

# 11 FUN THINGS TO DO IN CAIRNS WITH KIDS

Consider using the money you've saved on half-price flights to Cairns to splash out on one of these fun family experiences in the region, **FIONA HARPER** writes

## 1. GREAT BARRIER REEF CRUISE

What's not to love about a waterborne adventure on the Great Barrier Reef? Spend a day at Sunlover Reef Cruises floating pontoon, where the kids will be hard pressed to decide what to do first. There's a wading depth ocean pool where inquisitive yellow-tail fusiliers hang out, a touch tank to get up close and personal with marine life in safety, snorkel tours and cruises over the reef in a glass-walled semi-submersible boat. But, undoubtedly, the best activity is the waterfide, guaranteed to exhaust the kids while creating lasting family memories. [sunlover.com.au](http://sunlover.com.au)

A family snorkelling on the Great Barrier Reef



## 2. HARTLEY'S CROCODILE ADVENTURES

Saltwater crocodiles are the superstars at Hartley's Crocodile Adventures, but there are so many fascinating creatures on show you could easily spend half a day here and not see them all. Time your visit to take in one of the shows, which are not only informative but also often hilariously entertaining, including the Crocodile Attack Show (don't be alarmed, no one is harmed). Take a cruise on the billabong, breakfast with locals and see caecilians, banggai and other reptiles such as snakes, tortoises and lizards.

[crocodileadventures.com](http://crocodileadventures.com)

## 3. WALKABOUT CULTURAL ADVENTURES

Explore Eku Yalanj country with Aboriginal guides whose ancestors hail from the world's oldest living culture. Learn about Indigenous cultural connections to Monsoon Gorge, the Daintree Rainforest and the Great Barrier Reef, and all the creatures that live here. A hands-on experience perfect for small family groups, you will also learn about bush medicine and tucker, try your hand at boomerang and spear throwing and maybe even catch a mud crab. It's a great chance to experience authentic Aboriginal culture on country, where tradition and connections remain as strong as they were tens of thousands of years ago.

[walkaboutadventures.com.au](http://walkaboutadventures.com.au)

## 4. AUSTRALIAN BUTTERFLY SANCTUARY

With more than 1,500 butterflies, the Australian Butterfly Sanctuary is Australia's largest butterfly sanctuary. Located in Kuranda village, it showcases native species including the spectacular green and yellow Cairns Bluewing, cohab blue Ulysses and Monarch butterflies, and lesser-known species. Learn all about the butterfly life cycle through immersive exhibits, educational experiences and guided walks, or wander at leisure through the aviary to simply admire the gentle flutter of these delightful creatures.

[australianbutterfly.com](http://australianbutterfly.com)



Image: Tourism and Events Cairns



## 5. CHILLAGOE MUNGANA CAVES NATIONAL PARK

Around three hours west of Cairns, Chillagoe-Mungana Caves National Park features dramatic limestone caves and significant Aboriginal rock art galleries. Mammoth stalactites drap the cave ceilings while stalagmites

rise like sentinels from a lost world. From the township of Chillagoe, book a ranger-guided tour to explore a fascinating, underground world through caverns and secret passages concealed within Donna, Franklin and Royal Arch Caves. [parks.des.qld.gov.au/parks/chillagoe-caves](http://parks.des.qld.gov.au/parks/chillagoe-caves)



Paronella Park



Search for treasure during a tour to the Frankland Islands

## 6. CAIRNS AQUARIUM

The easiest way to get up close and personal with the creatures that inhabit the waters of the Great Barrier Reef, Cairns Aquarium is home to around 16,000 critters from diverse Tropical North Queensland habitats and eco-systems, including corals, billabongs, rivers, mangrove forests and the ocean. Touch and Talk sessions offer an intimate insight into the creatures' behaviours, while the touch tank allows visitors to handle sea stars, cucumbers and other delicate marine life. But the big attraction is the main aquarium, where colourful tropical fish dart amongst coral reefs, while seafish and large rays glide overhead.

[cairnsaquarium.com.au](http://cairnsaquarium.com.au)

## 7. PARONELLA PARK

Drive two hours south of Cairns and you'll find a mix of magnificent parklands and historic Spanish-style architecture at Paronella Park. Nestled amongst the rainforest on the banks of Mena Creek, the attraction was the dream of Isid Paronella, who arrived in Australia from Catalonia in 1901.

[paronellapark.com.au](http://paronellapark.com.au)

## 8. FRANKLAND ISLANDS REEF CRUISE

Beginning with a rainforest river cruise, followed by the shortest open water crossing of any of the Cairns day tour boats, this tour takes you to Normandy Island in the Frankland Islands National Park island group. During the adventure snorkel safari you will see extraordinary coral reefs, including massive boulder corals and widespread anemone gardens (and maybe even find Nemo!). You have up to four hours to explore and enjoy this natural paradise, above and below the water.

[franklandislands.com.au](http://franklandislands.com.au)







### B. STAND-UP PADDLEBOARDING IN COBBOLD GORGE

In the heart of Gulf Savannah country, the near-vertical sandstone walls of Cobbold Gorge are etched with glorious patterns and rugged formations carved by the elements. Take a guided boat tour along the waterway, or glide across the still waters on a SUP while learning about the evolution of this ancient landscape. Paddling gently through the gorge, you'll witness nature in all its glory – from delicate fern fronds dancing in the breeze to birdcalls high above the canopy. [cobboldgorge.com.au](http://cobboldgorge.com.au)

Stand up paddleboarding in Cobbold Gorge



Undara Lava Tubes

### 10. UNDARA LAVA TUBES

Follow the rolling savannah plains west of Cairns and the Great Dividing Range, you'll find Undara Lava Tubes. The Undara Experience was created by the pioneering Collins family, who have grazed cattle on Rosella Plains Station for over 150 years, and is much more than a geological wonder that has evolved over millions of years. Take a guided tour through the cave system and enjoy vivid sunsets and starlit skies that Outback Australia is renowned for, amidst native wildlife including kangaroos, wallabies and micro-bats. Stay overnight in the homestead or restored railway carriages, or roll out a swag and sleep beneath the stars. [undara.com.au](http://undara.com.au)

### 11. RIVER TUBING WITH AUSSIE DRIFTERZ TUBING TOURS

There are few easier ways to view lushly vegetated rainforest than floating gently down a river in an inflatable tube. Families with children aged five and older can journey along forest-lined Ilithara Gorge or the Mulgrave River, depending on conditions on the day, with Aussie Drifterz Tubing Tours (part of Cairns Adventure Group). With an experienced guide to point out highlights, wildlife and to ensure a safe experience, the tour takes a couple of hours and may include some small, easy rapids in between long, lazy drifts downstream. [cairnsadventuregroup.com.au](http://cairnsadventuregroup.com.au) (R)

Image: Tourism and Events Cairns Inc