

EXPERIENCE

Rainforest to reef

Look beyond the accepted tourist offerings of Far North Queensland and you'll find a region scattered with hidden gems.

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By Fiona Harper

The southern cassowary is as tall as a human, with glossy black plumage concealing stubs where wings would normally be. Its most striking features are its elongated cobalt-blue neck and helmet-like casque. The cassowary is endangered, with as few as 2000 remaining in Far North Queensland, but it is integral to the survival of the rainforest, as it can digest large rainforest fruits and disperse them over great distances. If the cassowary disappears, so too will much of the rainforest.

Pullman Cairns International with its wall of lofty white-framed windows, makes a great base to explore this incredible part of Australia. After all, Accor has 12 hotels dotted around Far North Queensland – in Palm Cove, Port Douglas and Cairns. Choose a base or move from region to region with ease, with all options available – from luxury to economy.

Venture forth

Inland from the coastal plain, Skybury Plantation, on the Atherton Tablelands beyond Kuranda, is Australia's oldest coffee plantation. Linger over lunch in the café while enjoying plantation views or take home your preferred blend of coffee capsules (Nespresso compatible). You can satisfy chocolate cravings at Daintree Estates with fine chocolate produced from locally grown cocoa beans.

If you're partial to leaf rather than bean, The Falls

Wayback Machine <http://www.laviemagazine.com.au/issue/issue05/article/from-rainforest-to-reef/> Go **MAR 02** MAR DEC 2015 2017 2018

which is surrounded by national parks and acts as a gateway to the waterfall circuit. Some, like Zillie Falls, are easily accessible, with a viewing platform perfectly positioned for photographers; Pepina Falls is a short walk from the car park. Others plunge dramatically into bottomless pools, luring overheated swimmers into cool rock-strewn ponds. Cantilevered above the treetops, Mamu Rainforest Canopy Walkway provides stunning views of forest-clad ranges and Queensland's highest peak, Mount Bartle Frere.

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North of Millaa Millaa, Yungaburra's wide streets are bordered by quintessential Queenslander-style architecture. The Yungaburra Markets are held on the last Saturday of the month, bringing local producers and artisans into the middle of the historical village to sell fresh produce, handicrafts and local wines. Revisit the pioneer days at nearby Herberton Historic Village, where 50 original buildings dating as far back as the 1880s have been preserved.

Find your sea legs

As enticing as the hinterland is, it's difficult to resist the temptations of the Coral Sea. If you fancy yourself as a 'boaty' type, you can hire a pontoon boat (no boat licence required) from Cairns Marlin Marina and potter around mangrove-lined Trinity Inlet. During low tide you may spot a saltwater crocodile lazing on a muddy bank. The crocs hang out here because there's plenty of food, which means it's a good place to drop a fishing line from your boat. Don't be tempted to get close to a croc, though. These notorious sallies (not to mention the southern cassowary) are best viewed at Cairns Tropical Zoo.

The Great Barrier Reef is a treasure chest of kaleidoscopic corals and fish. Green Island is a tiny cay surrounded by a coral reef so it's great for snorkelling and diving or viewing the reef from a glass-bottom boat. Great for all ages, Fitzroy Island is where hikers can enjoy the challenging walk to the decommissioned lighthouse (easier coastal trails wind past white-sand beaches) and the superb snorkelling straight from the beach.

If you're in Port Douglas you won't find a better place to cool off than in the lagoon-style pool at Pullman Port Douglas Sea Temple Resort & Spa. The seemingly endless lagoon meanders past vast tropical landscaped gardens exquisitely lit with underwater lighting and flaming tiki torches. Relax after an exhausting day of exploring with a tippie at the lagoon bar or upgrade to a swim-out apartment.

For more seaside adventure head to Mission Beach, which is actually four villages clinging to the vegetation beyond the beach itself. Hire a tinnie, take a water taxi across to Dunk Island or enjoy a long, lazy walk along 14 kilometres of pristine beach. Grab a bite at the restaurants and cafés dotted among the beach cottages. Better yet, take advantage of free barbecue facilities on the Bingil Bay foreshore.

If it's some good tucker you're after, you'd be hard-pressed to beat Rusty's Market in Cairns itself. It's an institution in these parts, a cultural melting pot of more than 180 vendors and entertainers who ply their wares from Friday to Sunday. Amid the sweet-smelling, organised mayhem, stalls bulge with tropical fruits (such as mangoes, melons and lychees), plus flowers and fashion.

You can also pamper yourself at the Pullman Palm Cove Sea Temple Resort & Spa located in a picturesque village with ancient paperbark trees and a palm-shaded beach. Spa therapy is an art form here, as is alfresco dining (Temple of Tastes restaurant is among the best), which makes for a delightfully hedonistic combination. You may not want to leave.

Before your Far North Queensland adventure ends, be sure to escape to Vie Spa at Pullman Palm Cove or Pullman Port Douglas and you will leave feeling restored, revived and inspired. What's more, as an Accor Advantage Plus member, you will receive **10% off the entire spa menu** as part of your membership, allowing you to indulge guilt-free.



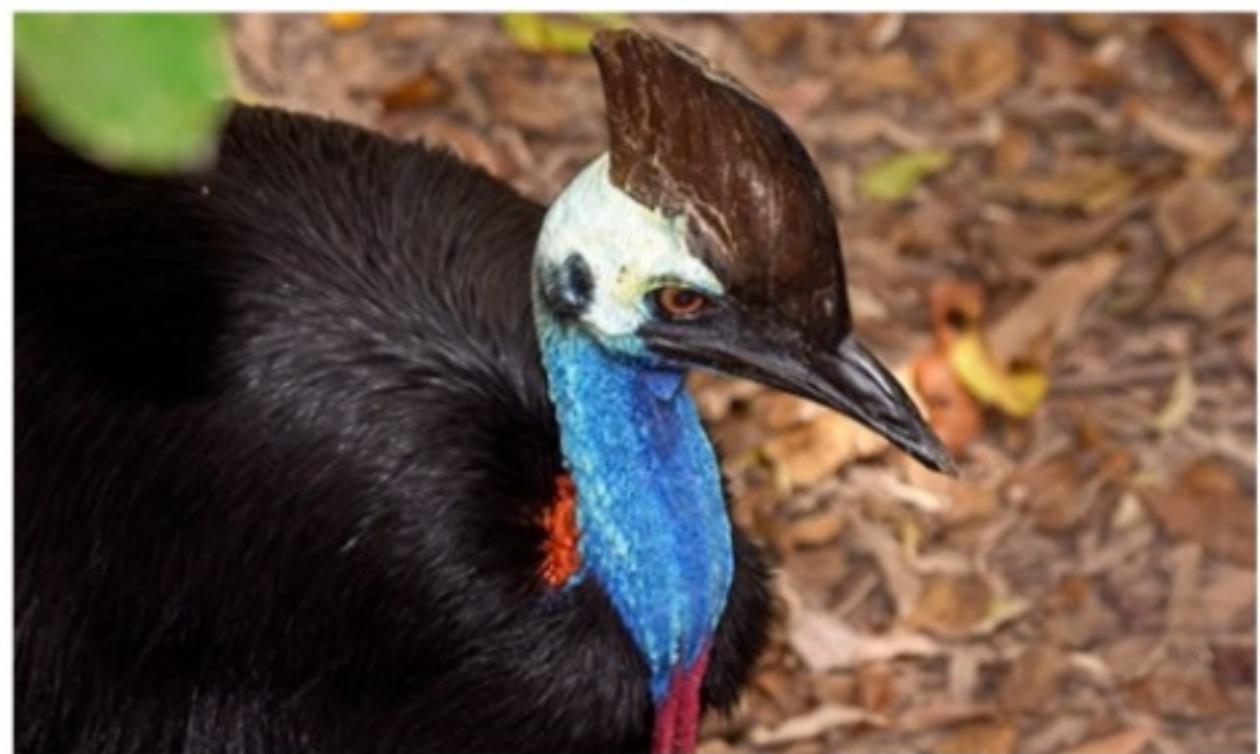
DID YOU KNOW?

Plant propagator

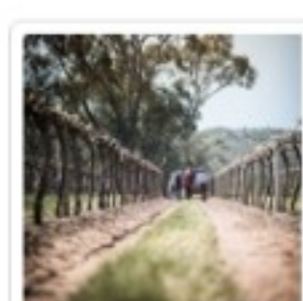
The cassowary eats more than 238 species of plants, swallowing fruits whole and passing thousands of seeds intact, enabling rainforest plants to spread far and wide.

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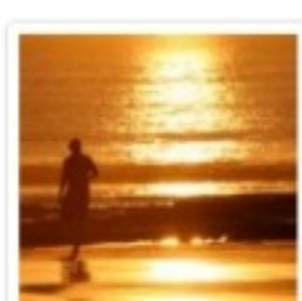
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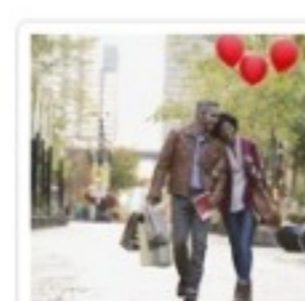


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