



# Whitsunday Coast

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## Best Places to Eat

- » Bommie Restaurant (p255)
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## Best Places to Stay

- » Qualia (p254)
- » Paradise Bay (p251)
- » Hayman Island Resort (p256)
- » Platypus Bushcamp (p236)
- » Water's Edge Resort (p246)

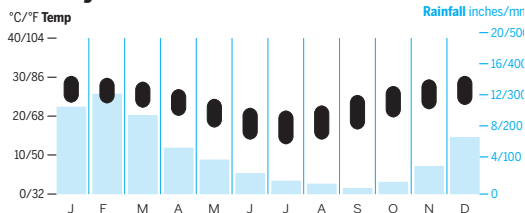
## Why Go?

In the calm waters of the Coral Sea, the beautiful Whitsunday Islands are one of Australia's greatest natural tourist attractions. Opal-jade waters and white sandy beaches fringe the forested domes of these 'drowned' mountains where you can camp in secluded bays as a modern-day castaway, laze in a tropical island resort, snorkel, dive, or set sail and island-hop through this stunning archipelago. Beneath the shimmering seas are swarms of tropical fish and the world's largest coral garden in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The gateway to the islands, Airlie Beach, is a vibrant backpacker hub with a continual parade of changing faces and a throbbing nightlife. Further north lie the unspoilt coastal gems of Hydeaway Bay and Cape Gloucester.

South of Airlie, and overlooking a sea of sugar cane, Mackay is a typical Queensland coastal town with palm-lined streets. There's not much to do here but it's a handy base for trips to Finch Hatton Gorge and Eungella National Park – lush 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

Boats skim across the water, and parties spill into the street 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** (p258)
- ② Sailing through the magnificent aquamarine waters of the **Whitsunday Islands** (p239)
- ③ Camping under the stars, hiking nature trails, and

making like an island castaway in the **Whitsunday Islands National Park** (p242)

- ④ Diving and snorkelling the island's fringing reefs or the outer **Great Barrier Reef** (p239)
- ⑤ Sipping cocktails by the pool at the luxurious tropical

island resort of **Hayman Island** (p256)

- ⑥ Waiting patiently for a glimpse of a shy platypus and walking in the misty rainforest at **Eungella National Park** (p235)

- ⑦ Getting wet, swilling beer and partying hard in fun-lovin' **Airlie Beach** (p243)