

Adventure on the Great Barrier Reef Drive

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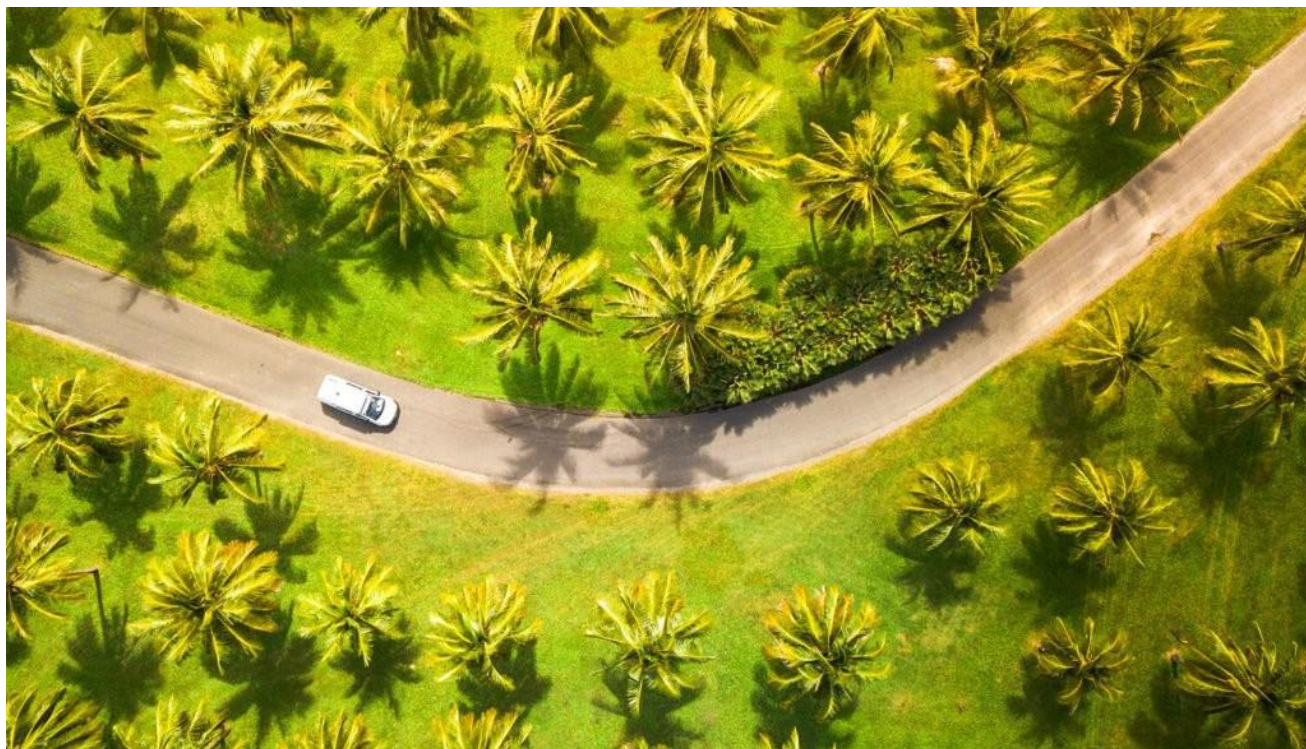
The strip of bitumen between Cairns and Cape Tribulation, now known as the Great Barrier Reef Drive, is 140 km of jaw-dropping beauty. The road winds between two world heritage icons that Tropical North Queensland is famous for: the Wet Tropics Rainforest and the Great Barrier Reef.

How to find the Great Barrier Reef Drive



The Great Barrier Reef Drive between Cairns & Port Douglas

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Thala Beach Nature Reserve

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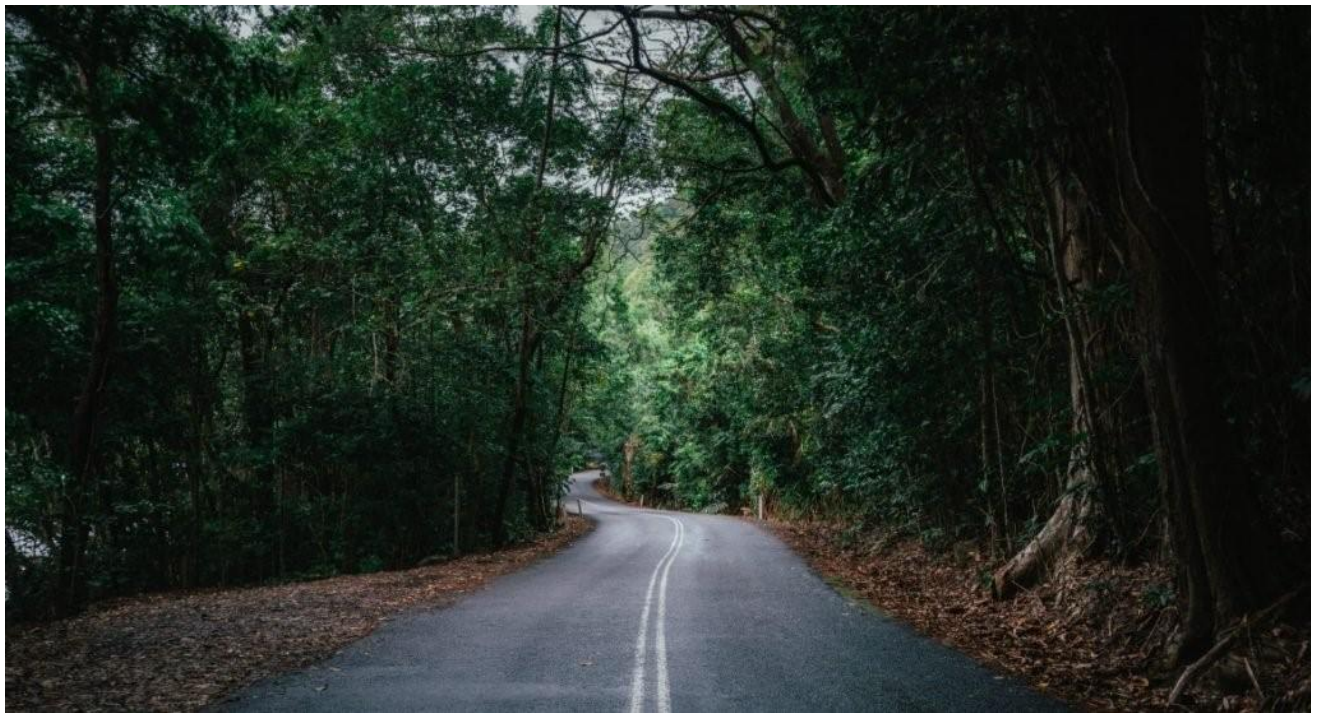
Officially, the road between Cairns and Mossman is called the Captain Cook Highway. It starts in the Cairns CBD as Sheridan St, passing through the Cairns northern beaches before reaching Port Douglas. Pass through Mossman on the Mossman-Daintree Rd before taking the Cape Tribulation Rd. You'll know you're on the right track when you come to the Daintree River and the river barge, which is your ticket into the Daintree Rainforest. Switch down a gear or two and enjoy the relaxed pace of life north of the Daintree as the road winds past overhanging forest canopy concealing some of the prettiest pristine beaches on the planet. The bitumen road ends at Cape Tribulation (known simply as Cape Trib by locals), where the Great Barrier Reef Drive officially ends.

How long will it take to do the Great Barrier Reef Drive?



Cross the Daintree River on the Daintree River Ferry

Cross the Daintree River on the Daintree River Ferry



Driving through the Daintree National Park

Driving through the Daintree National Park

Don't be fooled into thinking that 'it's only 140km, we only need two days'. There's so much to see and do on this drive so give yourself plenty of time. Allow approximately one week but if you don't have that much time, a minimum three days will give you an enticing taste of tropical road tripping.

Highlights of the Great Barrier Reef Drive



Walk along the beautiful Ellis Beach

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Enjoy lunch at Osprey's Restaurant at Thala Beach Nature Reserve

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Yorkeys Knob, Trinity Beach, Clifton Beach and Palm Cove are Cairns suburban coastal communities with restaurants, cafes and accommodation set alongside sweeping stretches of beachfront parkland. Ellis Beach and beyond is your introduction to long stretches of beach sand untainted by human footprints. This is where forest-clad mountains start tumbling into the sea. Get used to having a beach all to yourself: it only gets better the further north you drive. Pull over alongside the highway, slip your toes into the sand and the world immediately seems a million miles away.

Spend a few hours at [Hartleys Crocodile Adventures](#) where you can take a boat cruise on a crocodile-inhabited lagoon for an up close & personal look at these apex predators. Call into [Thala Beach Nature Reserve](#) for lunch in Osprey's Restaurant amongst the treetops on a beachfront headland overlooking the Coral Sea. Check into an eco-designed bungalow amongst the forest and chill out with nature.

Port Douglas is worthy of at least a few days indulgence. A relaxed beachfront village with a modern vibe, there's restaurants, cafes, hotels, markets, boutiques and a gazillion things to do. It's also a great spot to board a boat heading out to the [Great Barrier Reef](#). Check out some of the area's wild critters at the [Wildlife Habitat](#).

Spend a day at [Mossman Gorge](#) for an introduction into Indigenous heritage and the Kuku Yalanji people. Dreamtime Walks, pristine rainforest, waterfalls and the crystal clear Mossman River should keep you entertained. Check into [Silky Oaks Lodge](#) on the northern bank of the Mossman River for elegant 5 star digs in the rainforest, or try some sport fishing at [Hook-a-Barra](#).

On the banks of the Daintree River join a [Crocodile Express Daintree River](#) cruise where you'll likely spot saltwater crocodiles sunning themselves on the riverbank. Drive your car onto the barge to cross the river and you're on your way to saying hello to the world's oldest rainforest.

Don't bother getting out of 2nd gear from here onwards. The locals barely bother and you'll find yourself slipping into the same relaxed state of semi-consciousness as the serenity of the forest takes over. Turn off the stereo, wind down the windows and allow the sights, smells and sounds of the rainforest to seduce you!



Spot a crocodile at Hartley's Crocodile Adventures

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Browse the boutiques on Macrossan Street in Port Douglas

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Alexandra Lookout in the Daintree National Park

Alexandra Lookout in the Daintree National Park

Drop in to the [Daintree Discovery Centre](#) to brush up on geographical history. It's not easy to get your head around a forest said to be more than 150 million years old but even if you don't care for facts, this is a great place for wildlife spotting from forest trails or aerial canopy walkways. A great spot to get your bearings is the Alexandra Lookout.



Wander along a rainforest boardwalk

Wander along a rainforest boardwalk



Noah Beach in Cape Tribulation

Noah Beach in Cape Tribulation



Visit Thornton Beach

Visit Thornton Beach

Take a detour to Cow Bay (not forgetting the Cow Bay Hotel for lunch or a game of alfresco pool) for more secluded beaches kissed by rainforest. Take note of signs warning of crocodile hazards and seasonal marine stingers. Check into a chilled out guest house for beachfront bliss.

Thornton Beach, Noah Beach, Coconut Beach are all worth a wander for leisurely, solitary beachcombing. So too the Marrdja, Kulki or Dubuji Boardwalks for easy forest walks. Hikers looking for something a little more energetic might try hiking to Mt Sorrow, 800m above sea level. As the road winds its way to Cape Trib there's the Jungle Bugs and Butterflies Insect Museum and Daintree Icecream Company.

The bitumen road ends at Cape Trib but the adventure is far from over. In fact, this is where the real fun begins with Cape Trib being the main hub of this very remote area. Check into a guesthouse or lodge like the [Heritage Lodge & Spa](#), [Jungle Lodge](#) or [Cape Trib beach House](#), or pitch a tent beachside at [Cape Tribulation Camping](#) and savour some beachfront bliss.

Take a [guided kayak tour](#) or join an [Ocean Safari](#) to a coral cay on the Great Barrier Reef to swim with turtles. Birdwatchers stand by with your binocular at the ready, Cape Trib is jumping with birds and butterflies, or try a [guided 4WD tour](#) along the famous Bloomfield

Track.



Bloomfield Track between Cape Tribulation and Wujal Wujal

Or you could just do absolutely nothing but relax. Don't worry about those pesky black spots in mobile phone or wifi services, this is the ultimate digital detox. A few days chilling out at Cape Trib and you'll likely have forgotten that there is a crazy chaotic world beyond the forest and beach.

The Great Barrier Reef Drive might have ended in Cape Tribulation but if you're up for a little more adventure, take the [Bloomfield Track](#) through to Cooktown.

Explore

Learn more about what do see and do as you make your way up the Great Barrier Reef Drive.