

Townsville & North Coast



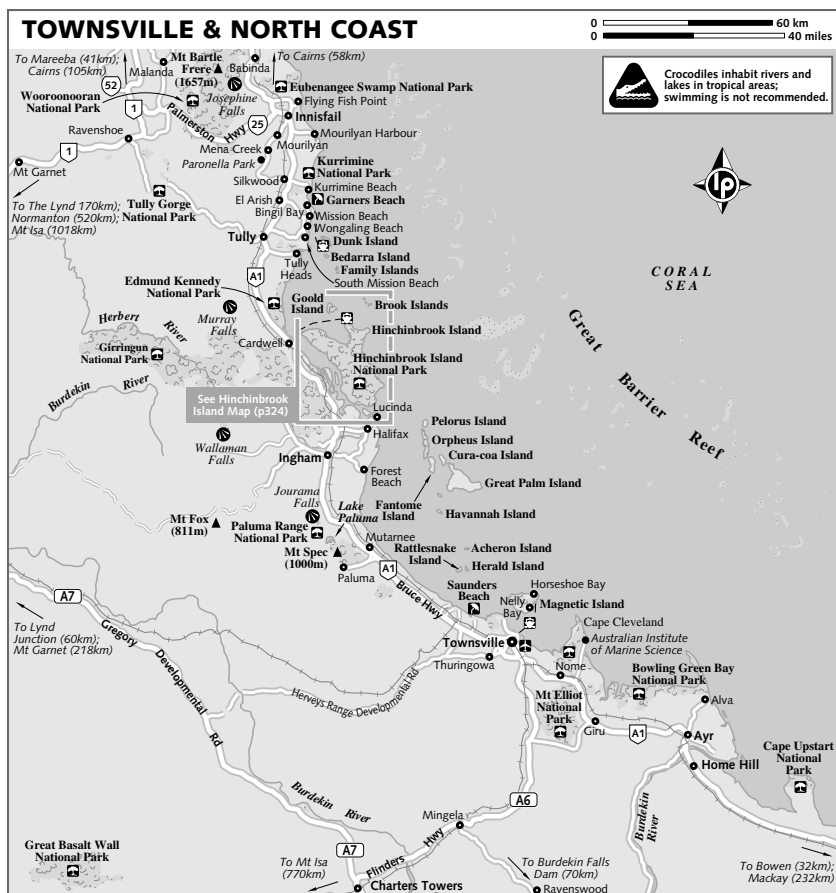
Townsville has finally stood and up said 'I've had enough!' Sick of being pushed into the background by Cairns to the north and Airlie Beach to the south, Townsville has broken free from the shackles of her more domineering cousins and is starting to make her own way in life. For decades the city was content to hide from the crowds and it has taken until now for her to realise what a stunner she is. Townsville is no longer seen as the backwater of North Queensland. This is a real, living, breathing city with a pulse. People live and work here and can't understand why anyone would want to be anywhere else. Townsville doesn't need to turn on the charm. It's already there. You just need to look.

In fact the entire north coast from Townsville to Innisfail dances to the beat of a different drum. It's a slower beat. A beat that makes people stop and listen. Magnetic and Dunk Islands are accessible to all budgets, while Hinchinbrook Island beckons walkers with the world-renowned Thorsborne Trail. Charters Towers and Ravenswood offer a small slice of the outback with a mining twist, without venturing too far into the interior. The small coastal communities around Mission Beach are the perfect place for a low-key getaway and Innisfail is a real-life working town with heaps of spunk.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Joining the full-moon party or lazing about in one of **Magnetic Island's** (p308) pretty little villages
- Cheering on the Cowboys or partying in down-to-earth **Townsville** (p298)
- Spotting a cassowary in the rainforest behind **Mission Beach** (p326)
- Searching for a secluded beach all to yourself on **Dunk Island** (p331)
- Gazing at the superb gold-rush architecture in **Charters Towers** (p315)
- Walking the **Thorsborne Trail** (p323) on stunning Hinchinbrook Island





Dangers & Annoyances

Dangerous marine stingers (box jellyfish) are present in the coastal waters during the summer months (November to May; see the boxed text, p251 for more information). Saltwater crocodiles inhabit the mangroves, estuaries and open water north from around Lucinda. Warning signs are posted around the waterways where crocodiles might be present.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Townsville is the major airport servicing the north coast, with domestic flights and connections to and from all major centres and capital cities.

Dunk Island has its own airport, with regular flights to and from Townsville and Cairns.

BOAT

The major ferry services along this coast are from Townsville to Magnetic Island, from Cardwell to Hinchinbrook Island and from Mission Beach to Dunk Island.

BUS

Bus services follow the Bruce Hwy on the main Brisbane–Cairns run, with detours to Mission Beach. Brisbane to Townsville takes 22 hours, Townsville to Cairns around six.

Inland services operate from Townsville to Mt Isa via Charters Towers, continuing on to the Northern Territory.