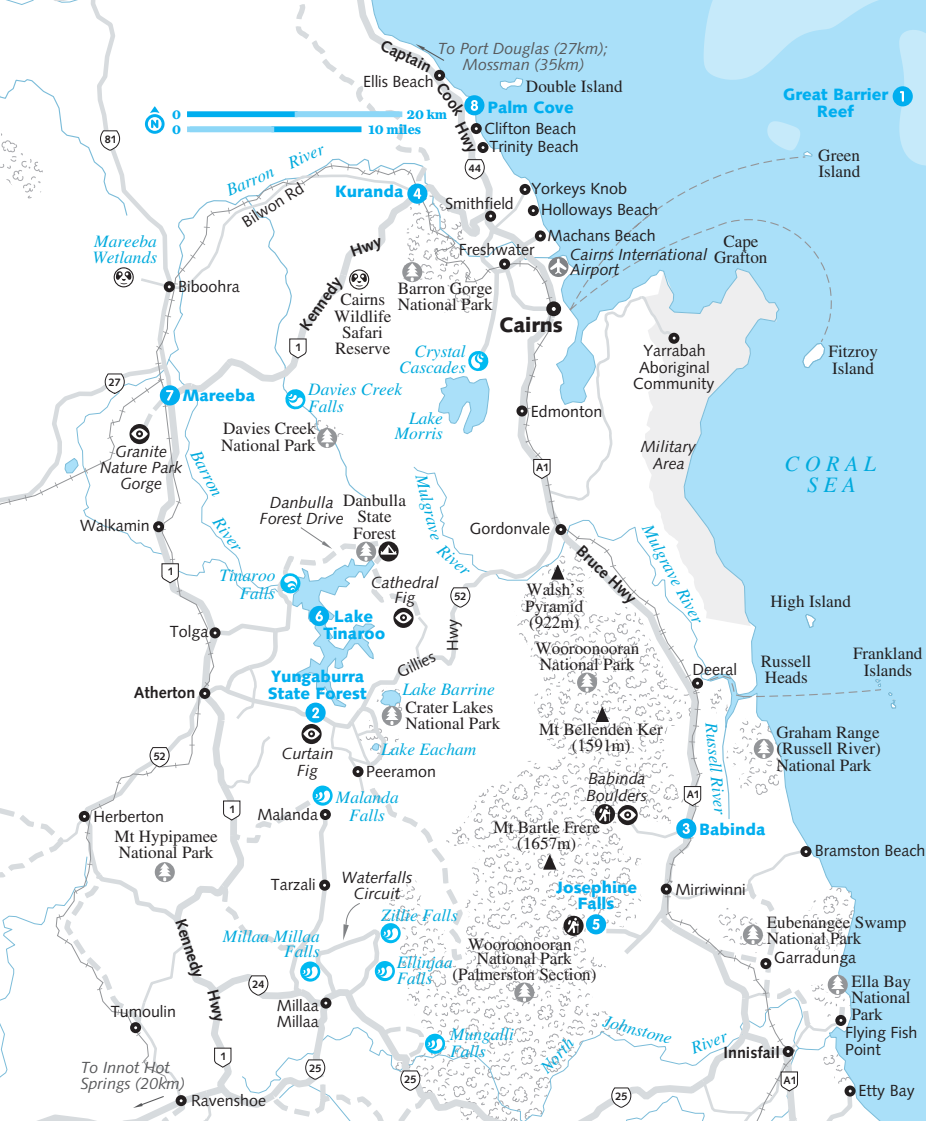
Cairns



July Bucking broncos and country music entertain the crowds at Mareeba's annual rodeo.

September Party-hard Cairns parties even harder during the Cairns Festival.

October Roots and blues bands headline the Yungaburra Folk Festival.



Cairns, Islands & Highlands Highlights

1 Diving, snorkelling and swimming among the fish, turtles and anemones that live in the multicoloured corals of the **Great Barrier Reef** (p311) from Cairns

2 Platypus-spotting along the creek in the picturesque village of **Yungaburra** (p349)

3 Making your own

didgeridoo with local Aboriginal artists in **Babinda** (p330)

4 Riding the Skyrail cable car through the rainforest to the alternative market town of **Kuranda** (p342) and returning to Cairns by Scenic Railway

5 Splashing in the natural pools and waterfalls at **Josephine Falls** (p331)

6 Fishing, barbecuing or simply watching the sun set on a **Lake Tinaroo** cruise (p351)

7 Drifting up, up and away over the Atherton Tableland in a hot-air balloon from **Mareeba** (p312)

8 Donning the shades and people-watching on the esplanade at **Palm Cove** (p333)