

# **Your guide to the Tropical North**

So many of us have heard of the East Coast of Australia; the myriad of picturesque islands with turquoise waters and the abundance of party towns filled with students ready for a fun-filled night. The route from Sydney to Cairns is one of the most travelled in Australia... but why do so few of us dare to venture north of Cairns? And why are the tropics of north Queensland so often ignored?

Well not anymore. Here's a guide for you to break away from the norm and explore those less-trodden paths of north-eastern Australia. And the good news is that you can fit it all into a long weekend away!

## **Port Douglas**

Just an hour north of Cairns, along Route 44, you'll come across this quiet little beach town. Often described as 'the city where the rainforest meets the reef', Port Douglas is home to incredible beachside resorts, immaculate seafood restaurants and access to two of the most incredible national parks Australia has to offer. The first is the well-known Great Barrier Reef easily accessible by the many tours departing from Port Douglas. The second, and the lesser-known World Heritage Site, is the awe-inspiringly beautiful Daintree Rainforest - the oldest tropical rainforest in the world.

## **Daintree Village**

From Port Douglas head up the aptly named Captain Cook Highway and turn off just before you reach the ferry crossing to find this little village nestled in the heart of the rainforest. The twenty-kilometre detour is well worth it just to take advantage of the numerous Crocodile River tours on offer. Over seventy crocodiles inhabit the river here and with some as long as six meters, it is best to keep your arms and legs firmly in the boat!

## **Cape Tribulation**

After you've had your fill of spotting these prehistoric creatures, head back to the ferry crossing which will take you the 100 meters or so over the Daintree River into the tropical rainforests of Cape Tribulation.

Amazingly, there's just one road that runs through this town. It's around 50km long and ends with a sign that reads 'Only 4WD beyond this point'. There's an incredible amount to do along this majestic drive so make sure you give yourself a day or so to fit it all in.

### *Alexandra Lookout*

This quick roadside stop offers a beautiful lookout over the Alexandra Range and Snapper Island giving you a real idea of the immensity of the Daintree rainforest. Give yourself enough time to appreciate the unique scenery of where the rainforest meets the sea something found nowhere else in the world.

### *The Daintree Discovery Centre*

The Daintree Discovery Centre is worth a stop to take advantage of the incredible amount of information they have about Cape Tribulation. If you're feeling adventurous, they also have an aerial walkway that can take you 23 meters up into the forest canopy.

### *Daintree Ice Cream Company*

All of the exotic and unusual ice cream flavours that you can purchase from this ice-creamery are made out of the fruits they grow in their surrounding tropical orchards. Feel free to take a look round and keep an eye out for cassowaries!

### *Thornton Beach*

There are pristine beaches dotted all the way along this coastline so make sure you jump out of the car to have a look at a few! Thornton Beach is one of the most picturesque.

### *Mason's Swimming Hole*

Perfect to cool down on a hot day, this quiet little swimming hole is crocodile free! It's just a \$1 donation to go and well worth it during the hot summer months.

### *Jungle Surfing Canopy Tours*

For the more adventurous out there, this company offers zip wire tours through the canopy. Exhilarating, terrifying but absolutely stunning!

### *Cape Tribulation*

Cape Tribulation itself is a small town with plenty of alfresco accommodation options, beautiful boardwalks through the mangroves, and plenty of cassowaries to keep you on your toes.

So grab friend, hire a car and start an adventure so incredible that you'll be left wondering why no one has told you to do it before.