

# GREAT BARRIER REEF ON A BUDGET

24 Mar, 15 by [Fiona Harper](#)

One of the worlds Seven Natural Wonders, the Great Barrier Reef makes an appearance on just about every dreamily-penned bucket list. Indeed, the Great Barrier Reef is a little like those A-list celebrities preening themselves on red carpets across the globe with paparazzi snapping at their heels. It's probably the most photographed underwater world in, ahem, the world.

Here's our tips to get the best value out of your Great Barrier Reef holiday.

## CHOOSE YOUR SEASON

Time your visit to the Great Barrier Reef carefully and you'll be able to snap up some bargains! The low season coincides with the wet season, which we actually prefer to call the Waterfall Season. It's when the rainforest is looking its absolute best as the entire ecosystem laps up fresh, life-sustaining cloud juice. The upside is that the south east trade winds ease between December and March and glassy, calm seas prevail, which are ideal for those who don't quite have their sea legs.

Many hotels offer low season rates or special packages so it pays to ask when you book. Port Douglas and Palm Cove rank well in Trip Advisors Top 25 Bargain Hotels in Australia. Who are we to argue?

It's the same deal with boat trips to the Great Barrier Reef – special deals are often available if you book more than one tour or add in extra inclusions. For sailors (or novices keen to learn), ask around at sailing clubs for crew berths on local yachts at social or racing events.



Photo by [Johan Lolos](#)

## CAMPING OUT

Caravan parks never really went out of fashion for budget-conscious and family travellers. Some, like (multi award winning) Cairns Coconut Holiday Resort, are more like adventure

theme parks with enough entertainment onsite to entertain youngsters through to seniors. Caravan parks often have million dollar views too! Check out 8 Island Campsites as well as these beachfront beauties for holidays in the sun that won't burst the holiday budget:

Ellis Beach Oceanfront Bungalows

Palm Cove Holiday Park

Cape Tribulation Camping



Palm Cove Beach Front. Photo by [Johan Lolos](#)

## FREE ATTRACTIONS

Those two platforms at the base of your legs (you probably know them as your feet) are your first class ticket to free holiday fun. Lace up your walking shoes and sling a backpack over your shoulder laden with lunch, water bottle and a map. Ask your accommodation host to point out interesting walking routes. You'll likely come across quaint back streets, cafes and bars frequented by locals, pedestrian trails, parks, boardwalks and markets to poke around in. Strike up a conversation with a local and who knows what hidden secrets you'll discover about their hometown.

History and art buffs already know about free museums and galleries. Living museums in the form of historic or iconic hotels and public buildings can also provide a fascinating insight into the past. The Cairns Esplanade Lagoon is open every day and it's absolutely free. So too are daily Active Living fitness classes as well as a 5 km run or walk every Saturday run by international organisation parkrun.

It doesn't cost anything to don a mask and snorkel, nor to enjoy the pleasures of a beach picnic or a free public beachfront BBQ.



Photo by [Jewelszee](#)

## CHEAP AIR TRAVEL

Is there such a thing? Yes there is! But you need to be in the know. Sign up for airlines newsletters to be sure you're first to hear about airfare sales. It's often cheaper to travel mid-week rather than on weekends. Avoid flying during school holidays and long weekends if you can and you'll likely save some coin.

Travel with hand luggage only, or, if you're a real cheapskate wear a coat with oversized pockets to stash heavy items like cameras, gadgets and all their chargers. Check with airlines in advance for carry-on weight limits.

How to snag that elusive upgrade? It never hurts to be polite and dress smartly to impress check in crew, which is when upgrades are usually determined. There's no harm in asking either. Alternatively save your frequent flyer points and buy a points upgrade.



Fiona Harper is Cairns based travel writer. Widely travelled, highly acclaimed and much published, Fiona's articles & images are published across the globe. When she's not writing about TNQ she's probably running a marathon or exploring the world by foot, bike, kayak, camel or boat: whatever mode of transport she can get her hands on!

