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Tropical Queensland



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Photos courtesy of Tourism Queensland

1. Jetty on Hinchinbrook Island
2. Snorkelling at Alma Bay
3. Kangaroo at Billabong Sanctuary
4. Flinders Street Nightlights, Townsville
5. Marina and Castle Hill, Townsville

Townsville & Magnetic Island

With the idyllic paradise of Magnetic Island right at your doorstep, it's not hard to see why people are attracted to Townsville. With an eclectic mix of rainforest, reef, sandy beaches, outback bush and big city benefits, Townsville has something for every holiday itinerary. It's the very heart of life in the tropics, with the region extending north to captivating Mission Beach, south to the rustic Burdekin and west to historic Charters Towers.

Surrounded by a rich hinterland of tropical rainforests and waterfalls, Townsville is the gateway to heritage gold-mining towns, the stunning outback, scenic islands and, of course, the Great Barrier Reef.

It's true what they say, the attraction truly is magnetic. Maggie, as 2500 locals affectionately know her, is the perfect island escape. A short ferry ride to Magnetic Island lands you in the heart of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, where more than 2,000 koalas roam wild and unique bird life inhabit the island. With 23 bays and beaches at various locations across the island, you are free to explore the splendour and beauty the island is renowned for.

If looking for hidden treasures sounds exhausting, other gems await you in the hub of Townsville city.

Catering for sophisticated palates and elegant tropical fun, this flourishing cosmopolitan city boasts an array of cafés, bars, restaurants, nightclubs, a world class casino and shopping experiences like no other. Whichever one you choose, you'll experience Townsville's friendly and unique, relaxed tropical ambience.

The Strand is the perfect place to unwind for any holiday to Townsville. The popular foreshore stretches for 2.5km with views across Cleveland Bay to Magnetic Island. It is a favourite for locals and visitors alike, with BBQ facilities, swimming enclosures, freshwater showers and playgrounds for social gatherings. For the kids, the state-of-the-art water park on The Strand is a playground of fun. Children wait anxiously while a huge overhead bucket fills with water then spills over them, causing many squeals and giggles.

For a relaxing day out or a long secluded walk on the beach, Townsville's five northern beaches 60 kilometres north of the city are the ideal getaway. Bushland, Saunders, Toolakea, Toomulla and Balgal are spectacular beaches. They combine the rugged bush with necessary amenities and beachside hideaways, where swimming, fishing, picnicking and bird watching are ideal.

Little Crystal Creek, located 11km up the winding road to Paluma Village, is well known for its historic stone arch bridge built in the 1930's, and cascading waterfalls that feed into one of the best freshwater swimming holes in the north.

Continue up the winding road to Paluma Village, nestled amongst the misty clouds. Located within the Mount Spec National Park, it is the southern-most point in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. At 1000 metres above sea level, Paluma is a cool mountain retreat with a convenient lack of mobile phone coverage. With cosy accommodation, cafes, arts and craft, bird watching and a large network of rainforest walks, Paluma promises the perfect getaway for a quiet, romantic weekend, or place to unwind.

Further north, see hundreds of wallabies at Tyto Wetlands, a nature reserve perfect for the avid bird watcher. Dugongs laze around in the coastal waters and are often spotted near the islands of Magnetic and Hinchinbrook, with winter seeing the arrival of whales to breed in the warmer waters.



PLACES TO GO ...

- Enjoy the views across Cleveland Bay to Magnetic Island
- Visit the Billabong Wildlife Sanctuary
- Snorkel or dive the Great Barrier Reef
- Visit the Museum of Tropical Queensland
- Reef HQ, the largest living coral reef aquarium in the world
- Learn about local Indigenous history at the Cultural Centre
- Castle Hill offers breathtaking views
- Go swimming at Riverway esplanade



If the local underwater residents are your kind of company, visit Reef HQ in Townsville's city to meet them up close, watch shark feeding and learn about the marine life that call the reef home. If you like a more hands-on experience, the Great Barrier Reef offers visitors one of the most beautiful, diverse, rich and abundant coral reef environments to explore on this planet.

With rainforest, reef, outback and city coming together to form this colourful region, there is something for everyone, from heart-pounding, lump-in-your-throat fun to a more peaceful adventure at whatever pace you are comfortable with.

Explore the terrain and admire the wildlife as you please on a sea kayak or push bike. Throw on your hiking boots and tackle the 32km Thorsborne Trail on Hinchinbrook Island or trek to the base of Wallaman Falls, the highest single-drop waterfall in Australia.

For thrill seekers, a scenic flight will allow you to take in the overwhelming beauty of the north, give your head a spin with aerobatics over the skyline of Townsville and views over tropical islands or watch as the north's own cowboys take on a bull at various rodeos.

Heading west will find you driving down the wide streets of Charters Towers, a montage of Australian heritage. Once the most populated town in Queensland outside Brisbane, Charters Towers is as rich in history as it is in gold.

So whether you're looking for an action-packed tropical holiday, or just want to laze on a warm secluded beach, you can experience life in the tropics and more on your holiday to Townsville.



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Reef Lodge Backpackers

Lonely Planet 2007 – 2008: "With its mellow atmosphere, beautiful murals, cheery bed covers and outdoor nooks, Reef Lodge leads the hostel pack. Space is a premium in the two-tier complex overlooking a courtyard, with book exchange, a laundry and travellers notice board, you're well catered for."

BUG Review: Reef Lodge is a beautifully maintained hostel with a laid back atmosphere right in the heart of the city centre. The dorms are air-conditioned, comfortable and clean; bathrooms are spotless with new fittings and hair dryers and the kitchen is well equipped. There is a games room/gym and with a pool table plus a couple of cozy TV lounges. Internet access is available in the courtyard (\$5 per hour) and there are laundry facilities. Security is very good and the reception staff are wonderfully kind and helpful.

Reef Lodge is one of Townsville's oldest hostels and certainly one of Townsville's most central Hostels. It was built back in the early 70's and has a unique charm of its own. Please don't take my word for it, feel free to come and look through the hostel before you check in.

We have no hidden costs and you get what you pay for. We understand that most of our travellers are looking for a fairly quiet, laid back environment so we ask that people settle down after 10.30pm and take the party to the clubs, the first of which is only about 20 meters away. This way people can get some rest as many of the backpackers staying here have jobs. If you are looking for work most backpackers have little trouble finding it. With its central location, you are only 200 to 600 meters from the beach, city centre, ferry terminal, Museum, Aquarium, Imax Theatre, Indigenous Centre and the Tourist Information Centre. "The Strand" at 2.5 kilometres long, is a great walk and has a free saltwater pool at one end and a small water park at the other.

We also have a free BBQ, pool table and gym, three TV and DVD areas. There are also plenty of places to just sit around and take it easy. All rooms have air-conditioning, and our twins, doubles, small dorms and motel rooms have fridge, toaster and kettle provided.

Did I mention you can kill yourself in Townsville? There is a large hill that takes about 45 minutes to walk up. The only time I walked up the hill, I felt I was going to have myself a good old fashioned myocardial infarction and drop dead! There is an upside; after you realize you're not going to die and it was only a near-death experience, the effort is well worth it, as it has a great panoramic view of the whole city. Particularly good at sunset! Visit www.reeflodge.com.au.

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Adventurers Resort is situated in the trendy café street, 10 minutes walk to the CBD and 15 minutes walk to the Strand. At the Strand you will find the beach with two netted swimming areas, free water park and a long walking path along the beach. Things to do, places to see in Townsville – Wildlife Sanctuary, day reef trips, diving the Yongala wreck (Australia's best wreck dive), Learn to Scuba dive course, sky diving, Magnetic Island, aquarium and museum. Discounted backpacker rates and a free night available (conditions apply). For more information visit www.adventurersresort.com or phone 1800 211 522.

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Magnetic Island & Townsville Backpacking

We've got it all! – You don't have to travel to the depths of the outback to experience Aussie culture or travel to outer reaches of the reef to explore pristine beaches and marine life. The city of Townsville is literally surrounded by the Great Barrier Reef, islands, beaches, rainforests, waterfalls, national parks and the outback! So why not come for a day, stay a week or lose yourself forever in this tropical paradise!

TOWNSVILLE

Townsville is Australia's largest, tropical beach-side city. It has an almost unbroken spell of sunshine, tropical breezes and sparkling azure waters with winter temperatures between 20°C and 25°C.

Get Stranded: Relax by the water under swaying palm trees on the multi-award winning Strand Beach and soak up the magnificent views to Magnetic Island. This beach-front promenade stretches 2.5km and is lined with cafes, recreational facilities, parks, playgrounds, swimming enclosures, the Rock Pool and FREE BBQ areas.

Party on to the Early Morn: If relaxing by the beach isn't your style then Townsville's nightlife is sure to get you going. Head to Flinders St East and you'll find most of the cities clubs and pubs conveniently located in the one place. From Irish pubs to dance clubs, Townsville's nightlife has something for everyone.

Free Stuff: There is loads to do in Townsville. Stroll through the Cotters Markets in Flinders Street Mall every Sunday and pick up a bargain, test your endurance and head up the Goat Track of Castle Hill for a 360° panoramic view, visit the monthly Strand markets or cook up some snags on the free BBQs dotted along the Strand.

Accommodation & Attractions: Townsville boasts some of Australia's best attractions – from adrenalin and adventure activities to relaxing nature tours. There is also no shortage of accommodation available for every budget including hostels, lodges, B&Bs, caravan parks and a number of free campsites. For ideas on tours, attractions and accommodation check out the listings on this page.

MAGNETIC ISLAND

With its 23 bays and beaches, wildlife, water sports, walking trails, sunshine and that unmistakable island party atmosphere, 'Maggie', as it's affectionately known, is a popular destination for backpackers to relax and have a good time. Only 8km from Townsville, Magnetic Island is three-quarters National Park and home to 2,000 people and northern Australia's largest colony of koalas in the wild! Getting there is a breeze with two ferry companies offering either a passenger service in just 20 minutes or car barge service in 45 minutes.

Free Stuff: Magnetic Island boasts endless walking tracks through the island's National Parks. The most famous of these is the Forts Walk, a 2km track where you will find WWII gun encasements, wild koalas and spectacular views of the coral sea. Meet the locals at the surf clubs and pubs, watch the cane toad races every Wednesday night, feed rock wallabies and fish at the old Geoffrey Bay jetty and snorkel one of the many fringing reefs around the island.

Accommodation & Attractions: Magnetic Island is a 'must-do' stop-over on the east coast backpacking trail. The diverse range of tours and activities will keep you busy for days and there's no shortage of accommodation from camping, budget bush and beach-front hostels through to self-contained units and resort style properties. For further information on activities and accommodation on the island check out the listings below.



Three great Townsville attractions

Located in the heart of Townsville's CBD and within easy walking distance from the Greyhound bus station, Reef HQ Aquarium, the Cultural Centre Townsville and the Museum of Tropical Queensland are a must for all visitors to North Queensland.

Experience the wonders of the Great Barrier Reef without getting wet at the award winning Reef HQ Aquarium. With many exhibits to explore, it's the ultimate reef experience. Immerse yourself in the underwater discovery tunnel and plunge into our 2½ million litre world of living, breathing coral home to thousands of incredible reef creatures.

The Townsville Cultural Centre will delight and inform visitors with its fine arts gallery and interpretive museum. Join us on the last weekend of every month for our Cultural Markets and enjoy traditional food, entertainment and a great range of authentic souvenirs.

The Museum of Tropical Queensland is a fantastic place to discover the natural and cultural heritage of North Queensland. The museum is full of captivating exhibitions, including the Pandora Gallery where visitors have the opportunity to see artefacts from the HMS Pandora, the ship sent by British Admiralty to capture the Bounty and her mutinous crew.

Best of all, these three big attractions are all next door to one another on Flinders Street East, so visit us today!



3 Great Attractions 1 Convenient Location

Located in the heart of Townsville CBD, Reef HQ, the Cultural Centre and the Museum of Tropical Queensland are a must for all visitors to North Queensland, there's plenty to see and do, so head down to Flinders Street East today!



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MUSEUM OF TROPICAL QUEENSLAND
The Museum of Tropical Queensland is a fantastic place to discover the natural and cultural heritage of North Queensland. The museum is full of captivating exhibitions, including the Pandora Gallery where you can see artefacts from the HMS Pandora, the ship sent by British Admiralty to capture the Bounty and her mutinous crew!
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