

MEDIA RELEASE



February 2024

What's New in Cairns & Great Barrier Reef

TOURS AND ATTRACTIONS

Discover what the local marine life gets up to after dark at Cairns Aquarium's [Night at the Aquarium](#) experience. Operating Monday to Saturday, the guided tour reveals the night-time behaviour with the help of infra-red and ultra-violet lighting in the 71 living displays. The immersive journey covers river systems, a tropical rainforest, and the Great Barrier Reef, highlighting unique adaptations of fish and animals. The experience concludes with a two-course dinner in the Aquarium's aquatic themed Dundee's restaurant.

Embark on the newly launched [Waterfall, Wetlands & Skyrail tour](#) by Down Under Tours. Explore the lush Cattana Wetlands and join a Djabugay Aboriginal guide at the Barron Falls to learn about the cultural significance of the World Heritage-listed Wet Tropics rainforest. Enjoy a delicious lunch at Skybury Coffee Plantation, try tropical ice cream flavours at Emerald Creek Ice Creamery, and experience the immersive Skyrail Rainforest Cableway experience. This inclusive tour is wheelchair accessible.

Experience the outer reef and an inshore reef in the one day with Sunlover Reef Cruises. The [Reef & Fitzroy Island Day Tour](#) launched on 1 February and includes a 1.5-hour catamaran journey to Sunlover Moore Reef Pontoon which has the Great Barrier Reef's only water slide, plus snorkelling, diving and glass-bottom boat tours. Next stop is Fitzroy Island for a 3-hour stopover including lunch. Explore the rainforest trails, swim with turtles and relax on white coral beaches.

Board the new Tropic Wings electric coach on the newly launched [Daintree, Mossman Gorge, and Wildlife tour](#) offering travellers an immersive full-day experience. This adventure takes you to the iconic Daintree Rainforest at Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre for a Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony and along the Daintree River for a crocodile cruise. Learn about the conservation efforts at Wildlife Habitat Port Douglas on an exclusive wildlife experience and return to Cairns on the Great Barrier Reef Drive.

Calling all twitchers! Mt Mulligan Lodge has partnered with FNQ Nature tours to launch a new [birdwatching package](#). On a 3-hour road trip between Cairns and Mount Mulligan, discover diverse landscapes showcasing more than 450 bird species, including 13 endemics. Expert guides will help identify magpie geese, blue winged kookaburras, and rare scarlet honeyeaters. Enjoy a private 3-hour birdwatching tour at Mt Mulligan Lodge which is set on a vast 28,000-hectare cattle station where you can go paddle boarding and on guided nature walks. The package includes a one-way scheduled helicopter flight between Cairns and Mt Mulligan Lodge, subject to availability.

Divers Den has launched an [Exclusive Night Dive](#) with a special departure on 23 February and plans to run the tour several times throughout the year to give certified divers the opportunity for an overnight dive without the expense of multiple days on a liveaboard. Hosted aboard the Sea Quest, the trip includes two exhilarating night dives with full equipment and torches provided. Dinner will be served between dives, with vegetarian options available. Participants can also opt for the PADI Night Dive Specialty Course, delving into navigation techniques, ascents, and descents in the dark.

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Billy Tea Safaris has switched up the [1 Day Daintree, Cape Trip & Bloomfield tour](#) to include a Daintree River cruise, interpretive drive over the Alexandra Range Lookout, a guided beach walk, lunch at a local café, a stop at the Daintree Ice-Cream Company and a guided walk at Mossman Gorge.

Learn how to catch eel or bream and cook it or walk through the bush finding hollow trees to make a didgeridoo with First Nations guides from the Atherton Tablelands. [Rainforest to Bush Cultural Experiences](#) are private charter experiences with an Indigenous family sharing their Yidinji and Mbabaram culture on their homelands. The tour can be designed to suit your interests and availability.

[Myroo Adventures](#) will launch island-hopping coach tours in April with the tours departing from Cairns and Townsville during the first week of the month. The QuickCoast Xpress adventures include Fitzroy, Dunk and Magnetic Islands. Reef and Dunk Island tours depart from Mission Beach and can be done from Cairns with a coach connection to the Reef Fleet Terminal.

Fine tune your mountain biking techniques at the new Mountain Bike Skills Park at [Port Douglas Sports Complex](#). The park is considered a game-changer in the world of mountain biking and was a collaborative effort involving the Rainforest & Reef Cycling Club, local businesses, cyclists, volunteers, and Douglas Shire Council.

ACCOMMODATION

After a three-year restoration project, Babinda's historic nursing quarters have been reborn as [Babinda Quarters](#), a charming guesthouse south of Cairns. Led by former owner Maggie Perpetua Nelson's daughter, Kim Marsden, the Art Deco building now offers 20 beautifully appointed bedrooms adorned with local art. With prices starting at \$140 per night, guests can enjoy affordable luxury and warm hospitality, continuing Maggie's legacy of sharing restored heritage buildings with guests.

[Lizard Island](#) has introduced two luxury lifestyle packages, offering guests an enhanced experience of the island's marine adventures and wellness offerings. Situated within the Great Barrier Reef, Lizard Island provides access to stunning coral reefs and secluded beaches. The Adventure on Lizard Island package, priced from \$856 per couple, includes adrenalin-filled activities like a guided Aqua Darts Snorkelling tour and a Cook's Look hike. Guests seeking relaxation can opt for the Wellness on Lizard Island package, starting at \$360 per couple, which includes spa treatments, nature walks, and guided paddleboard or kayak tours. Both packages are available with a three-night minimum stay and are valid for travel until 31 March 2024.

The Reef House Boutique Hotel and Spa is offering exclusive [Rejuvenation Season Escapes](#) until 31 May 2024. Guests can indulge in a six-night package starting at \$1874 per person, which includes a complimentary night, candlelit dinner, food and beverage credit, daily breakfast with Coral Sea views, and more than 21 complimentary Signature Inclusions. A three-night package is also available from \$790 per person, offering similar perks.

Mission Beach hideaway [The Elandra](#) has opened with the stunning pool and open terrace restaurant and bar overlooking the Coral Sea and its islands. The 20 boutique designer resort rooms are nestled in 6ha of private tropical rainforest and facilities include a gym, tennis court

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and day spa. The events space caters to 120 cocktail-style and 80 seated guests. A shuttle bus and e-bikes are available for guests.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

Attention all anglers! [Shangri-La The Marina, Cairns](#) has introduced Cook Your Catch where you can enjoy your barramundi or coral trout cooked by a chef for only \$35 per person. Anglers can walk from their fishing charter at the Cairns Marlin Marina to The Backyard Restaurant where Executive Chef Aaron Habgood will expertly prepare it. Choose from a variety of cooking styles including pan-fried, roasted, beer-battered, or steamed. Pair your perfectly cooked fish with two sides of your choice ranging from green vegetables to chips or a garden salad.

Tapas favourites like Spanish jamon and grilled octopus paired with local ingredients are being dished up at [Miguel's](#) overlooking the Coral Sea at Palm Cove. The tapas bar and restaurant features Spanish wines to complement the evening menu and is open from Wednesday to Sunday.

Flavours from around the world are on the menu at [Garage](#) on the beachfront at Palm Cove which recently added a dinner menu after starting as an all-day breakfast and brunch café. Tarragon spiked whitebait fritti, torched yellowfin tuna curry leaf confit leeks and grilled brussels sprouts with mushrooms and Jerusalem artichoke cream can be enjoyed after 5pm, while brunch is served until 3pm.

EVENTS

The Undara Experience is set to erupt with the [Outback Rock and Blues](#) weekend from 26-28 April. With three separate shows over three days, this is a weekend to suit fans of all music genres. Outback Rock and Blues is an amazing weekend of music and mates in one of Tropical North Queensland's most unique locations – [Undara Experience](#).

The Queensland Symphony Orchestra will perform a world premiere of Symphony No.3, Great Barrier Reef (2024) composed by Paul Dean at the 30th Anniversary of [Port Douglas Carnivale](#). The Symphony Under the Stars concert is on 25 May at Rex Smeal Park with Carnivale celebrating pical North Queensland's culture from 24-26 May.

[Crankworx](#), the world's most watched mountain bike event, includes Cairns again on its World Tour after a successful two years. The iconic rainforest tracks at Smithfield Mountain Bike Park will come to life on 22-26 May with a raucous crowd and daredevil racing. Mountain biking devotees won't want to miss the packed schedule of events including downhill, dual slalom, slopestyle, speed and style and the official Australian Whip-off Championships.

For more information go to cairnsgreatbarrierreef.com

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Images:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/zf395z5m7hbea7higxaqz/h?rlkey=fnw82173b018ijmcygc3lx6lt&d|l=0>

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