



Brisbane - Cairns

Your Brisbane - Cairns motorhome road trip!

Pacific Coast Way (Coastal Route)

Queensland is a state of contrast. Roughly three times bigger than France, there are thousands of kilometres of roads connecting every type of scenery you can imagine, with countless bucket-list destinations along the way! There is no doubt that there is a Queensland motorhome holiday route to suit every traveller...and this incredible journey between Brisbane and Cairns is one of the best!

The Pacific Coast Way offers the quintessential Aussie road trip, beginning at Queensland's relaxed and cosmopolitan state capital Brisbane and hugging the Queensland coastline as it winds through a magnificent 1,700 km stretch of golden beaches, national parks, cane fields and rainforest as it takes in some of the country's most treasured and iconic landscapes, including one of seven wonders of the world, the Great Barrier Reef.

Read on to discover all the incredible highlights for this route, which include our top tips and recommendations for each stop...then give us a shout, we'll find you your perfect motorhome and you'll be off on your next adventure before you can say 'Gallivanting Oz!'

Getting the most out of your trip

How much time will I need?

There are few ways to better embrace a motorhome road trip than cruising the beautiful eastern coastline. The trick however is taking your time, as so many spectacular places lie a little way off the highway, such as the picture-perfect Whitsunday Islands off Airlie Beach, or Eungella National Park inland from Mackay. If you can, we recommend taking 14 to 21 days to properly explore the little coastal towns, amazing national parks, waterfalls and seemingly endless pristine white beaches.

The best time to explore this route is April to October, when the temperatures are mild and the skies invariably clear and blue. Do note though, that during the months of June, July and August, lots of travellers from the southern states (affectionately known as grey nomads) tend to head north to enjoy this route. Some popular areas can be busy during this time as well as being impacted by school holidays which are late June/early July. In terms of the best direction to go, it really depends if you are nearer the start of the season or end. If travelling in April, it is better to go Brisbane to Cairns direction; if closer to October the reverse direction is best.

How much planning is required?

The beauty of a hiring a motorhome is the flexibility. If you choose, you can often decide your route for the day and where to stop overnight as you travel (although we always recommend booking in your first and last campgrounds of the trip, plus a couple along the way just to give your journey a little structure). HOWEVER, in high season popular camps in popular spots can book up early, so do keep that in mind. Particularly, you'll find around Cairns, Cape

Tribulation and other beach hotspots are all pretty busy during June – August with the ‘grey nomads’ that reside in the southern states and head north for a warmer winter.

If you enjoy exploring nature, it’s a good idea to look into **national park fees** before you set off, as each state operates differently and there are a few considerations to take into account, for both day visits and camping.

- **In QLD**, you do not have to pay for entry into national parks (except for some 4WD-only access areas) however you do have to pay for overnight camping. To book camping or find information on the national parks, see the official website: www.parks.des.qld.gov.au or call on 13 74 68. There is also a handy page which list the camps with suitable sites for motorhomes, which you can peruse by park name or map. Camp bookings must be pre-booked (no self-register service on arrival) – make sure you consider phone/internet access for last minute bookings.

We recommend popping into **visitor centres** whenever possible, to pick up the latest maps and information for local attractions and campsites. **Online resources** such as local tourism websites, Wikicamps, Camps Australia Wide and TripAdvisor are great sources of up-to-the-minute information too.

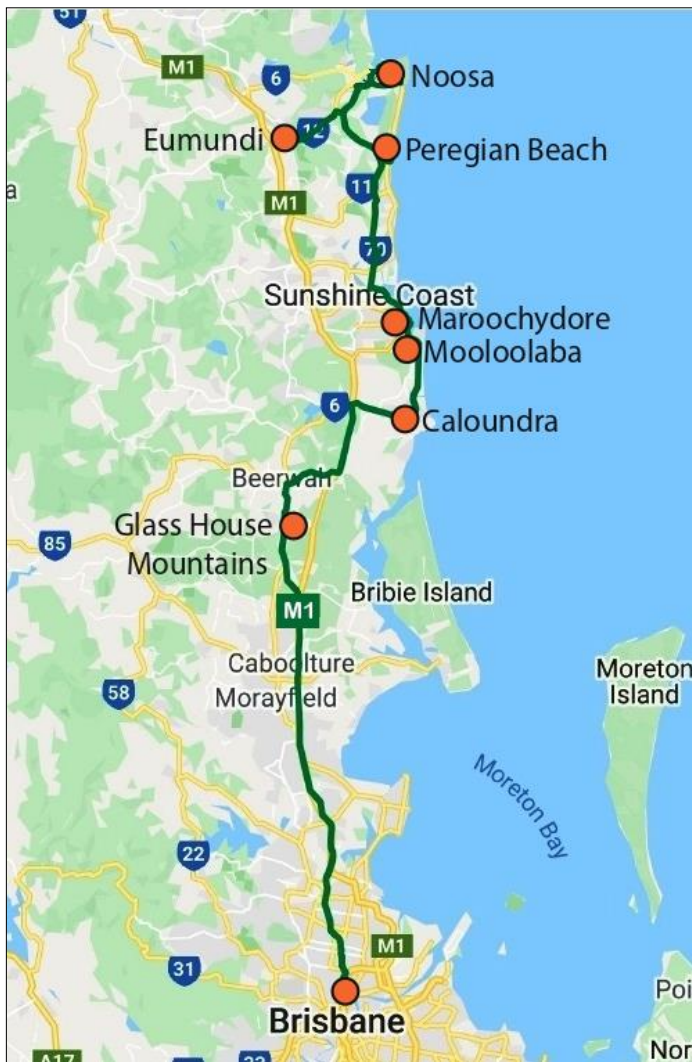
If you haven’t already, be sure to check out our Gallivanting Oz [Facebook posts](#) and [travel blogs](#) showcasing incredible motorhome holiday destinations all over Australia – they’re a great source of inspiration.

Brisbane to Cairns 1,685 km of incredible coastline to explore!

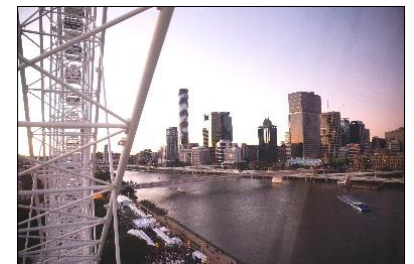


Route Highlights

The Pacific Coast Way – Brisbane to Cairns (Coastal Route)



Brisbane is the perfect place to start or finish a motorhome road trip. There is a lot to love about the charming laid-back capital of the 'Sunshine State'. Centred around the winding banks of the beautiful Brisbane River this vibrant city is a destination within itself, with a treasure trove of historic and cultural attractions, beautiful gardens, bustling shopping streets and al fresco dining. A great place to start is the visitor information centre on the **Queen Street Mall**, the inner-city shopping precinct, where friendly volunteers will hook you up with maps, information, or even a free walking tour! Jump onto one of the free **CityHopper ferries** to cruise through the CBD and Brisbane's cultural and social hub, **Southbank**, with its sparkling lagoon, bars and restaurants and the **Southbank Cultural Precinct**, a cluster of world-class galleries, museums and theatres...if you're only picking one, we recommend **GOMA** (Gallery of Modern Art) which is always guaranteed to knock your socks off!

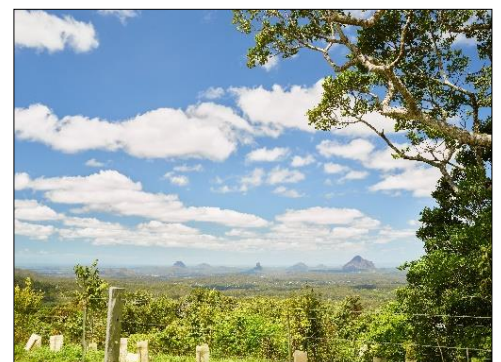


Taking a stroll by the river in Brisbane is practically mandatory. Some lovely routes include Southbank to the convict-quarried cliffs of **Kangaroo Point**, then over the river on the pedestrian **Goodwill Bridge** to the **City Botanical Gardens**, or take the stunning **Brisbane Riverwalk** which juts out over the river connecting the city to leafy **New Farm** (the best spot in town for your turmeric latte and smashed avo), passing under Brisbane's iconic **Story Bridge** and through the bars and restaurants of the historic **Howard Smith Wharves**. Drive up to the peak of **Mount Coo-tha** for magic panoramic views over the city, river and ocean, meet some Aussie marsupials at **Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary** and be sure to visit the lush **Roma Street Parklands**, to enjoy the themed gardens and water features - smack bang in the middle of the city. Check out our list of Top 5 Things to do in Brisbane along with our free guide, download here:

<https://www.gallivantingoz.com.au/things-to-do-brisbane>

Sunshine Coast Hinterland

The craggy volcanic peaks of the **Glass House Mountains** jut dramatically from the otherwise flat landscape between Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast. The two largest peaks, Mount Tibrogargan and Mount Beerwah, can be seen from the highway. While you can get a peek from the road, we highly recommend taking a detour to see them in all their glory from a lookout such as **Mary Cairncross Reserve**, which also features a short but gorgeous circuit walk through the rainforest with tiny Paddymelon wallabies hopping right beside the path. Explore the cafes and handicraft offerings of the quaint mountain villages of **Maleny** and **Montville** or spend a day at the outstanding **Australia Zoo**, made famous by Steven Irwin (aka the Crocodile Hunter), meeting animals from all over the world and catching the incredible crocodile show!



Sunshine Coast

The **Sunshine Coast** is all about beautiful sandy beaches; 65 km of them in fact! Despite being a large population centre, the 'Sunny Coast' always feels friendly and laid-back - no towering skyscrapers or glitzy casinos here. With its southernmost point at Caloundra, the Sunshine Coast extends all the way up to the Great Sandy National Park, north of Noosa. To do the 'coastal drive' in its entirety, start off in Caloundra, and slowly make your way north to Noosa. This stunning area is holiday central and you'll have no trouble finding a great campground if you fancy pulling up for a day or two! Pre-book if you're travelling through school holidays or once you're sure of your travel date.



Caloundra has a great feel and is popular with holiday makers. Bustling Bulcock Street, with its ice cream and bric-a-brac shops, invokes a nostalgic feeling of beach holidays of old. On Sundays, the street is closed to cars and hosts an excellent Sunday market. Stroll the boardwalk beside **Bulcock Beach**, enjoying the gorgeous views across Pumicestone Passage, stop in for a cool drink at the **Caloundra Surf Club** or catch a wave at popular **King's Beach**. **Moffit Beach** is the locals' favourite lunch spot, with great cafés and views to match, framed by the towering Norfolk Pines which line the edge of the rocky beach. Nearby **Curramundi Lake** is the family favourite; a tranquil natural lake of clear shallow water and golden sand, which connects to a long and unspoilt stretch of beautiful surf beach through a narrow tidal channel - the perfect place to relax for a couple of hours!

Mooloolaba's extremely popular beach is known to be the safest on the Sunshine Coast! Stroll the beachfront promenade lined with al fresco restaurants, juice bars and fashion boutiques. Take a scenic boat cruise from the nearby **Mooloolaba Wharf** complex or catch the famous seal show at Sea Life. If you fancy a dip in the sea without surf, stop off at **Maroochydore** where you'll find a lagoon-like beach - no waves to worry about here! This is also the location of one of our fav campground on the Sunny Coast; **Cotton Tree Holiday Park**, which is exquisitely located on the waterfront between the Maroochy River and the stunning Maroochydore Beach. A little further north, the funky little town of **Peregian** marks the start of a unbroken string of stunning white beach, ending at a huge headland at **Sunshine Beach**, where you can climb the first 200 steep steps of the **Noosa National Park coastal trail** for an awe-inspiring view over the ocean and beaches stretching to the south. On the other side of this headland is the uber-chic coastal town of **Noosa**, which offers everything from boutique shopping and exquisite cuisine to picnics on the beach. The small, but very beautiful **Noosa National Park** situated on Noosa's headland is full of great walks and wildlife. You may even spot a koala if you're lucky. Inland from Noosa is the pretty little township of **Eumundi** where, beneath the shady heritage-listed fig trees every Wednesday and Saturday, the town centre transforms into one of the biggest artisan markets in Australia.

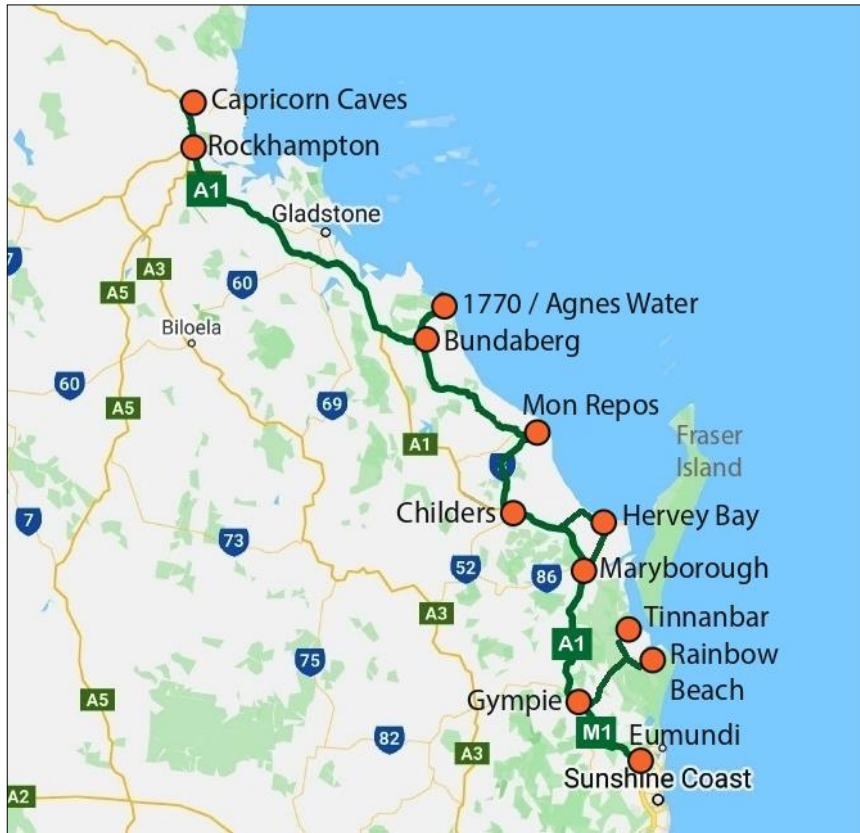


Gympie acts as the economic hub for the Cooloola region, which encompasses the surrounding fertile farmland of the Mary Valley and runs east to the pretty townships which line the coast. Gympie sprang up after gold was first discovered in 1867, followed a year later by the biggest nugget ever found in Queensland – weighing in at a whopping 27 kg and spurring a gold rush that saved the newly independent state of Queensland from impending bankruptcy. Pull into motorhome-friendly **Lake Alford park** for a cuppa by the pretty lake as you admire the incredible range of birdlife. Pop into the adjacent **visitor centre** for a map of the town's **heritage trail** or visit the **Gold Mining and Historical**

Museum across the park on Brisbane Road, which, incidentally, is the road to Tin Can Bay and Rainbow Beach (See below). Train buff? A couple of times a week, the steam-driven **Mary Valley Rattler** chugs visitors through the scenic Mary Valley and Amamoor State Forest, stopping off at a couple of little towns along the way.

DETOUR: The Cooloola Coast Tourist Drive

From Gympie the highway takes the more direct inland route, but if you have time (1-3 days) this wonderful coastal detour should definitely be on your itinerary! Firstly take in the holiday towns of Rainbow Beach and Tin Can Bay, then continue north along the pine-forested coastline of the Great Sandy Straight, opposite Fraser Island, to meet up with the highway at Maryborough, via a string of little fishing communities.



Rainbow Beach is a relaxed beachside holiday town nestled between the **Great Sandy National Park** and the Pacific Ocean, so named for the 'rainbow' coloured sands (primarily yellow, red and orange...) which make up its coastal sandstone cliffs. There is plenty to keep you busy here, from excellent fishing or kayaking with dolphins to horse-riding on the beach. Hit the pretty beach in front of the main street, browse the little shops and enjoy a cocktail on Sea Salt's rooftop bar, overlooking the ocean. Capping hilltop above, spectacular **Carlo Sand Blow** with its sweeping views over the inland waterways and national parks on one side, and out to Fraser Island and the colourful coastline on the other is the best spot in town for catching the sunset and sandboarding too! Rainbow Beach is the **southern gateway to Fraser Island**, accessed via 4WD and the vehicle barge that departs from **Inskip Point**, about 15 minutes north of town. The beautiful MV Sarawak bush camping area is tucked in behind the dunes under the she-oak trees and has a couple of motorhome-friendly sites – first in best dressed!



Sleepy little **Tin Can Bay**'s picturesque foreshore and mangrove-lined estuaries make it a magnet for fishing and boating enthusiasts. Hire a boat or kayak to explore in style, or head to the café beside the boat ramp for the rare opportunity to interact with wild **Australian Humpback dolphins** in their natural environment! Weave your way north to rejoin the Bruce Highway, via a tiny fishing community or two along the way. A good choice is tiny **Tinnanbar** where you'll find a lovely waterfront picnic area perfect for pulling up your motorhome for a cuppa under the shady gum trees, as you enjoy views across the water to Fraser Island.

World Heritage-listed **Fraser Island (K'gari)** needs no introduction. The crystal-clear freshwater lakes with their dazzling white sandy beaches, virgin rainforest and wild dingos of the world's largest sand island appears on travel shows and bucket lists across the globe. To tackle the sandy tracks of Fraser Island, you will need to hire a 4WD or join one of the 4WD bus tours which leave from Rainbow Beach or Hervey Bay, via the barges which depart from both towns. For peace of mind, you'll find secure motorhome storage yards in both towns too.



Maryborough was the eastern seaboard's second port for free settlers in 1847, and has fascinating tales to tell of escaped convicts, wharfs, wool, timber and seedy opium dens, some of which still lie hidden beneath the beautiful heritage buildings lining the **Mary River**. Explore the parkland, museums and public buildings of Maryborough's **City Heart and Portside precinct**. Snap a selfie with the statue of **Mary Poppins** whose creator, Pamela Lindon Travers, was born here in 1899. Step back in time at **Brennan and Geraghty's Store** on Lennox Street, family-run from 1871 until the death of the youngest son in 1975 when it was locked up...piles of ledgers still stacked beside the kerosene lamp and shelves stocked with Dr Morse's Indian Root Pills, WWII tins of Lucky Strike tobacco and even a packet of Hang Mee tea stamped March 20, 1885. If you have time, drop by the tiny but excellently run not-for-profit **Fraser Coast Wildlife Sanctuary** to be entertained by cockatoo antics or a snake experience!



Hervey Bay (pronounced *Harvey* Bay) is a city that feels like a small holiday town. Spread out along a 17 km beachfront esplanade that links the city's boat harbour in **Urangun**, with the bars and restaurants of **Scarness and Torquay** out to the family-friendly rockpools and water-park of **Pialba**, there is bike path, caravan parks and golden beaches with calm waters for swimming all the way. Hervey Bay's main claims to fame are the world-class humpback whale watching right off the coast (July -Oct), the delicately sweet Hervey Bay Scallops (some say the best in the world!) and of course, being the northern gateway to Fraser Island.

Hervey Bay is a 20-minute detour from the highway at Maryborough, but there's no need to backtrack; just continue along the gorgeous coastline, re-joining the highway at Childers. **Local Tip:** Seafood fans should pull into Goody's On The Beach at Toogoom for a delish lunch with a picture-perfect view.

Childers is surrounded by green hills, rich red-dirt farms and fields of sugar cane, and this quiet rural town has a surprising number of attractions! For the full Childers experience, enjoy pub-grub goodness at the **Grand Hotel**, then wander down the main street to the **Old Pharmacy Museum** to check out the old lotions and potions. The up-close and personal experience with native animals and reptiles at **Snakes Downunder Reptile Park** is not to be missed if you can spare a couple of hours, and you're always guaranteed of a friendly welcome and excellent preservative-free wines at **Hill of Promise Estate**. Last but not least (and this is a big call) we reckon locally made **Mammino Gourmet Ice Cream** may just be the best in Queensland...especially the crazy-delicious ginger and macadamia!

There is a beautiful detour between Childers and Bundaberg. Stop off at tiny **Woodgate**, in an idyllic spot between the ocean and the crystal-clear **Theodolite Creek**; every stand-up paddle boarder's dream! Enjoy local birdlife on a stroll through pretty paperbark forest on the **Banksia Track** or pull up for a cuppa a few steps from the sand and soak up the serenity.

Bundaberg (or *Bundy*, to its mates), home of Australia's most famous rum. It's another pretty detour from the highway to this quiet city where you can stroll along the **riverside boardwalk** beside the Burnett River in the city centre reading the interesting interpretive boards as you go, jump on a **river cruise** and learn some local history, or visit the **Bundaberg Rum Distillery**... for educational purposes. If you have time, a daytrip to snorkel the coral reefs of **Lady Elliot Island** is highly recommended, as is visiting the little seaside suburb of **Bargara** and neighbouring **Mon Repos** with its award-

winning **Turtle Centre**. If you're lucky enough to visit between November and the end of March, this is where the largest concentration of nesting loggerhead turtles in the South Pacific come ashore, and you can join a ranger to watch them lay their eggs, or see the hatchlings emerge.



1770 and Agnes Waters will transport you straight back to childhood holidays. Surrounded by four national parks and pristine waterways, these sleepy and undeveloped little towns, just a few kms apart are set on a picturesque backdrop of tidal creeks, sheltered sandy inlets and Queensland's northernmost surf beaches, perfect for a dip or a spot of fishing. Explore the national parks and waterways bordering the town of 1770, take in magnificent views from the **Bustard Bay lookout**, then stop off at the



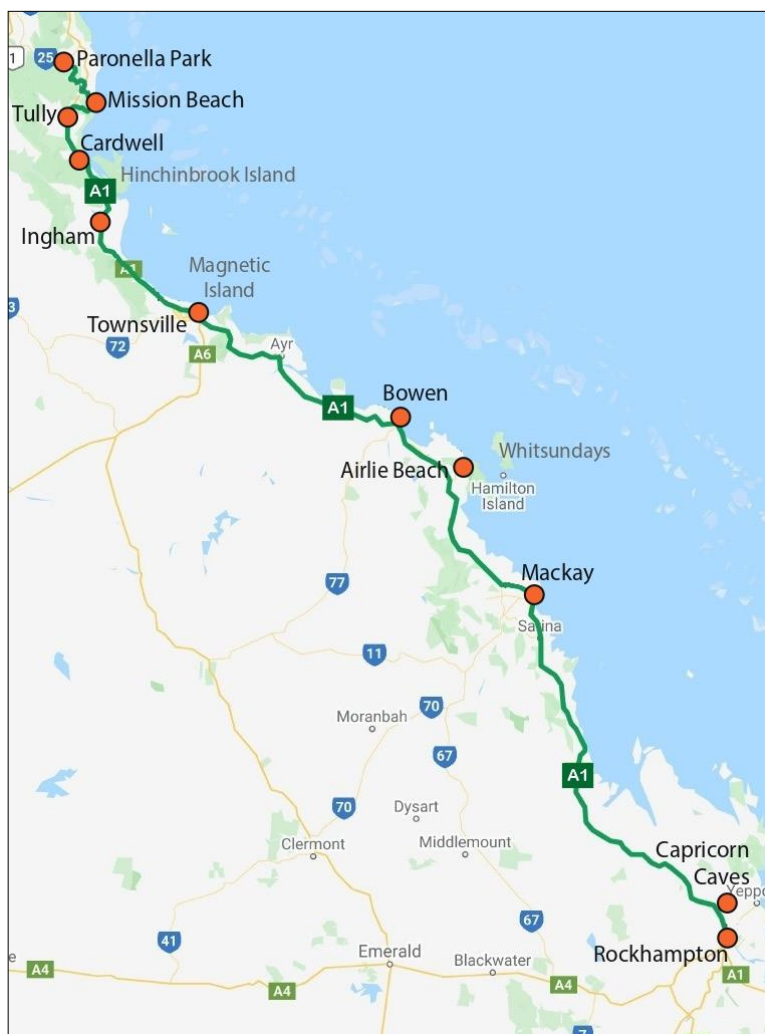
Captain Cook Memorial before heading to the iconic **Tree House Hotel** for a cool drink as you watch the sun set over the water. Like so many laid-back beach towns, this is firmly on the backpacker circuit which means there's lots of adventure activities to be had, from surfing lessons to the excellent **LARC tour**, an amphibious vehicle that drives up the coastline of Bustard Bay to the isolated Bustard Head Lighthouse – the first lighthouse to be built in Queensland. Just south of Agnes Water is the delightful **Paperbark Forest Boardwalk**, a 10-minute stroll through ferny undergrowth, over stepping-stones and, at certain times of

year, surrounded by clouds of butterflies!

Rockhampton straddles both the mighty Fitzroy River and the Tropic of Capricorn, proudly staking its claim as the **beef capital of Australia**...and with 3.2 million head of cattle in the surrounding Greater Rockhampton Region we're not

arguing! Interesting fact, the Fitzroy Basin is the second largest seaward draining basin in Australia, which explains why this country was so important to local Aboriginal people. You can learn more on a tour of the low-key and refreshingly authentic **Dreamtime Cultural Centre** to hear stories and even try your hand at boomerang throwing! **Rockhampton Zoo** set amid beautiful leafy grounds makes the perfect lunch stop, with koalas, kangaroos, wombats, snakes, emus and more...including, as a little surprise, chimpanzees! And the best bit? It's free! Good onya Rocky! History buffs can step back in time at the **Rockhampton Heritage Village** (*NB: temporarily closed for renovations, so call before you go*), which features heritage buildings set up as they would have been between 1850 and 1950.

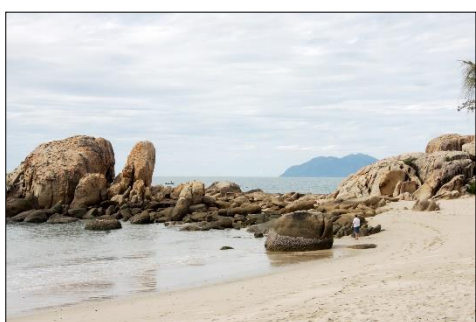
As you continue north, it's a short detour from the highway to the **Capricorn Caves** to be guided by candlelight through narrow zigzagging underground passageways into cavernous limestone caves protecting stalactite decorations, rare ferns and occasionally little insectivorous bats...and we promise every hair will stand on end during the lyrical demonstration of the natural acoustics of Cathedral Chamber!





Mackay is a busy sugar and mining town, and doesn't offer much in the way of attractions, but is a good base for exploring the amazing reefs and rainforests on its doorstep, such as the sub-tropical **Eungella National Park** (90 mins to the west), with its abundance of spectacular native wildlife and offering a great chance to see a platypus in the wild, or **Cape Hillsborough National Park** (40 mins to the north), renowned for its dramatic scenery of lush rainforest, rugged rocky headlands and the sandy beaches where agile wallabies gather on the sand at sunrise, searching for mangrove pods to snack on – don't forget your camera!

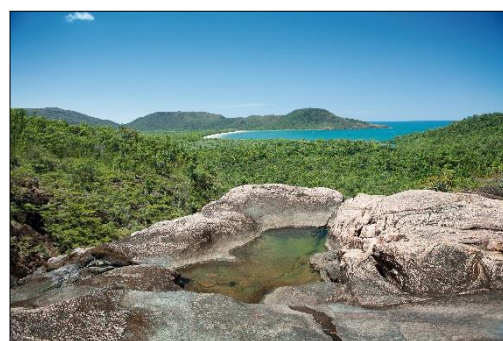
Airlie Beach and Shute Harbour - the Whitsundays. The lively holiday town of Airlie Beach acts as a gateway to the tropical paradise that is the Whitsunday Islands, an archipelago of 74 islands of which most are uninhabited and pristine national parks, edged by pure white beaches and surrounded by warm tropical waters. Most ferries and island tours leave from **Shute Harbour** to the south of town, to the world famous pure-white sands and turquoise waters of **Whitehaven Beach** or the popular island resorts, such as upmarket **Daydream Island** and laid-back **Adventure Island Resort** (South Molle). Back in town, take a dip in the pretty **Airlie Beach Lagoon**, café and bar hop your way along the main street, take a cooking master class, go sailing or hike the rainforest trails of the **Conway Range** just 15 minutes from town.



Bowen is a friendly seaside town with idyllic palm-fringed beaches, such as gorgeous **Grays Bay** or **Horseshoe Bay**, which shelters colourful coral gardens of the fringing reef lying mere metres offshore. Australia's favourite tropical fruit, the juicy Bowen mango is a huge source of pride for this little town, as is the 2007 blockbuster Hugh Jackman and Nicole Kidman film 'Australia' which used this gorgeous location as a backdrop. Take a happy snap by the **Big Mango**, drop into the adjoining **visitor centre** for local advice and a delicious mango sorbet, then set about exploring the town's excellent **mural trail**, which depicts the history of the area. **Flagstaff Hill** gives wonderful

views over town and the Whitsunday Islands, with easy motorhome parking and a couple of flat, easy walks. This region is known for fresh produce, harvested from both the land and the sea, so treat yourself to a meal at the lovely old **Grand View Hotel**, or grab some fresh seafood and *chuck a prawn on the barbie!* If you decide to stay for a night or two, **Queens Beach Tourist Village** is a wonderful spot, just a short stroll from the beach and with facilities and grounds galore.

Townsville is tropical North Queensland's largest city, instantly recognised by the giant pink granite monolith, Castle Hill, which sits above it which you can drive to the top for magnificent views out over the city and ocean. Head to the pretty beachfront esplanade for a dip in the lovely seawater swimming pool, **Strand Rockpool**. Get the lowdown on local plants, animals and dinosaurs at the **Museum of Tropical Queensland**, then pop next door to the **Reef Headquarters Aquarium**, the world's largest living coral reef aquarium. **Billabong Sanctuary** is a real little gem so if you have a few hours to spare, be sure to drop in and make some new furry friends! It's a great destination, but one of the main reasons motorhomers come to Townsville is to leave...on a ferry to magnificent **Magnetic Island** (known locally as Maggie), a beautiful little island smack bang in the middle of the Great Barrier Reef; its national parks and 23 bays providing a haven for native wildlife, including koalas, rock wallabies and over 100 different species of birds! Despite being only 7 km long there are four villages on the island and over 25 km of walking trails! Join a tour, hire a 'mini moke' and drive around the island, or jump on a local bus!



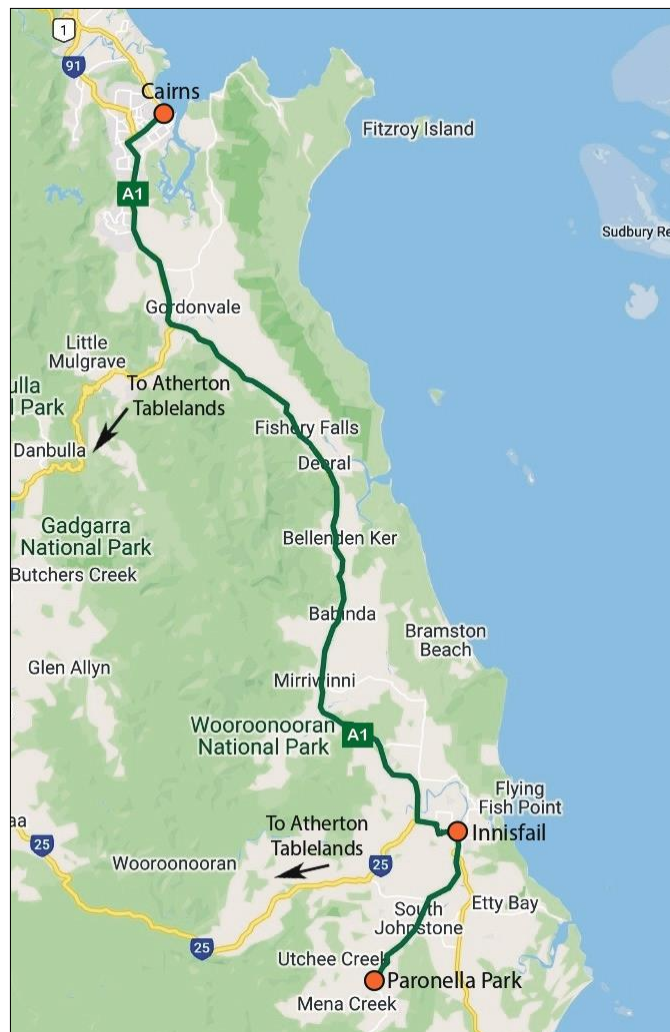
This last stretch between Townsville and Cairns is known as the **Great Green Way** and this lush, scenic drive certainly lives up to its name! Wind your way through misty rainforest covered mountains, spectacular waterfalls, rich fertile farmlands and breathtaking Coral Sea vistas, as you pass 12 national parks over 25 tropical islands that sit just off the coast, making for some awesome scenery!

Along the way, experience the tranquil natural beauty of the **Tyto Wetlands**, just outside of **Ingham**; a unique 90-hectare natural wetland which is home to over 245 species of birds and woven with 4 kms of paths, boardwalks, and lookouts. Continue past **Hinchinbrook Island**, Australia's largest island national park, and make sure you stop off at the Panjoo Lookout near **Cardwell**, with lots of motorhome parking and uninterrupted views over the channel to Hinchinbrook Island. (*Panjoo* means 'beautiful place' in the local Banjin lingo, by the way...they're not wrong!)



The picturesque town of **Tully** is famous for sugar and rain; it's officially the wettest town in Australia, a fact commemorated with a giant **golden gumbboot**. With this much rain, it's no surprise this **Tully River** is one of Australia's best spots for **white water rafting!** Drop into the friendly **visitor centre** for a choc-covered banana or to book onto the interesting guided tour of the local **sugar mill**.

If you were to close your eyes and picture a perfect tropical beach setting, **Mission Beach** wouldn't be too far off it. This beautiful coastal village, surrounded by rainforest and coastal farmland has managed to retain its quaint unhurried beachy vibe...even as the funky bars, cafes, boutiques and visitors arrived. 5 km to the north, quiet little **Bingil Bay** is considered to be the prettiest beachfront in Mission Beach. Stop off at the quirky **Bingil Bay Café** for a warm welcome and a chai latte in rainforest. Grab a walking map from the **visitor centre** for trails through the pockets of rainforest, and keep your peepers peeled for a cassowary sighting!



Paronella Park is an incredible stop, if you have time. In the 1930s the Spanish owner, inspired by childhood memories of Catalan castles, dreamt of creating a magnificent home for his new bride. He was no sit-about guy, and set to work building his 'castle', complete with ballroom and a 13-acre wonderland of tropical gardens, tennis courts and even a tunnel...set over 2 levels and powered by waterfall! The entry price includes a daytime and a night-time guided tour, walking maps and unpowered camping for the night.

As you drive the final leg to Cairns, be sure to call into the tranquil **Lit Sing Kwang Chinese Temple** in the **Innisfail**, to see the artifacts and learn about the rich history of the local Chinese community, some of the first non-indigenous settlers in this area.

Cairns is snuggled in between Great Dividing Range and the Coral Sea and serves as the main gateway to two World Heritage listed treasures, the **Great Barrier Reef** and the **Wet Tropics rainforest**, the oldest and most biologically diverse tropical rainforest on earth with pockets such as the **Daintree Rainforest** that have remained unchanged since dinosaurs walked the earth! **Cairns Esplanade** is a fun place to hang out for the day, with a lovely swimming lagoon and a huge choice of excellent bars and restaurants. If you're in town on the weekend, rub shoulders with the locals at **Rusty's Market** as you check out fresh local produce and flowers, food stalls and live music. The Cairns Botanical

Gardens The spectacular lush tropical gardens, rainforest trees and pretty lakes of the **Cairns Botanical Gardens** are a wonder – don't miss the orchard garden and butterfly house!

Within a short distance of town, you can be diving the world's largest coal reef, hiking around misty volcanic lakes, exploring ancient rainforests and towering fig trees with walking trails passing beneath their roots! There are waterfalls and glass-bottom boats, fascinating Aboriginal culture, some of the most beautiful tropical beaches you can imagine, and of course, the world-famous **Kuranda Skyrail**, which carries visitors on a magnificent 7 km journey to the top of the Kuranda Range over the ancient rainforest canopy, stopping in the middle for a walk around the forest. Taking the little Kuranda Scenic Railway back down is also highly recommended!

There are a number of caravan parks in and around Cairns – we definitely recommend booking in advance as the warm winters are a popular location for both our southern Aussie and international friends to flock to.

The Atherton Tablelands is a tropical volcanic plateau stretching to the west and south of Cairns. The wonderful diversity of produce that is grown in the fertile pasturelands has earned this area the title of Far North Queensland's food bowl. Wind your way west from Cairns up and over the Kuranda Range, then continue through the tableland's green rolling hills, pulling in at the little towns to take in the ancient rainforest, spectacular waterfalls, giant Curtin fig trees and deep crater lakes. Browse the colourful **Kuranda Markets** and marvel at over 1,500 free flying butterflies at **Australian Butterfly Sanctuary**. Carry on to pretty **Mareeba**,



surrounded by plantations and tropical fruit orchards to enjoy a cup of locally-grown coffee - and keep an eye out for the yummy **Emerald Creek Ice-Creamery** tucked into the bush on the way. Uncover some interesting local history at the museum at the **Hou Wang Temple** in **Atherton**, built in 1903 making it the oldest timber and iron Chinese temple in Australasia. If you get the chance, the steam train ride to the once bustling tin mining community of **Herbeton** is great fun, with stunning views over the Carrington Waterfalls and tablelands on the way. If all that exploring has got you hungry, stop into **Ravenshoe** for a pub lunch in the historic dining room of the Ravenshoe Hotel, the highest pub in Queensland! Nearby is another record-breaker, pretty **Millstream Falls**, Australia's widest waterfall.

The Atherton Tablelands has something for everyone from the Waterfalls Circuit to sampling foodie delights around each corner. There are a range of caravan parks and freedom camping options in and around the Atherton Tablelands, which are popular.

North of Cairns

Cruising north from Cairns towards the Daintree you'll simply love the scenery as the road hugs the coast passing through north beach locations such as **Palm Cove**, **Ellis Beach** and **Port Douglas**. It's not unusual for people to choose to stay in locations such as Palm Cove and Ellis Beach for the relaxing beachside vibe, popping back into Cairns itself to enjoy the attractions and activities.

Daintree

To head north towards Cape Tribulation, you will need to take a vehicle ferry to cross the river. Before doing so, we recommend a detour to the **Daintree Village**, small relaxed community on the banks of the Daintree River surrounded by picturesque valleys. Along the way you will be spoilt for choice with many operators willing to take you out on the Daintree River fringed by the world heritage listed Daintree rainforest. Our favourite operator is the local and family operated 1-hour **Bruce Belcher's Daintree River Cruise** with a very high chance of spotting crocodiles in the river and most likely some interesting birdlife too.

It's a super quick trip on the vehicle ferry over to the sealed road which cruises up to stunning **Cape Tribulation**. Make sure you allow enough time on your trip north of the Daintree River as this road is very twisty with a number of areas with a reduced speed limit. Some of these areas are popular for cassowary sightings – so make sure you keep a look out! Enjoy the lookouts and coastal communities on the way. Cape Trib, as



its fondly known, is a friendly small community that is popular with many travellers. For this reason, please book your caravan park site as soon as you know when you'll be in the area. There is a small national park camping south of the village at Noah Beach – this can be booked in advance online and is in the Daintree National Park. There is no option for freedom camping around this area, so best to make sure you're organised, as there is very limited phone reception in this area.

If historic **Cooktown** is on your bucket list, access to this pretty town is on the Cairns side of the Daintree River, via a sealed road. There is an alternative option with the Bloomfield Track, however that is 4WD only. This charming town which wears its history has lots of statues of Captain Cook and a number of impressive buildings constructed during the gold mining boom in the 1880s. Surrounded by stunning countryside, this beautiful and unspoilt coastal town makes a great spot to hang out for an afternoon while you absorb yourself in some of Australia's iconic history.

We hope our Brisbane to Cairns Travel Route Highlights has helped to inspire you and given you some great ideas for your next motorhome holiday!

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Gallivanting Oz would like to acknowledge the use of some Tourism Australia images in this Brisbane to Cairns travel highlights.