

# MEDIA RELEASE



August 2025

## What's New in Cairns & Great Barrier Reef

### TOURS AND ATTRACTIONS

Step into the heart of the Torres Strait Islands with an unforgettable three-day cultural journey during the iconic [Winds of Zenadth Cultural Festival](#) on Thursday Island in September. This exclusive tour from \$3,999 has limited spots available – only eight people (twin share) per tour. Feel the pulse of the Torres Strait as you are immersed in the rhythm of powerful dance, soul-stirring art and ancient storytelling, all guided by local experts.

Currently under construction, the \$3.76 million Eastern Kuku Yalanji Bamanga Muruku Tourism Hub will open in December, offering immersive cultural experiences such as art, dance, tours and ceremonies, all in the heart of the World Heritage-listed Daintree Rainforest.

[Sailaway](#) is redefining reef exploration with the launch of its second E Tender, a 100% solar-electric glass bottom boat, with one at Low Isles and the second at Mackay Coral Cay, offering guests a whisper-quiet, eco-powered adventure on the Great Barrier Reef.

From croc cruises to coral reefs, [Cairns Adventure Group's](#) new [Overnight on the Daintree Delight](#) delivers two days of culture-rich, high adrenaline adventure across rainforest and reef. Guests will enjoy a Welcome to Country at Mossman Gorge, crocodile-spotting cruises, rainforest ziplining, and an overnight rainforest stay before snorkelling the Great Barrier Reef with Ocean Safari, all designed to celebrate culture, Country and community.

Mandingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours has launched a premium cultural experience pairing the [Deadly After Dark Sunset Cruise](#) with an exclusive Outback Menu at Cairns' award-winning Ochre Restaurant. Explore Mandingalbay Yidinji Country by twilight before savouring native bush foods and regional produce in a celebration of culture, storytelling and world-class cuisine.

Transport yourself to ancient Egypt at the new immersive exhibition, the [Tomb of the Pharaohs](#). Featuring more than 450 artefacts handcrafted in Egypt under the guidance of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities Egyptologists, this world-first showcase brings to life gold death masks, sarcophagi, mummies and treasures from the Valley of the Kings, Saqqara, and Tanis. Tours from \$50pp.

Reef Unlimited's new [Whale Watching Tours](#) are making a splash this winter, running July 14 to August 22 aboard the luxurious Aquarius II during the annual humpback migration through the Great Barrier Reef. Guests can enjoy front-row views of migrating whales in what is known as the humpback triangle off Cairns before having chill time on Fitzroy Island, home to spectacular Nudey Beach.

Faster, sleeker and greener – [Frankland Islands Reef Cruises'](#) new 14-metre high-performance vessel now offers improved stability and panoramic viewing areas while reducing fuel consumption by 60%. Guests will enjoy up to 45 extra minutes on Normanby Island thanks to

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faster transfers, enhanced wildlife viewing along the mangroves and an intimate small-group experience with just 44 passengers.

Coral Expeditions has partnered with The Australian Geographic Society and Great Barrier Reef Legacy to bring a one-of-a-kind conservation experience. The [Coral Futures Expedition](#) is a seven-night premium voyage blending immersive citizen science and exploration with guests joining marine experts to monitor reef health, contribute to coral conservation and experience the wonder of the Great Barrier Reef aboard Australia's pioneering expedition cruise company. The expedition will sail on December 4, 2025 from Cairns.

[Skyrail Rainforest Cableway](#) has unveiled 'The World's Oldest Rainforest Story', a first-of-its-kind in-gondola audio experience featuring the voice of Djabugay Traditional Owner Dennis Hunter, while also announcing an \$85 million upgrade featuring floor-to-ceiling transparent gondolas and cutting-edge technology to elevate the rainforest experience in 2027.

Aquarius II has joined the [Reef Unlimited](#) fleet - a sleek 26-metre, 240-passenger vessel built for reef tours, business charters and standout events from Cairns and Port Douglas. Featuring three levels of spacious comfort including a sundeck, air-conditioned saloon, buffet catering, Starlink Wi-Fi, and a hydraulic dive platform, Aquarius II offers an exceptional way to experience the Great Barrier Reef.

Cairns Marlin Marina has become the year-round home port for [Morris Nautical's](#) luxury fleet — M.Y. Northern Escape, M.Y. Flying Fish, and M.Y. Beluga — cementing Cairns as a premier superyacht hub. These bespoke vessels explore the Great Barrier Reef including the Ribbon Reefs, Lizard Island and the Coral Sea with the custom-built game fishing yacht, Gambler, also joining the fleet.

Discover the world's first living biobank at Port Douglas' Crystalbrook Superyacht Marina – The [Forever Reef Project](#) – where the largest and most diverse collection of Great Barrier Reef coral is being preserved for future generations. Visitors can join guided tours to see vibrant living specimens, learn from marine experts and explore pioneering coral conservation science, with VIP private charters available for an exclusive, in-depth experience.

Marking its 36th anniversary, the [Daintree Discovery Centre](#) has unveiled a new \$500,000 Jarrabina Terraces canopy walkway and tech-driven experiences, making the ancient rainforest more accessible than ever.

## ACCOMMODATION

[Little Drifter Cairns](#) is open with a fresh new stay in the tropics for reef-chasers, rainforest rovers and anyone chasing sunshine and stories. Following a multimillion-dollar design-led refurb, this 54-room Cairns property that sleeps up to 259 guests, blends boutique comfort with tropical energy, offering both dorm-style and private boutique accommodation. Opening rates start from \$60 a night in a shared bunk suite, and \$150 for a private queen room.

The Sunshine Tower Hotel has been rebranded to the [Alvio Hotel Cairns](#) after a two-year refurbishment of then 61-room property on Sheridan St. The renovations include revitalised

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lobby and dining spaces, a Mediterranean-inspired pool with tropical gardens and the rooms have views of the Cairns mountains and hotel landscaping.

[BIG4 Ingenia Holidays Cairns Coconut](#) has unveiled its expanded Splash Park, featuring four waterslides, eight play zones, and a 200-litre tipping bucket. With stays from \$200 a night, this is perfect for a fun-filled family holiday.

## FOOD & BEVERAGE

[Sails Cairns](#) by Hemingway's brings the region's first Nikkei-inspired menu - a vibrant fusion of Japanese precision and bold Peruvian flavours, paired with Trinity Inlet views. Sails Cairns is open from midday to 10pm, Monday to Sunday for lunch and dinner, along with an all-day sharing menu of dishes.

## EVENTS

Celebrate ancient history and culture less than an hour from Cairns at the Yarrabah's new look [Music and Culture Festival](#) on August 30 at Bishop Malcolm Park from 1-10pm. Run by the community for the community, the festival will feature bands, traditional dance, an art and crafts market, food vans and light projections.

For the sporty locals and travellers, the [Port Douglas Gran Fondo Festival](#) is taking place September 12-14 with the exciting new addition of the Run Port Douglas event. The festival now offers four ride distances and four run distances including a half marathon.

[Savannah in the Round](#) 2025 in Mareeba on the Atherton Tablelands has announced a stellar lineup featuring both international and Australian artists. Taking place on October 9-12, the music festival will be headlined by Zac Brown Band and Jackson Dean from the US, alongside Australian music icons like James Reyne, Kasey Chambers and Daryl Braithwaite.

[Be Social Fest](#) is hitting Cairns this October for two epic days of live music, good vibes and unmissable festival energy! Kick off the party on October 24 at The Jack with an exclusive 18+ pre-party featuring Winston Surfshirt and friends, then come back for the all-ages main event on October 25 at Cairns Showgrounds, headlined by Matt Corby and Bliss N Eso. Expect food stalls, show rides, art installations, markets, and VIP areas for all ages.

For more information go to [cairnsgreatbarrierreef.com](https://cairnsgreatbarrierreef.com)

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