

Queensland

It's sunny, warm and the only state where more people want to come than want to leave! It's the 'Sunshine State' – Australia's great escape and a powerful magnet for southerners creeping northward for less complicated lifestyles and sun-drenched holidays.

Five regions in Queensland are World Heritage-listed and three of them can be explored through walks that are featured in this chapter. Australia's Great Dividing Range begins amid the Wet Tropics region in the far north and here lies Queensland's highest peak – Mt Bartle Frere – where walkers can still experience Jurassic plants from Gondwana days. Also in the Wet Tropics, there's a sense of romance as you roam Hinchinbrook Island's beaches and camp under starry skies. Freshwater lakes and pristine beaches lure walkers to the world's largest sandbar, Fraser Island, with its unique ecosystem and genetically pure dingo population. Queensland's southern doorway leads to the Central Eastern Rainforests Reserves region and Lamington National Park's subtropical rainforests, with Australia's most extensive walking track network (160km).

In the past, Queensland may not have ranked as highly as some southern states as a bush-walking destination, but the secret's out. Come and share the outdoors with the locals.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Cracking a coconut under starry skies at **Hinchinbrook Island** (p349)
- Splashing cool mountain water on your face in **Lamington National Park** (p335)
- Ripping off your boots, running through the sand and plunging into Lake McKenzie on **Fraser Island** (p342)
- Congratulating yourself after hauling up to Queensland's rooftop, **Mt Bartle Frere** (p353)

■ TELEPHONE CODE: 07

■ www.epa.qld.gov.au

■ www.queenslandholidays.com.au

ENVIRONMENT

Queensland's a land of contrasts, five times bigger than Japan and twice as big as Texas. Hot, wet summers characterise the tropical north, but along the southern highlands snow has been known to fall. Some places get only 150mm of rain a year, while others experience up to 4000mm.

The Great Dividing Range is Queensland's backbone and separates the well-watered coast from the inland's rolling plains. Sun-baked islands and beaches give way to mountainous rainforests and eucalypt glades. Descending westward, taller trees are replaced by stunted mulga and acacia scrub, eventually petering out to the Outback's spinifex grasses.

Queensland's home to Australia's most endangered mammal, the northern hairy-nosed wombat. Once found as far south as Victoria, it now lives only in a small national park in the tropics. Lungfish are unique to Queensland – they can live in water or on land. Queensland has more bird species than any other state or territory. One of the most striking is the large, flightless cassowary, a primitive bird restricted to dense northern rainforests and now endangered even there.

Queensland has been subjected to sustained and government-supported environmental vandalism – 4.5 million hectares of brigalow (eucalypt) scrub was cleared from north Queensland to the New South Wales (NSW) border in one nine-year period. Seventy-five percent of its rainforests were felled and some mangrove nurseries remain threatened by urban development.

Fortunately, there are now 223 national parks protecting its natural areas – havens for adventure seekers.

INFORMATION

When to Walk

Queensland has an undeserved reputation as being 'too hot for walking', but try visiting its rainforests during summer: temperatures are guaranteed to be degrees cooler than lower coastal areas. Rain is common (most falls between January and March, which is also the cyclone season for the northern two-thirds of the state), but the heady perfume of a wet forest enhances your experience. Winter's the time to walk its coastal islands.

Maps

Hema's 1:2,500,000 *Queensland State Map* and its associated regional maps are great for travel planning. Sunmap has a 1:2,500,000 state map, regional maps and a series of 1:25,000 and 1:50,000 topographic maps. Individual maps are listed in the Planning sections for each walk.

Books

Lonely Planet's *Queensland* gives a great overview of the state's jewels, charms, people and peculiarities. Queensland Museum publishes an excellent series of environmental and natural history books including *Wild Places*, *Wild Plants and Wildlife*, all with stunning colour photos. *Take A Walk in Queensland's National Parks – Southern Zone*, by John and Lyn Daly, is a comprehensive guide for that region. Townsville to Cooktown is admirably covered by *Tropical Walking Tracks*, a series of five booklets by Kym Dungey and Jane Whytlaw. Paul Curtis' *The Travellers' Guide to North Queensland* has over 50 walks and scenic drives.

Information Sources

Most cities and towns have visitor information centres, often staffed by knowledgeable and helpful volunteers, though don't expect too much info about specific walks.

National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ); (☎ 3367 0878; www.npaq.org.au) Leading community voice for conservation since 1930, it organises comprehensive bushwalking and camping programs.

Queensland Federation of Bushwalking Clubs (www.geocities.com/qfbwc) Maintains a list of state-wide affiliated bushwalking clubs.

Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (QPWS); (☎ 3227 8185; www.epa.qld.gov.au) Manages national parks.

Queensland Travel Centre (☎ 13 88 33; www.queenslandwalks.com.au) A Tourism Queensland innovation that walks you through the state from the coast to the Outback. Whether you're after a short walk or a multiday hike, the new website has it covered and also provides useful links to other sites.

Permits & Regulations

Permits are necessary for camping in national parks. Contact QPWS (☎ 13 13 04; www.qld.gov.au/camping; sites for 2 \$8). Some parks require contact with local rangers; these are mentioned in the specific walks. Permits for Green Mountains (p335), Great Walk Fraser Island (p342) and the Thorsborne Trail



(p349) may need to be secured months in advance. QPWS encourages walkers visiting remote areas to complete bushwalking registration forms, which are available online or from QPWS offices.

Most areas are 'fuel stove' only. During Total Fire Ban days (p46/47), all fires are forbidden, even fuel stoves.

Guided Walks

K2 Extreme (☎ 3257 3310; www.k2extreme.com.au; 140 Wickham St, Fortitude Valley; yearly membership \$70) Caters for beginner and experienced adventurers, who can walk, climb, kayak or cycle in Queensland's southeast.

Torre Mountaincraft (☎ 3870 2699; www.torre-mountaincraft.com.au; 205 Moggill Rd, Taringa) Offers

abseiling and climbing on world-acclaimed Kangaroo Point cliffs, plus canoeing and mountain biking.

Wooroonooran Safaris (☎ 1300 661 113; wooroonooran-safaris.com.au) Conducts guided day tours to less-crowded, less-commercialised beauty spots, especially Wooroonooran National Park. Their most popular naturalist-guided walk is the 19km Goldfield Trail, offered as a one-day tour.

GATEWAYS Brisbane

☎ 07 / pop 1.5 million

Australia's most laid-back capital city, Brisbane is home to South Bank Parklands with its own lifeguard-patrolled free beach (that's no fee, not no clothes) opposite the city centre; Brisbanites gather here to celebrate special occasions. There are several heritage walks around town and if you miss seeing a koala in the bush, there's always **Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary** (☎ 3378 1366; www.koala.net; Jesmond Rd, Fig Tree Pocket; adult/child/family \$19/14/49; ☎ 8.30am-5pm), Australia's largest koala sanctuary.

INFORMATION

Brisbane visitor information centre (☎ 3229 5918; www.ourbrisbane.com; Queen Street Mall; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Thu, 9am-7pm Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 9.30am-4.30pm Sun) Download maps for Brisbane River Heritage Trail and RiverWalk, a trail connecting over 20km of paths, roads, bridges and parks along Brisbane River.

QPWS (☎ 3227 8185; www.epa.qld.gov.au; 160 Ann St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri) Customer service centre sells maps and books, and can organise permits.

World Wide Maps and Guides (☎ 3221 4330; www.worldwidemaps.com.au; Shop 30, Anzac Sq Arcade) The best place to buy maps.

SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT

You can buy quality adventure/outdoor gear from specialty shops, including **K2** (☎ 3854 1340), **Mountain Designs** (☎ 3216 1866) and **Paddy Pallin** (☎ 3252 4408), which are all on Wickham St in Fortitude Valley, while **Kathmandu** (☎ 3252 8054; 728 Ann St) is just up the road. Torre Mountaincraft (p329) sells and hires out equipment, and several suburban camping stores stock cheaper gear or sell brand names at competitive prices.

Supermarkets in Brisbane's CBD include **Coles Express** (Myer Centre, 91 Queen St) and **Woolworths** (MacArthur Bldg, cnr Queen & Edward Sts). There's a **Foodworks Supermarket** (Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley) in Valley Metro Plaza.

SLEEPING & EATING

Check the net (www.ourbrisbane.com) for a list of Brisbane's accommodation houses or **Brisbane Visitors Accommodation Service** (☎ 3236 2020; bristrav@tpg.com.au; 3rd fl, Roma St Transit Centre; ☎ 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-4pm Sat & Sun) will find a bed to suit your budget.

Newmarket Gardens Caravan Park (☎ 3356 1458; www.newmarketgardens.com.au; 199 Ashgrove Ave, Ashgrove; unpowered/powerd sites for 2 \$22/23, lodge rooms for 2 \$45, cabins for 2 \$75-95; ☎) is the closest to the city and buses stop out the front. Linen hire is available and there are free barbecues and a fridge.

Bunk Brisbane (☎ 1800 682 865; www.bunkbrisbane.com.au; cnr Ann & Gipps Sts, Fortitude Valley; dm \$16-25, s/d \$45/70; ☎ ☎ ☎), winner of Queensland Tourism's Backpacker Accommodation award, has taken hostels to another level. Birdee Num Num Bar has \$5 meals from 6pm and daily upbeat entertainment.

Painted bright orange, **Brisbane City Backpackers**, (☎ 1800 062 572; www.citybackpackers.com; 380 Upper Roma St; dm \$17-26, s/d \$55-75/60-80; ☎ ☎ ☎) is 400m from the transit centre. Fiddlers Elbow Pub has nightly entertainment and The Cafe serves good food, focusing on backpacker budgets.

Explorers Inn (☎ 1800 6288; www.explorers.com.au; cnr George & Turbot Sts; r \$85; ☎ ☎) is Brisbane's cheapest three-star accommodation and is just 150m from the transit centre. Its licensed barbecue opens daily and \$10 will get you a main meal.

Snooze Inn Hotel (☎ 1800 655 805; www.snoozeinn.com.au; 383 St Pauls Tce; s/d/tw \$90/100/110; ☎ ☎) in cosmopolitan Fortitude Valley, is new and fifteen minutes' walk from Brisbane's centre. There are over 200 eateries within walking distance.

Il Mondo (☎ 3392 0111; www.ilmondo.com.au; 25-35 Rotherham St, Kangaroo Point; r \$100-135, f \$165-350; ☎ ☎) is close to the city and convenient to the start of Brisbane River Heritage Trail and RiverWalk. Savini Restaurant, downstairs, serves dinner.

City food courts serve the usual ready-to-go food, but Brisbane's great climate makes eating outdoors especially enjoyable. Stacks of cafés cater for all cuisines.

On South Bank's boardwalk, **Chez Laila** (☎ 3846 3402; mains \$9-24; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner) overlooks Brisbane River to the city. Its signature dish is an authentic Lebanese platter, big enough for two.

Among West End's eclectic café set, **Ouzeri** (☎ 3846 5800; cnr Boundary & Russell Sts; lunch \$13-16; ☎) lunch & dinner daily) comes recommended by local bushwalkers. Greek and Italian fare is served with lashings of live Greek music on Friday and Saturday. Lunches are huge and scrumptious.

The best place to sample native cuisine is **Tukka Restaurant** (☎ 3846 6333; 145 Boundary St, West End; mains \$21-31; ☎) dinner daily, lunch Sun). Its platter of game meats, native berries, bush dukkah and Australian cheeses is a hit and comes in at \$19 per person.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The national highway bypasses the city centre via Gateway Motorway (M1), connecting the Gold and Sunshine Coasts via the Pacific and Bruce Hwys. The Pacific Motorway (M3) leaves the city, joining M1 at Eight Mile Plains. Take Ipswich (M2) or Logan (M6) Motorways to head west.

Air

Qantas (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au; 247 Adelaide St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) has international and domestic flights servicing Brisbane. QantasLink and their affiliate airlines service metropolitan and regional Australia, while **Virgin Blue** (☎ 13 67 89; www.virginblue.com.au) and **Jetstar** (☎ 13 15 38; www.jetstar.com.au) generally tout cheaper fares for on-line bookings.

Buses and the Airtrain (right) run to and from the airport.

Bus

TransInfo (☎ 13 12 30; www.transinfo.qld.gov.au) is the bus and train hotline for Brisbane and Queensland's southeast.

Brisbane Transit Centre (☎ 3236 2528; www.brisbanetransitcentre.com.au; Roma St; ☎ 4.30am-midnight Sun-Thu, 24hr Fri & Sat) is the nucleus for interstate and regional coach arrivals and departures. Booking desks are on level three.

Greyhound Australia (☎ 13 14 99; www.greyhound.com.au) Operates services from Brisbane to Cairns (\$200, 29 hours, four daily) and Brisbane to Sydney (\$100, 17 hours, five daily).

Premier Motor Service (☎ 13 34 10; www.premierms.com.au) links Australia's east coast from Melbourne to Cairns. Services include Brisbane to Cairns (\$175, 29 hours, daily) and Brisbane to Sydney (\$70, 14 hours, two daily).

Coachtrans (☎ 1300 664 700; www.coachtrans.com.au) operates Skytrans transfers from the airport to Brisbane Transit Centre and accommodation in the CBD (adult/child \$9/11, half hourly, 5.30am to 11pm) as well as the Gold Coast (\$35, hourly, 6.15am to 11pm).

Train

State and interstate trains arrive and depart from Roma St Railway Station, below the transit centre.

Queensland Rail (☎ 13 22 32; www.traveltrain.com.au) runs the high-speed *Tilt Train* from Brisbane to Cairns (\$300, 24 hours, Monday and Friday). The slower *Sunlander* also travels this route (\$200, 32 hours, Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday).

Citytrain (☎ 13 16 17; www.qr.com.au) runs from **Central Station** (cnr Ann & Edward Sts) to the Gold and Sunshine Coasts.

Airtrain (☎ 3215 5000; www.airtrain.com.au; ☎ 6am-7pm daily) links Brisbane's airport with the city centre (\$12) and the Gold Coast (\$24) every 30 minutes.

Car Rental

ABC Integra Network (☎ 1800 067 414; www.abc-integra.com.au; 398 St Pauls Tce, Fortitude Valley) says it will beat the majors by up to 40%, while **Abel** (☎ 1800 131 429; www.abel.com.au; level 1, Brisbane Transit Centre) rents over the net from \$45 per day, all-inclusive.

Cairns

☎ 07 / pop 98,981

Unshamedly the tourist capital of Queensland's tropical north, Cairns is hugged by World Heritage-listed Wet Tropics rainforests. An adventurers' playground, outdoorsy folk get adrenalin rushes from bushwalking, bungee jumping, kayaking, snorkelling, diving and everything in between.

INFORMATION

The Esplanade's eateries, accommodation and booking centres all peddle the 'ultimate' tourist experiences.

Abells Chart & Map Centre (☎ 4041 2699; Andrejic Arcade, 55 Lake St) Stocks an extensive range of guidebooks and maps.

Gateway Discovery Centre (☎ 4051 3588; www.tropicalaustralia.com.au; 51 Esplanade; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm) Helpful for general info and walking track brochures.

QPWS (☎ 4046 6600; www.epa.qld.gov.au; 5b Sheridan St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri) Gives park information, issues

permits and has a good collection of books. Get topographic and tourist maps from the third floor.

SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT

City Place Disposals (☎ 4051 6040; 46-48 Shields St) has lower-end camping and walking equipment, including gas canister refills, and hires out three-person tents. **Adventure Equipment** (☎ 4031 2669; 133 Grafton St) is into better-quality gear and hires kayaks and canoes. It's not a booking agent so provides sound advice on local adventure spots.

For self-caterers there's a **Woolworths** (Sheridan St) and two supermarkets in Cairns Central Shopping Centre. For the ultimate in fresh fruit and vegies, visit **Rusty's Bazaar** (Grafton St; ☎ 6am-6pm Fri, 6am-3pm Sat & Sun).

SLEEPING & EATING

Gateway Discovery Centre (☎ 4051 3588; 51 Esplanade; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm) arranges accommodation throughout Cairns and the region.

Cairns Coconut Caravan Resort (☎ 4054 6644; www.coconut.com.au; cnr Bruce Hwy & Anderson Rd; unpowered sites for 2 \$32-38, powered sites for 2 \$34-40, cabin d \$55-75; ☎ ☎ ☎) has a courtesy bus to the city and there's a campers' kitchen, mini-mart and lots of free fitness activities. It's meticulously maintained by a swarm of worker bees.

Opposite the train station, **Gecko's Backpackers** (☎ 1800 011 344; www.geckosbackpackers.com.au; 187 Bunda St; dm \$21, s \$31-35, d \$46-48; ☎ ☎ ☎) has renovated Queenslander homes that are bright and clean. Linen is supplied and they'll store extra luggage if you're off walking.

At **Caravella Backpackers** (☎ 4051 2159, 4031 5680; www.caravella.com.au; 77 & 149 Esplanade; dm/s \$20/40, tw & d \$45-65; ☎ ☎ ☎) the bright, spacious rooms have fridges, and the big community kitchens are ideal for preparing trail food.

The 'backpacker' in the name of **Gilligan's Backpackers Resort** (☎ 4041 6566; www.gilligansbackpackers.com.au; 57-89 Grafton St; dm \$26-28, r \$90; ☎ ☎ ☎) decries its class. It has combined resort-style surroundings with upmarket budget accommodation. Social activities revolve around the pool, deck bar and a mezzanine bar that looks like a sheik's communal bedroom.

The Balinese Motel (☎ 4051 9922; www.balinese.com.au; 215 Lake St; s \$90, tw & d \$100; ☎ ☎ ☎) is centrally located and decorated with unique Balinese-style furnishings. Included

are free airport transfers and a continental breakfast. There's a communal kitchen for self-caterers.

Fig Tree Lodge (☎ 1800 068 090; www.figtreelodge.com.au; 253 Sheridan St; r \$110-130; ☎ ☎ ☎) Get a home-away-from-home feel in this open-plan resort, set among cool, tropical gardens. Studio rooms have kitchenettes. In the heart of the lodge is a restaurant and Irish-style bar, famous for serious steaks and Guinness.

Cairns is a city of international cuisine. Locally recommended **Swiss Cake & Coffee Shop** (☎ 4051 6393; 93 Grafton St; dishes \$6-11; ☎ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) serves the ultimate European, home-made cakes and slices with excellent coffee. Its salads are the best.

A local bushwalkers' hangout, **City Walk Cafe** (☎ 4051 5075; cnr Shields & Lake Sts; dishes \$8-12; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) has hearty brunches, snacks, sangas and veggie meals.

A top travellers' haunt, **The Woolshed** (☎ 4031 6304; 24 Shields St; meals \$12-16; ☎ dinner) serves up huge steaks. Several hostels promote free dinners here. These entree-sized meals can be upgraded to heartier meals for five to six dollars. You might need to queue outside waiting for a seat.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

The international terminal allows visitors to hop on or hop off in Cairns.

Qantas (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au; cnr Shields & Lake Sts), its affiliate **Jetstar** (☎ 13 15 38; www.jetstar.com.au) and **Virgin Blue** (☎ 13 67 89; www.virginblue.com.au) fly between Brisbane and Cairns (from \$140, two hours).

Australia Coach (☎ 4048 8355; per person \$8) runs the Airporter bus to the city. A taxi is around \$15.

Bus

Buses operate from the **Cairns Transit Centre** (☎ 4051 5899; Trinity Wharf, Lake St; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm daily). See Bus p331 for details of fares and schedules.

Train

Cairns Railway Station (☎ 4036 9249; Bunda St) is the arrival and departure point for interstate trains.

Queensland Rail (☎ 13 22 32; www.traveltrain.com.au) operates the *Tilt Train* from Cairns to Brisbane (\$300, 24 hours, Sunday and

Wednesday). The slower *Sunlander* also travels this route (\$200, 32 hours) on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

Car Rental

Majors are represented at the airport and in town. Town's the place for cheaper deals. Most start from \$29 per day, plus charges. Some offer one-way rentals and 4WDs.

All Day Car Rentals (☎ 4031 3348; www.cairns-car-rentals.com; 1/62 Abbott St)

Billabong Car Rentals (☎ 1800 354 299; www.billabongrentals.com.au; 134 Sheridan St)

LAMINGTON NATIONAL PARK

Lamington's rainforest-clad slopes form part of the Scenic Rim, a chain of mountains encircling Queensland's most populated and accessible areas – Brisbane and the Gold Coast. Lamington, like most of the rim, is World Heritage-listed and protects one of the world's largest stands of subtropical rainforest. With most of these forests falling to the logger's axe, it's quite the privilege to be able to explore this ancient landscape.

Lamington is all about walking, smelling, seeing, hearing and feeling the rainforest.

HISTORY

Dairy farmers, and loggers attracted by 'red gold' (the prized cedar trees), arrived in the mid 1800s. Surprisingly, a grazier and the son of a prominent timber miller were two of the first to lobby for creation of the park. Named for an early Queensland governor (not the Australian chocolate-coated cake), Lord Lamington only visited the park once, supposedly shooting a koala to mark the occasion!

Men using picks and shovels were employed during the Depression to construct the graded tracks. Today, Lamington boasts over 160km of walking tracks winding through lush rainforests to panoramic lookouts and over 500 waterfalls. An easy walk along the 22km Border Track links Green Mountains (commonly known as O'Reilly's) and Binna Burra. Most walking tracks start at these trailheads and radiate from this route.

ENVIRONMENT

Wollumbin (Mt Warning), Australia's largest shield volcano, erupted 22 million years ago. Continual weathering of its lava flows produced Lamington's creeks, rivers, valleys and escarpments. Wollumbin's original height is estimated at 2000m. Today the plug stands 1157m and is visible from many of Lamington's lookouts.

Lamington's rainforests nurture over 200 rare or threatened plants and animals. Trees with massive buttressed trunks, liana vines and orchids and the aptly named strangler figs, flame trees, stinging trees, wait-a-while vines, elkhorns, staghorns and crows-nest ferns all flourish. Fairylands of Antarctic beech forests are at their northernmost extent; the root stock of some are estimated to be more than 5000 years old.

Listen for the melodious song of the elusive Albert's lyrebird mimicking bush sounds to attract a female companion. Few walkers are lucky enough to see his display ritual. Distinctive calls of catbirds, whipbirds and riflebirds resonate throughout the forest. Brilliant black-and-yellow regent bowerbirds are regularly seen at O'Reilly's, and king parrots and crimson rosellas are easily spotted.

Pademelons graze near camp sites at dawn and dusk, while spotlighting reveals possums, gliders and bandicoots. Along the tracks you may meet shiny black land mullets (skinks about 30cm long with a 20cm girth), goannas and non-venomous carpet pythons. An encounter with the bright-blue, pugnacious Lamington spiny cray will have it hissing and snapping its pincers as it retreats.

PLANNING When to Walk

Lamington's temperate climate brings in walkers year-round. You can enjoy an invigorating swim under a waterfall in summer (rain and thunderstorms are common at this time, but after all it is a 'rainforest'). Don't fancy rain? Then walk in winter. Days are crisp but nights can be freezing. Spring attracts birders and flower enthusiasts to the heathlands.

No bush camping is allowed during December and January. Rangers close some tracks in adverse conditions but there's always something open.

What to Bring

Insect repellent or other deterrents are essential to discourage leeches (see the boxed text opposite) and ticks. Apply liberally to your socks, boots, gaiters and exposed skin.

Maps & Books

Day walkers can use the free maps from the visitor information centres (below). Hema's 1:35,000 *Lamington National Park* displays walking tracks in different colours. Sunmap's 1:25,000 *Beechmont* and *Tyalgum* topographic maps should be carried by overnight walkers. Maps are available from stockists (p330) or at O'Reilly's and Binna Burra gift shops.

Bernard O'Reilly's *Green Mountains* gives a graphic account of his 1937 search and rescue efforts following one of Queensland's best-known aircraft crashes. Reading it before walking through Lamington's seemingly impenetrable forests engenders admiration for his superior bushcraft. O'Reilly's gift shop sells the book.

Information Sources

Walkers and naturalists with a passion for the park staff visitor information centres at **Green Mountains** (☎ 5544 0634) and **Binna Burra** (☎ 5533 3584) on weekends and school holidays. They give sound advice about current conditions. Contact rangers on the same numbers.

Permits & Regulations

Bush camping (☎ 5544 0634; sites for 2 \$8, limit 6 people, maximum stay per site 1 night) is restricted

and phone bookings are essential. Binna Burra's remote sites are closed indefinitely because of the risk of tree falls. Fuel stoves are mandatory.

Guided Walks

O'Reilly's Rainforest Guesthouse (p337) has a comprehensive program of guided activities. Binna Burra Mountain Lodge (p339) offers abseiling (10m to 90m), half- and one-day guided track walks and one-day, off-track walks. Activities are offered to campers and day-trippers. Both provide transfers for those walking the 22km Border Track.

ACCESS TOWN Gold Coast

☎ 07 / pop 376,500

This holiday hot-spot is just an hour south of Brisbane. It's glitzy, it's plastic, it's expensive, it's fast and just very Gold Coast. If you want to escape the hype, drift in and out on your way to some great hinterland walking.

There are almost as many tour desks as hotels, but for central information visit **Surfers Paradise visitor information centre** (☎ 5538 4419; www.goldcoasttourism.com.au; Cavill Ave Mall; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-5pm Sat, 9am-4pm Sun). For a comprehensive range of camping gear see **Neerang Disposals & Camping** (☎ 5596 4434; 10 Spencer Rd, Nerang). There are supermarkets in all big shopping centres and throughout the suburbs.

SLEEPING & EATING

Stay Oz (☎ 1800 359 830; www.stayoz.com.au; Transit Centre, Surfers Paradise) Helpful for accommodation and travel services.

Surrounded by eateries and continually being refurbished, **British Arms YHA Hostel** (☎ 1800 680 269; www.britisharms.com.au; Mariners Cove, Main Beach; dm \$22-26, r \$60; 🍷) is near the beach, just five minutes' walk from Seaworld. There's a free bus to/from Surfers' transit centre.

For self-caterers, **Club Surfers Apartments** (☎ 5531 5244; www.clubsurfers.com.au; 2877 Gold Coast Hwy, Surfers Paradise; r \$90-150; 🍷 🍷) is near the beach and a short stroll to the café scene.

Chateau Beachside (☎ 5538 1022; www.chateau.beachside.com.au; cnr Esplanade & Elkhorn Ave, Surfers Paradise; s/d \$110-145, f \$120-150; 🍷 🍷 🍷) is a high-rise complex in the heart of Surfers,

BEAT THE LEECH

Rainforests are notorious for leeches and some novices panic just thinking about them! It's probably because these black, worm-like passengers suck your blood, then swell until they drop off. You then start bleeding. But don't worry – they're not a death threat and after a while you'll find yourself picking off these little critters as a matter of course.

Leeches are most active during rain, when they escape from their burrows in the leaf-litter or drop from trees. They usually home in on your feet and ankles, making their way through shoelace eyelets and your socks, or they may even travel quietly up your leg to other intimate parts. You can't feel them attaching because their saliva contains a local anaesthetic; you bleed because it also contains an anticoagulant.

While some reach for the saltshaker to dislodge them, others flick them off or let them feed and then drop off. Deterrents come in several forms, most of which cause the leeches to vomit and fall off. Insect repellent (not environmentally friendly), eucalyptus oil, tea-tree oil, vinegar, lemon juice or salt sprinkled between two layers of finely woven socks have all been tried. No matter what, leeches seem to be winning the rainforest war!

opposite the beach. Rooms are spacious and have spectacular ocean views. Ask about special off-peak rates.

You'll never go hungry on the Gold Coast. There's everything from quick eats to fine dining in this multicultural melting pot.

For great Aussie seafood – from bugs to barra – head for **Sonatas** (☎ 5526 9904; cnr Surf Pde & Queensland Ave, Broadbeach; mains \$15-25; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner). It's popular with locals and also serves veggie meals.

Watch the world go by in the outdoor dining area at **Costa D'ora Italian Restaurant** (☎ 5538 5203; 27 Orchid Ave, Surfers Paradise; dishes \$10-35; 🍷 lunch & dinner). The pasta-and-cappuccino lunch deal is a bargain.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Coolangatta's Gold Coast Airport is 25km south of Surfers Paradise. **Qantas** (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au; 3047 Gold Coast Hwy, Surfers Paradise) and **Jetstar** (☎ 13 15 38; www.jetstar.com.au) fly from Sydney (from \$110, 1½ hours) and Melbourne (from \$155, two hours) daily.

Greyhound Australia (☎ 13 14 99; www.greyhound.com.au) runs from Brisbane to Surfers Paradise (\$22, 1½ hours, seven per day), while **Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10; www.premiers.com.au) travels the same route (\$15, 1½ hours, two per day).

Citytrain and Airtrain (p331) have multiple services from Brisbane's city (\$8.70, one hour) and airport (\$23, 1½ hours) to **Neerang Railway Station** (☎ 5527 4921) where a bus connects to Binna Burra (p339).

All buses stop at the Southport, Surfers Paradise and Coolangatta Transit Centres.

Connections to Green Mountains leave from **Surfers Paradise Transit Centre** (☎ 5584 3700; 10 Beach Rd, Surfers Paradise).

GREEN MOUNTAINS

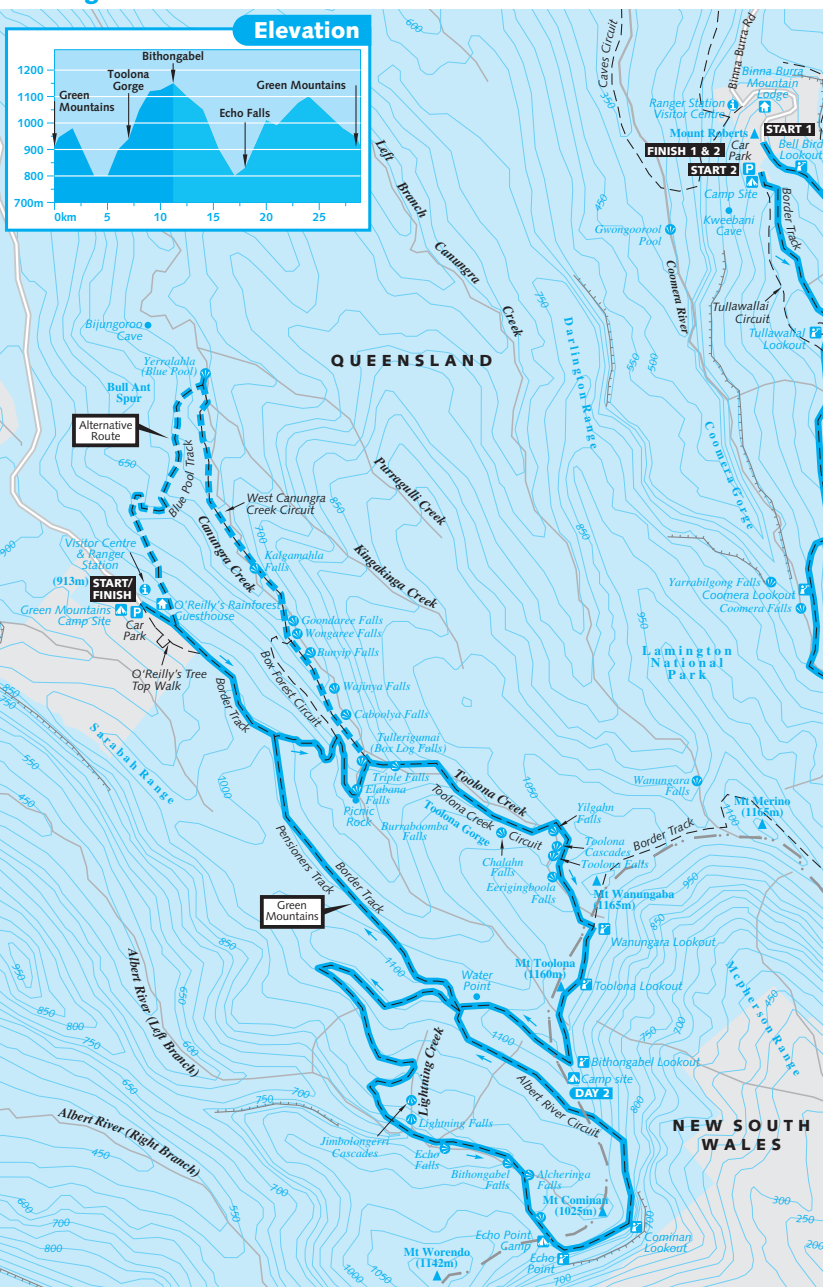
Duration	2 days
Distance	28.9km
Difficulty	moderate
Start/Finish	Border Track trailhead
Nearest Town	Gold Coast (opposite)
Transport	bus

Summary This walk showcases Green Mountains' finest – pristine subtropical rainforests, mossy gorges, cascading waterfalls and sweeping panoramas. Fourteen creek crossings add adventure to some of Lamington's best-loved tracks.

As you stroll along the track, pause to enjoy the unique sounds of this ancient forest: the screech of a catbird, the crash of a falling log, a whisper of breeze in the canopy or the soothing sound of a gurgling cascade. All add to the enjoyment of walking to a remote camp in one of Queensland's favourite parks. Feeling fit? Extend Day 1 with a challenging, more rugged deviation that crisscrosses West Canungra Creek (see Side Trip p338).

Before leaving Green Mountains, experience life in the canopy on Australia's first tree-top walk. A 180m suspended walkway leads you through tree-tops, 15m above the ground. There is no need to book and, best of all, it's free.

Lamington National Park



NEAREST TOWN & FACILITIES

See the Gold Coast (p334).

Green Mountains

O'Reilly's kiosk sells basic walkers' needs including noodles, gas cylinders, metho and spare tent pegs. There are no ATMs, so cash up in Brisbane or the Gold Coast.

Book your Green Mountains camp sites at **QPWS** (☎ 3227 8185; www.epa.qld.gov.au; per person/family \$4/16) and enjoy rainforest settings and hot showers. **O'Reilly's Rainforest Guesthouse** (☎ 1800 688 722; www.oreillys.com.au; s/d from \$145/290; 🍽️) has a range of accommodation, most with magnificent mountain views. Lodgers and campers can sample their country-style cooking. View the mountains from the café verandah (best value – burger and drink \$15), experience sunset from the Rainforest Bar (meals \$15 to \$20) or enjoy à la carte meals in the guesthouse dining room.

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

Allow two hours from Brisbane or 1½ hours from the Gold Coast via Nerang and Canungra. It's a winding, sealed road from here. **Australian Day Tours** (☎ 3236 4155; www.daytours.com.au) run from Brisbane Transit Centre (\$70 return, daily). **Mountain Coach Company** (☎ 5524 4249, fax 5524 8013) operates from Gold Coast Airport or Surfers Paradise Transit Centre (\$70 return, daily).

THE WALK

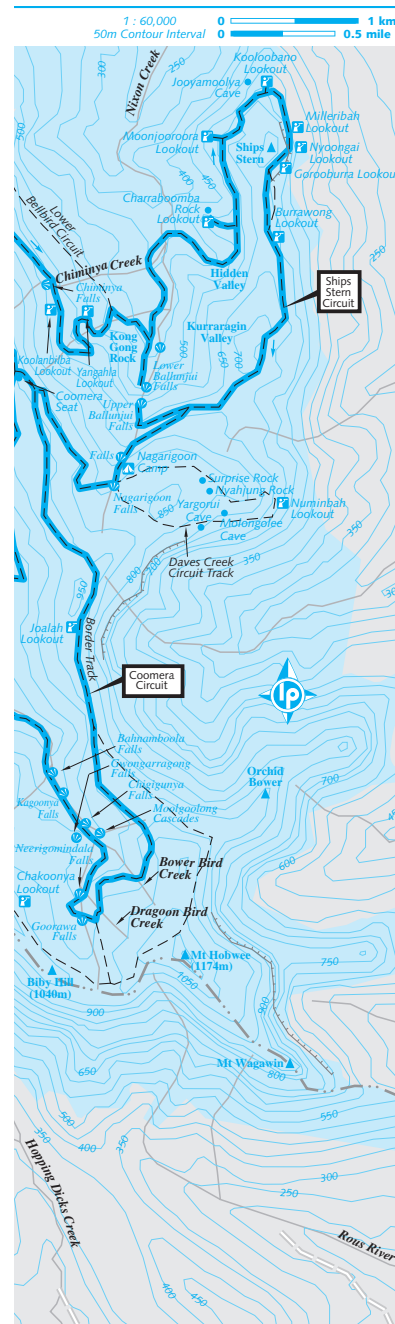
Day 1: Green Mountains to Bithongabel

4–4½ hours, 11.2km

Follow the Border Track for 1.7km and turn left on to the Toolona Creek Circuit track. Zigzag downhill past huge brush boxes with distinctive salmon-pink trunks and fibrous bark socks. Veer right at the next junction towards **Picnic Rock** – your first creek crossing and possibly your first encounter with a Lamington spiny cray.

Walk to the next junction and detour 70m left to **Elabana Falls**, the park's most photographed. Back at the junction, continue to the creek crossing at Triple Falls, but be careful: the mossy rocks can be treacherous. The track winds gradually uphill, passing several waterfalls, and challenges you with four creek crossings before reaching the steep, moss-covered walls of **Toolona Gorge**.

After winding past Chalahn Falls, Toolona Cascades and dramatic Toolona



Falls, the canopy opens slightly near Eeringboola Falls. The track winds uphill, crosses Toolona Creek twice (collect overnight water) and passes a stand of Antarctic beech before rejoining the Border Track. It's worth another detour, 75m left, to visit **Wanungara Lookout**. On a fine day, you can see northeast to Stradbroke Island, east to Wollumbin and southeast to Byron Bay.

From the previous junction, the Border Track enters NSW en route to Toolona Lookout. Ten minutes on is the 'wedding tree', a huge, moss-covered Antarctic beech – the site of many nuptials. The track meanders 400m through lush rainforest to **Bithongabel Lookout** and the cleared camp site (no facilities), back in Queensland. If you need extra water, follow the Border Track northwest (towards Green Mountains) for 1km and look for a water sign, 200m before the Albert River Circuit junction.

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE: VIA WEST CANUNGRA CREEK

3½–4 hours, 10.6km

If you feel 18.2km for Day 1 is within your capabilities, this variation is worthwhile. Don't attempt it if water levels are high.

Leave the Border Track 250m from O'Reilly's and head downhill, crossing several creeks on the way to **Yerralahla** (Blue Pool). This deep pool is always cold, even in midsummer.

Turn sharp right near the pool and head south, upstream beside West Canungra Creek. The track crosses the creek and its tributaries several times and some crossings get tricky after rain. Track quality deteriorates as you wind from side to side, passing fern-clad cliffs and a few short zigzags on the way to Kalgamahla Falls. Continue upstream past the falls to another crossing below Wongaree Falls. Masses of Christmas orchids flower here in December and January, and you may spot the blue Lamington spiny cray, especially following rain.

Soon you will reach Box Forest Circuit track junction on the right. Continue ahead past several cascades to Caboolya Falls. The track climbs again, passing a rill before crossing Toolona Creek. When you reach a junction, a short detour right leads to **Box Log Falls** in a small gorge. The main track winds gently uphill to another junction. Turn right to visit beautiful **Elabana Falls** before returning

to Toolona Creek track. Turn left and follow Day 1 notes to reach Bithongabel camp.

Day 2: Bithongabel to Green Mountains 6–7 hours, 17.7km

Follow the Border Track to the first Albert River Circuit junction. Ignore it and continue 100m to the second junction and turn left near more Antarctic beeches.

Wind downhill for about 40 minutes and you'll hear Lightning Creek gurgling over Jimbolonggerri Cascades. Swing right, zigzag downhill past several smaller waterfalls and cross Lightning Creek, upstream from Lightning Falls. (The 30m side track to **Echo Falls** makes a great photo stop.) The main track leads uphill, past three more waterfalls before crossing the creek below Bithongabel Falls. Continue uphill beside a moss-covered bank to Alcheringa, the final waterfall.

The track climbs past a storm-damaged area to a bush camp site on the right, a staging point for adventurous forays into Lamington's trackless regions. Follow the main track a few hundred metres to **Echo Point Lookout** for views towards Wollumbin. From Echo Point, the trail passes Cominan Lookout, then goes downhill past more moss-covered banks (home to thousands of **glow-worms** that sprinkle the walls with light at night). You'll soon reach the top of the ridge near a stately Antarctic beech; head downhill to rejoin the Border Track. Turn left, go downhill for 3.2km to Toolona Creek turnoff, then retrace your steps to the trailhead.

SHIPS STERN CIRCUIT

Duration	6 hours
Distance	19km
Difficulty	moderate
Start/Finish	Binna Burra car park
Nearest Towns	Gold Coast (p334)
Transport	bus
Summary	Aboriginal legends, a ship-shaped bluff and steps hewn from a sheer rock face are part of this adventure. Add a towering waterfall and stunning views and you're on one of Lamington's most varied walks.

This popular walk meanders through cool, subtropical rainforest, shady palm-filled glades and open eucalypt forest. Banksias

attract hordes of honeyeaters around July, and orchids and other wildflowers peak in September. Allow time to linger at the lookouts and don't miss the climb to Charraboomba Rock. You won't be disappointed!

NEAREST TOWN & FACILITIES

See the Gold Coast (p334).

Binna Burra

Binna Burra's gift shops have limited groceries, maps and books. There are no ATMs, so cash up in Brisbane or the Gold Coast.

SLEEPING & EATING

Enjoy peace and quiet at **Binna Burra Mountain Lodge** (☎ 1800 074 260; www.binnaurrallodge.com.au; unpowered/power sites for 2 \$22/29, 2-4-bed on-site safari tents \$50/70, lodge packages per person from \$100; 🚽) where the attached camping ground has hot showers, laundry, communal cooking shelters with coin-operated barbecues. Linen hire is available for safari tents. The Tea House has café-style meals, plus barbecue packs from \$9.50, while packed lunches (\$16) are available from the Lodge if ordered the night before. Campers can dine at the Cliff Top Dining Room, but book first.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Allow 1½ hours from Brisbane or one hour from the Gold Coast along a winding, sealed road, via Nerang and Beechmont.

Binna Burra buses collect visitors daily from **Gold Coast Airport** (🕒 1.30pm, return per person \$50) and the Airtrain (p331) at **Nerang Railway Station** (🕒 2pm, return per person \$50). Book with the Binna Burra Mountain Lodge.

THE WALK

From the car park, walk 300m back down the road to the grassy saddle and head southeast along the signposted track. Head past a huge tallowwood known affectionately as 'Big Foot'. Ignore Bellbird Lookout track, cross Chiminya Creek and pass another track to Yangahla Lookout. Zigzag downhill to **Koolanbilba Lookout**, an exposed rocky bluff where there are superb views. Wind further downhill between the two halves of Kong Gong Rock and cross the creek again before reaching a junction.

Ignore Lower Bellbird Circuit turn-off and descend between towering brush boxes,

estimated to be 1200 years old. Don't miss the ancient red cedar crowding the left of the track. If this 50m giant weren't so isolated, it would have been felled by loggers. The track leads beside a wide, rocky gully to another junction. Before turning left, it's worth taking a 600m detour to the base of **Lower Ballunju Falls** where Nixon Creek tumbles over a two-tiered, 150m cliff. You could cool off in the pool, but it'll be a teeth-chattering experience!

Back at the junction, descend through a grove of piccaboons flanking boulder-choked Nixon Creek, then climb high above its left bank. Cross Chiminya Creek, swing right across Nixon Creek, then head uphill, passing a slot guarding Hidden Valley, a small palm-filled oasis. Continue beside cliffs, fenced with an avenue of palms. Aboriginal people knew this area as 'skeleton caves', and believe loose rocks below the cliff were thrown by spirits defending the caves.

At the next junction, take a 330m detour up to **Charraboomba Rock**. Climb 85 steps etched into the rock and follow a scrubby track to the edge of an exposed cliff. Panoramic views centre on Egg Rock and Kurragin Valley. Back at the junction, the track leads 100m to Moonjooroora Lookout. It levels, closely following the Ships Stern escarpment to another junction. Turn left and walk 100m to the end of **Kooloobano Point** on the sharp end of Ships Stern. Great views at this halfway point make an obvious lunch spot.

Return to the track, veer left uphill past Milleribah, Nyoongai, Gorooburra Lookouts and Burrawong Lookouts. Woollumbin towers over the Tweed Valley. Beyond Gorooburra, the track divides briefly – the right branch has the best western views. Vegetation alternates between rainforest and eucalypt forest. The track rejoins near Burrawong Lookout. At the next junction, if you're still feeling fit, it's only 1.4km to a vantage point near the head of **Upper Ballunju Falls**. The views are great, but you need to allow one hour for the return trip and it's still 5km back to Binna Burra.

The main track climbs past Ballunju Cascades and continues beside lush tree ferns in Nixon Creek, to Nagaragoon Falls. Just beyond, you reach Nagaragoon Clearing, once the site of a beautiful remote

camp. A few minutes later you come to Daves Creek track. Turn right and walk 15 to 20 minutes to the Border Track. From here it's only 2.3km on relatively level track to Binna Burra.

COOMERA CIRCUIT

Duration	8 hours
Distance	17.5km
Difficulty	moderate
Start/Finish	Binna Burra car park
Nearest Towns	Gold Coast (p334)
Transport	bus
Summary	Views into the 160m Coomera Gorge are awesome. Coomera Crevice splits the head of the gorge and cradles the plummeting Coomera Falls. Definitely one of the best waterfall hikes in Lamington.

There are more than 500 waterfalls in Lamington, and this walk (considered one of the prettiest) visits one of the most famous. Giant brush box trees give way to glossy green lilies and ferns as you descend to the gorge. And there are plenty more waterfalls as you crisscross the river six times on the way back uphill.

Go to the lookout and back (11km return) for a shorter walk, but be warned, you'll be missing some serious scenery upstream of the falls.

NEAREST TOWNS & FACILITIES

See the Gold Coast (p334) and Binna Burra (p339).

THE WALK

Set out along the Border Track and walk gradually uphill for 1.9km to the Coomera Seat where the track splits. Take the middle branch and head downhill. You'll often see blue, golf ball-sized fruit from quandong trees, a favourite food of pigeons, fruit-doves and parrots, so keep your eyes open.

Dappled light filters through the canopy as the track descends, crossing three rills. It passes through a patch of open eucalypt forest then sidles along the edge of a ferny gully. As you re-enter eucalypt forest, note the massive old tree on the right with burls on its trunk. These are usually caused by insect attack and are prized by wood-turners.

Continue downhill past an exposed rocky outcrop on the cliff edge. There are great views across Coomera Valley to the Darlington Range. The track then descends through a blanket of sedge, and hugs the cliff until it reaches **Coomera Lookout**, which hangs precariously over the edge. Take time to soak up the superb views of Coomera Falls (64m) and neighbouring Yarrabilgong Falls (150m).

Beyond the lookout, the track continues along a very narrow ledge beside the beautiful Coomera Crevice. Runnels of water constantly tumble into this crevice, nourishing lilies that cling to the sheer, mossy cliffs. Follow the ledge to the first crossing where large lichen-flecked boulders fill the riverbed. After two more crossings, zig-zag uphill on the right bank for about 15 minutes to reach the base of **Bahnamboola Falls**. As you wind uphill, two side tracks will lead you to vantage points overlooking the falls. Beyond the falls, cross Barajum Creek below another small cascade and continue uphill to a side track, which leads to **Kagoonya Falls**. These falls stay in view as you ascend.

Cross Gwongarragong Creek and head past Gwongarragong Falls towards the fourth river crossing. A few minutes later, cross a flat rocky slab below Moolgoolong Cascades. Wind past Chigigunya Falls, then cross Bower Bird Creek before skirting around a lily-filled gully at **Dragoon Bird Creek**. Look around the edge of the clear shallow pools – you may see blue spiny crays.

After the fifth crossing, meander uphill past Goorawa Falls (the last for the day), and then cross the river for the final time. A few minutes later, rejoin the Border Track, 7.6km from Binna Burra. Turn left, cross two more fern-filled creeks and continue on, ignoring the Mt Hobwee track on the right. Follow the gently graded track uphill to **Jolah Lookout** for good views across Woggunba Valley to Springbrook Plateau and the Pacific Ocean. This sunny clearing has long been home to yellow-faced whip snakes, but recently a fat blue-tongued lizard has taken up residence, possibly displacing the snakes. The track leads north past Daves Creek track, to the Coomera Seat. From here, retrace your steps to the beginning of the walk.

FRASER ISLAND

Fraser's up there among Australia's outstanding natural places – international and Australian visitors flock here to swim in unpolluted lakes, relax along sandy beaches, walk through lofty rainforests, slide down mobile sandblows and marvel at cliffs of coloured sands.

Walkers jealously guarded Fraser's secrets for years, content that most visitors only frequented popular beauty spots. But the secret is out, partly because the Queensland Government allocated heaps of money to create six world-class walking tracks throughout the state, showcasing three World Heritage-listed areas. They're called 'Great Walks' and Fraser Island's Great Walk was the first, meaning that increasing numbers of visitors are now appreciating the island's inner beauty on foot.

HISTORY

The traditional owners called Fraser Island *K'gari*, meaning 'paradise'. Theirs was a self-sufficient lifestyle to be envied – unlimited

seafood and forests providing material for shelters, canoes, fishing tackle and a cool escape on summer days.

That great seafarer, James Cook, penned the first record of the island. Matthew Flinders was the first Englishman to stand on its shores, noting, 'Nothing can be imagined more barren than this peninsula'. Didn't he get it wrong!

Captain James Fraser and his young wife Eliza were among survivors shipwrecked in 1836. They drifted for weeks before landing on Fraser. Seized by Aboriginal people and subjected to harsh treatment, some eventually escaped to the mainland – including Eliza. Her dramatic 'account' won worldwide notoriety and she is immortalised in the island's name.

Fraser's mineral sands were mined until late last century and logging its tall forests was condoned until just before World Heritage listing in 1992.

ENVIRONMENT

Fraser is another world. It's a gigantic (120km by 15km) vegetated sandbar. Over a few million years, shifting ocean currents

PRISTINE LAKES AND CRYSTAL CREEKS

Sand is the key to Fraser's formation, but it's water that's made it so special. Many regard Fraser's lakes and creeks as its most distinctive assets. Each has its own character: some mysterious and some moody, while others are just beautiful. With an average annual rainfall of 1600mm and a huge natural aquifer channelling rainwater that fell 60 to 100 years ago, it's no wonder Fraser is adorned with fast-flowing creeks and 40-plus lakes.

Over half the world's perched (dune) lakes, including the world's largest (Lake Boomanjin) nestle on Fraser. Perched lakes occur above the water table. Almost impermeable organic matter and sand hold water in depressions between the dunes. Some, like Lake McKenzie, are crystal-clear, their waters percolating through sand, while others, including Lake Boomanjin, are tannin-stained from decaying vegetation. Lake Bowaraddy (120m above sea level), in the island's north, is one of the world's highest perched lakes. Water is so pure that these lakes support few plants and animals, and most have only two or three fish species.

Window lakes are less common. They form when ground level falls below the water table. Lake Wabby, the island's deepest, is an example of this type. It's also known as a barrage lake, caused by mobile Hammerstone Sandblow damming the waters of a natural spring and encroaching on its shores. Unlike the others, it supports several fish species.

Three species of turtle live in the lakes. Please don't feed them, or the fish, as it upsets the natural balance of aquatic life.

Many creeks drain the island. Some, like Wanggoolba at Central Station, flow silently past ancient *Angiopteris* ferns, the largest fern fronds in the world. Others like Eli, north of Happy Valley, spill millions of litres of water per hour into the ocean.

Help preserve Fraser's fragile creeks and lakes by not polluting their waters. Most don't have streams filling or draining them, so foreign matter can be trapped for many years. Try a T-shirt instead of sunscreen when swimming!

have stolen and deposited sands from northern NSW. The dune systems still evolve – changing before your eyes.

But how do Fraser's forests survive on a bed of sand? They draw mineral nourishment from sand and absorb trace minerals washed into the sand by rain. Vegetation decays and recycles these minerals. As successive dunes form, deeper nutrient layers develop, supporting diverse forest types and the state's most extensive heathlands.

Fraser is a buffer zone for seagrasses, critical for dugong and green turtle populations. Watch for migrating whales as they swim north in cooler months, then return to Antarctica with their young during warmer climes.

You'll identify hosts of seabirds. Look for pied oystercatchers, running along on skinny, red legs. The female may be trying to spirit her chicks away from harm, while the male of the family feigns a broken wing to distract would-be predators or inquisitive humans.

PLANNING

When to Walk

Fraser offers something year-round. Despite heat, possible tropical storms or persistent rain, summer and autumn (22°C to 28°C) are most popular with campers. Annoying insects decline in cooler months from March, although mosquitoes and sandflies will always inhabit swampy areas. Winter and spring are definitely the best for walking. Chances of rain are reduced, especially after June, when temperatures settle between 14°C and 21°C and wildflowers are at their best.

Designated walkers' camps mean you needn't share your site with hordes of people, even during school holidays and long weekends.

What to Bring

Take fuel stoves, warm clothes for chilly nights and insect repellents to banish March flies and other peskies. A \$1 coin will get you a hot shower at Central Station.

Maps

The QPWS 1:50,000 topographic map *Great Walk Fraser Island* is all you'll need. They also issue information brochures about the Great Walk.

Information Sources

It's best to gather information from www.epa.qld.gov.au before heading for Fraser. There's an historical display of the island at Central Station.

Permits & Regulations

For camping and vehicle permits visit www.qld.gov.au/camping or call ☎ 13 13 04.

Fraser is a 4WD-only area and permits must be displayed on your windscreen. Collect them from **QPWS Brisbane** (☎ 3227 8185; www.epa.qld.gov.au, 160 Ann St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri), **QPWS Maryborough** (☎ 4121 1800; cnr Alice & Lennox Sts; ☎ 9am-5pm daily), **QPWS Rainbow Beach** (☎ 5486 3160; Rainbow Beach Rd; ☎ 7am-4pm daily) or ask about other collection points.

Guided Walks

Kingfisher Bay Resort (☎ 1800 072 555; www.kingfisherbay.com) offers ranger-guided eco walks for guests and day visitors. Swim and walk on a two- or three-day, all-inclusive Cool Dingo tour, staying at its **Wilderness Lodge** (2-4 bed r from \$240-280; 🍷). 4WD coaches transport you to beauty spots.

GREAT WALK FRASER ISLAND

Duration	5 days
Distance	83.8km
Difficulty	moderate
Start/Finish	Dilli Village/Happy Valley
Nearest Town	Hervey Bay (opposite)
Transport	ferry, 4WD taxi

Summary Nowhere else in the world can you walk beside towering rainforests, vast wildflower heathlands, ancient permanent streams and expansive sandblows to a lake that's so clear you can see turtles on the bottom.

Fraser needs to be the world's largest sand island to contain all its jewels. Meandering through Fraser's magical paradise you'll be following ancient trading pathways of Butchulla people, and logging roads and tramways that served a bygone forest industry. Naturally, a cool dip in one of its iconic lakes becomes part of your day.

Several access points provide links to the Great Walk or enable smaller sections to be walked. The side trip from Central Station to Pile Valley is an absolute must, so it's been included in the total distance for Day 2.

WARNINGS

- Keep out of the surf. Strong rips are common and sharks, stingers and box jellyfish are likely to be lurking.
- Take care walking along Seventy-Five Mile Beach. It's a designated highway and it's really hard to hear vehicles above the crash of the surf. Sleeping unprotected in the sand dunes is not cool. 4WDs use these areas and have run over hung-over tourists.
- Be dingo-safe (see the boxed text p346).

NEAREST TOWN & FACILITIES

Hervey Bay

☎ 07 / pop 36,100

This peaceful, seaside town has just been voted 'Australia's happiest place to live'. It's Australia's whale-watching capital and the most convenient launching place for Fraser Island trips. **Hervey Bay visitor information centre** (☎ 1800 811 728; www.herveybay.qld.gov.au; cnr Maryborough-Hervey Bay & Urraween Rds; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun) is best for advice on accommodation and tours. **Great Outdoors** (☎ 4194 0622; 2 Boat Harbour Dr) and **The Camping Company** (☎ 4124 7233; 108 Boat Harbour Dr) have a huge range of tents and camping gear. The smaller **Torquay Disposals & Camping** (☎ 4125 6511; 424 Esplanade) is central and has everything you need for a hiking trip to Fraser.

SLEEPING & EATING

Beachfront Tourist Park (☎ 4125 1578; www.beachfronttouristparks.com.au; Esplanade, Torquay; unpowered/power sites for 2, \$19/24) is on the beach and has a family atmosphere.

Set in bushland, **Colonial Cabins Resort** (☎ 1800 818 280; www.coloniallogcabins.com.au; 820 Boat Harbour Dr, Urangan; dm/r from \$20/50; 🍷 🍷 🍷) is a spotlessly clean YHA backpackers that has a bar and eatery. It also offers fully self-contained accommodation.

Koala's Beach Resort (☎ 1800 354 535; www.koalaadventures.com; 408 Esplanade; dm/r \$25/70; 🍷 🍷 🍷), a VIP backpacker resort opposite the beach, has a party atmosphere.

Rates at **Lakeside B&B** (☎ 4128 9448; www.herveybaybedandbreakfast.com; 29 Lido Pde, Hervey Bay; d \$120-150; 🍷) include breakfast, and the lakeside spa makes this a perfect place to unwind after your Fraser hike.

Locally recommended **Bayarama Cafe** (☎ 4125 1515; 428 Esplanade; dishes \$5.50-17; ☎ breakfast & lunch) is a popular haunt. It has the best coffee in town, and home-made biscuits and cakes are a speciality.

Still one of the most popular eateries in town, **Black Dog Cafe** (☎ 4124 3177; 381 Esplanade, Torquay; mains \$10-20; ☎ lunch & dinner) has a great atmosphere and excellent staff. Meals range from sushi to club sambos, ribs to seafood salads. Check out the blackboard specials.

Licensed, waterfront **Cafe Balaena** (☎ 4125 4799; Shop 7, Hervey Bay Tourist Terminal, Buccaneer Ave, Urangan; mains \$10-27; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) has been serving the world since the early 90s. Dine with locals and enjoy huge meals and salads, and mouthwatering seafood.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Hervey Bay is 300km north of Brisbane, and 25km east of the Bruce Hwy.

Sunshine Express (☎ 13 13 13; www.sunshineexpress.com.au) flies between Brisbane and Hervey Bay (\$120, one hour, daily).

Greyhound Australia (☎ 13 14 99; www.greyhound.com.au) and **Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10; www.premiers.com.au) have daily services (\$32 to \$50) from Brisbane to Hervey Bay's **Bay Central Coach Terminal** (☎ 4124 4000; Bay Central Shopping Centre, Boat Harbour Dr). Catch Bus No 5 (\$2.80) for the 7km ride to Urangan Marina to transfer to Fraser Island.

Suntours (☎ 1300 735 301; 449 Esplanade, Torquay) run from Brisbane to Hervey Bay, stopping at the coach terminal and Urangan Marina (\$45, four hours, two per day).

Queensland Rail (☎ 13 22 32; www.traveltrain.com.au) connects Brisbane with Maryborough via the *Tilt Train* (\$65, five hours, Sunday and Friday), where a Trainlink bus (\$5.90) transfers to Hervey Bay.

Fraser Island

Near the trailhead at **Dilli Village Environmental Education Camp** (☎ 4127 9130; sites for 2 \$20, bunkhouse per person \$20, cabins \$60, maximum 3 people), you can leave vehicles for \$5 per day. 'Village' in the name doesn't mean shops – there's nothing here except the camp.

You can self-cater or eat and drink in the bar and bistro at **Fraser Island Wilderness Retreat** (☎ 1800 063 933; www.fraserislandco.com.au; r \$140-180 1-3 people, f \$180-220 up to 5 people; 🍷) at Happy Valley (the end of the trail). There's a general store and fuel next door.

Kingfisher Bay Resort (☎ 1800 072 555; www.kingfisherbay.com; r \$270-300, max 3 adults; ♿ ♿) is the ultimate treat before and after your walk. Visit the Sandbar (open to day-trippers) or the Maheno or Seabelle Restaurants for that pre- and post-walk indulgence. There's also a bakery, general store and fuel.

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

Vehicle and passenger ferries operate from Hervey Bay. **Kingfisher Fast Cat** (☎ 1800 072 555) leaves Urangan Marina for Kingfisher Bay (\$50 return, 30 minutes, six per day).

Fraser Venture (☎ 1800 072 555; vehicle/walker \$120/20 return) runs a ferry from River Heads to Wangoolba Creek (30 minutes, three per day), while the *Fraser Dawn* connects Urangan Marina with Moon Point.

Aussie Trax (☎ 1800 249 330; www.fraserisland4wd.com.au) at Kingfisher Bay Resort provides pick-ups and drop-offs, hires hiking and camping gear and can arrange food packages. Three-day deals (\$300 per person, extra days \$60) include equipment, food, permits and maps.

Fraser Island Taxi Service (☎ 4127 9188, 0429 379 188; www.fraserservice.com.au) transports walkers and arranges food drops to/from anywhere on the island. It's the only cab, so bookings are essential. Kingfisher Bay–Dilli Village is \$105, while Happy Valley–Kingfisher Bay will set you back \$120 (up to five passengers for each service).

THE WALK

Day 1: Dilli Village to Lake Benaroon

5 hours, 13.5km

Follow a sandy road west from Dilli Village to a boardwalk spanning a wetland. Head uphill through coastal woodland before curving right, beside a swampy area. Crest a sandy ridge dotted with bloodwoods and scribbly gums and follow it northeast, then west to a cluster of twisted angophoras with distinctive pink trunks.

About an hour from the start, the track leads through a long sandy swale to a junction. Turn right and clamber uphill to the top of **Wongi Sandblow** for stunning coastal views. Back at the junction, follow a level track through macrozamia (Aboriginal people leached poison from their red fruits, then pounded them to make flour). Wind downhill, cross a firebreak and continue below banksias and bloodwoods to the

dingo-proof enclosure surrounding a walkers' camp. Head past the car-based camping ground to **Lake Boomanjin**. Casuarina needles and gum leaves blanket the track as you head north along the soft, sandy shore. Cross a few tannin-stained rills, then curve east around the lake to a junction.

Turn left towards Lake Benaroon and climb north. The track winds up and down along a ridge covered with leaf-litter and peppered with sedge and macrozamia. After crossing several fallen logs, Lake Benaroon comes into view through regenerating brush box and blackbutt. Descend again and veer left beside the lake towards a junction at the camp site.

Day 2: Lake Benaroon to Central Station

5 hours, 12.1km

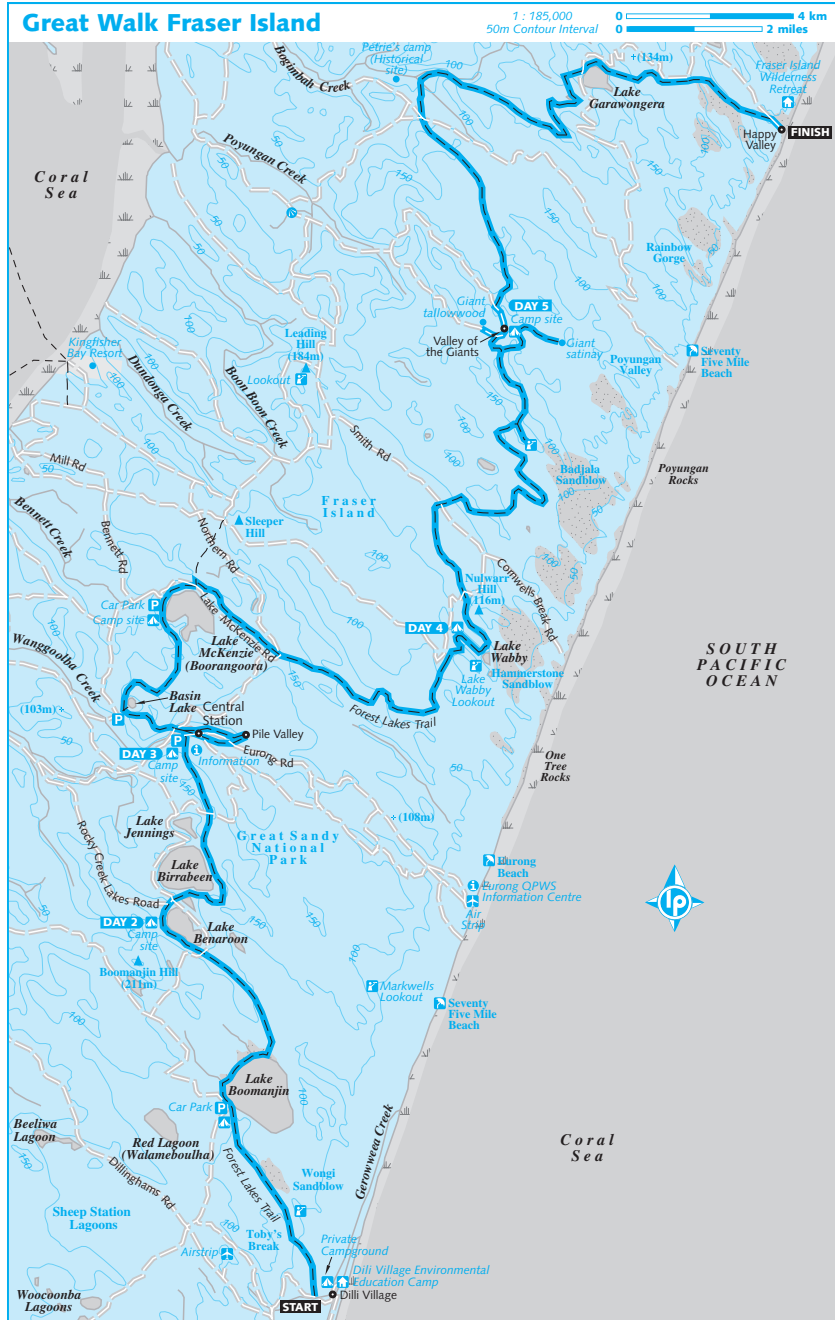
From the junction, the track passes melaleucas fringing the lake, then veers away into banksia woodland. It curves around a swampy depression before reaching **Lake Birrabeen** – a good swimming spot.

Veering east from the lake, the trees become taller as you enter a stand of majestic blackbutts. Meander through undulating terrain, passing the stumps of long-felled trees, before cresting a ridge lined with brush box and satinay – the Fraser Island turpentine. (Satinays were once prized for their ability to withstand marine borer attack. Many were felled during the late 1800s and early 1900s for wharf planking and piles; some were used during construction of the Suez Canal and others to rebuild London Docks after WWII.)

Continue downhill, curve past a water tank and descend a set of steps to cross a sandy road. Turn right at the next road and head past Pile Valley track to Central Station camping ground. This huge enclosure has elevated storage lockers to keep food away from marauding goannas.

Select a camp site and return to Central Station. A narrow bitumen road leads steeply downhill from the day use area to a boardwalk beside crystal-clear **Wangoolba Creek**. Walk past Basin Lake turnoff and continue towards Pile Valley. There's a viewing platform beside a huge angiopteris fern, a species dating from Gondwanan times.

At the next junction, veer left and continue beside the creek. Head through tall piccabean palms to the appropriately named



Pile Valley. Turn right at the next two junctions and head uphill through an avenue of towering kauri pine. The other pines with tessellated bark are slash pines, part of an early 1900s plantation. There's one more road to cross before returning to the camping ground where you can indulge in a hot shower.

Day 3: Central Station to Lake Wabby

7 hours, 18.5km

Walk back through Central Station to Wanggoolba Creek and Basin Lake turnoff. Head uphill, along a sandy ridge to a junction. Small but beautiful **Basin Lake** is 150m to the right. It's probably too early to swim, but it's certainly worth a look.

Back at the junction, climb gradually to an old road. Turn left downhill to another

junction and continue towards Lake McKenzie. Skirt a swampy depression before reaching a walkers' camp, then follow the fence to the shores of stunningly beautiful **Lake McKenzie**. You'll rarely find yourself alone, but despite the crowds, a swim here is an unforgettable experience.

The track climbs northwards along a soft, sandy road. At the top of the ridge, a walking track veers left downhill and becomes firm underfoot. It curves around the lake and levels below a stand of blackbutts, towering over a dense understorey of macrozamia. It's cool below the canopy as you head towards the next sandy road, where the track follows an old logging tramline to another junction. Turn left towards Lake Wabby.

Climb north over several low rises, cross another road and crest one final ridge before

winding downhill to a junction at the walkers' camp. Leave your packs and contour around the edge of a ridge, past the car park to **Lake Wabby Lookout** for great views across Hammerstone Sandblow.

Feel like a romp on the sandblow? Head downhill through tall scribbly gums to Valley of the Giants track junction. Ignore it and continue 500m ahead. Climb a wide finger of soft sand to crest the sandblow, then descend to **Lake Wabby**. It's a great spot to cool off. Before returning to camp, collect water at the car park.

Day 4: Lake Wabby to Valley of the Giants

6 hours, 20km

Retrace yesterday's steps to Valley of the Giants turnoff. Go left and climb through casuarinas to the ridge top. When you reach a road, continue ahead on a service trail covered with leaf-litter. Open forest surrounding the high dunes gives way to rainforest as you continue climbing. A walking track veers right, away from the road, and leads through piccabeen palms to another road.

Continue through closed forest on a gentle gradient, high above the valley floor. Cross a few steep ridges, then climb to a signed junction. Drop your packs and walk 600m east, along a eucalypt-lined ridge to the base of a huge dune. A short climb leads to **Badjala Sandblow** and great coastal views.

Back at the junction, head north downhill into tall forest. Occasional tree stumps remind us of Fraser's logging days. The terrain levels below a cool stand of rainforest where purple lilly-pilly berries litter the ground. Turn right at the next two junctions and continue to a third where a 3km side track leads to the island's tallest satinya.

Follow the main track left, downhill through beautiful forest to another junction. It's worth dropping your packs to visit **Fraser's tallest tallowood**, 1300m to the left. Its diameter is 3.6m and it's believed to be around 1000 years old. After hugging the tree, return to the junction and follow the main track 400m to the camp site.

Day 5: Valley of the Giants to Happy Valley

7 hours, 19.7km

Follow the old tramway route through lush rainforest and climb gradually past a storm-

damaged area. This section of forest was heavily logged and is now revegetated with spindly eucalypts, all vying for the sunlight.

Crest a ridge, descend to cross another road and veer right along a walking track. Huge sawtooth banksia leaves blanket the track as you approach another road. Turn right, continue to a T-junction and go right again. (The left-hand track leads 500m to Petries Logging Camp but all traces have now been removed.)

Head northeast uphill to a stand of satinays, towering above piccabeens. This marks the start of a long, steep climb high above the valley floor. The track contours around a ridge and descends southeast to a disused 4WD track. Continue past melleuca wetlands, cross another ridge and swing right, away from the road. Head past a walkers' camp to **Lake Garawongera**, one of Fraser's most attractive perched lakes. It's a great place for a swim, but because of its fragile environment, you're asked to eat in the picnic area.

From here, follow a hard-packed road around the western edge of the lake. The walking track swings right, away from the road and leads east around the lake. You may hear wompoo fruit-doves as you climb to the top of a long, sandy ridge. Head downhill and look for a tree blazed by early surveyors. At the next road, veer right through a gate, climb another ridge and contour along the left of a gully between tall dunes. Crest a low hill, descend to a road and turn left down steps to a picnic area at the end of the walk – but not the end of the day. **Happy Valley Pub** is just 200m along the road.

HINCHINBROOK ISLAND

Hinchinbrook is a huge 35km-long island wilderness in the state's tropical north. It's Australia's largest (and by far Queensland's most rugged) island national park.

Crossing Hinchinbrook Channel's seagrass beds you're confronted by huge granite mountains. These hulking sentinels of the wilderness watch over the island – from fragile mangrove forests on its western shores, to sandy palm-lined beaches, sweeping bays and rugged headlands on its east coast. After completing the Thorsborne Trail, those same mountains seem to

DINGOS

Dingos are one of Australia's most efficient killers. Evolving in Asia, probably from a subspecies of grey wolf, they arrived with sailors around 4000 years ago. Their hunting skills were honed to perfection as they slunk through our grasslands and woodlands, colonising all areas of Australia except Tasmania. They were probably responsible for the demise of Tasmanian tigers (thylacines) and Tasmanian devils from the mainland. Because of Fraser's isolation, its dingos have rarely interbred with domestic dogs and they are among the most genetically pure. They have roamed Fraser for several thousand years.

They are small animals, less than knee-high, watchfully aloof and never friendly, but irresistibly appealing. Their ears are pointed; their coats usually yellow, striped with white on their chests and the tips of their bushy tails and feet, and they have a distinctive trotting gait. Unlike domestic dogs, they only have one litter of up to six pups a year and rear them in a den until they're old enough to hunt for themselves. Instead of barking, they have a mournful howl.

They gather in packs, and establish and defend territorial rights. They'll hunt alone for small animals, rodents, reptiles and birds, but engage in pack warfare when larger prey is targeted. Dingos are natural scavengers, always looking for an easy feed. By nature's standards they're not overly cruel or savage, but we need to respect them and their environment. Let them grow up wild; if they scrounge from people they lose their hunting skills and become aggressive. Sadly, these dingos may be culled – for habits taught by people.

Fatalities from dingos have occurred in recent years, so it's important to be dingo-safe. Make sure your group is aware of the basics (on-the-spot fines are imposed on foolish people not adhering to common sense rules):

- Never feed dingos – wild animals should fend for themselves.
- Never encourage or coax dingos – they might look loveable, but they can be aggressive and unpredictable.
- Walk in groups – lone walkers are more likely to be stalked or bailed up.
- Secure your food and rubbish in containers provided at camps – dingos will rip through tents to steal unprotected food or scraps.
- If threatened, remain calm and back away, keeping eye contact with the dog. If attacked, defend yourself aggressively.
- Report all dingo incidents.

WARNINGS

- Don't swim in the sea during box jellyfish season (October to April). These jellyfish are the world's most venomous. Transparent tentacles up to 3m long contain millions of stinging cells. Contact can cause severe shock, respiratory failure and cardiac arrest.
- Estuarine crocodiles (salties), the world's largest reptiles, inhabit creeks, rivers, lagoons and coastlines. Sightings around North and South Zoe Creeks are common. Heed the signs and be extremely cautious during breeding season (September to April).
- Native rats will chew through packs and tents (and pretty much anything else) looking for food. Use the metal, rat-proof boxes at camp sites or suspend food above the ground (although the rats are famous for their ingenuity – even leaping from the top of your tent to try to reach hanging food!).
- Heavy rain and high tides make creek crossings dangerous. If in doubt, wait till low tide or turn back.

congratulate us, knowing we will share their wish to protect all that is wild and beautiful on Hinchinbrook.

ENVIRONMENT

Hinchinbrook is surrounded by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. These fascinating waters cover fringing reefs and are home to marine grazers including dugongs and green turtles. Its mangrove forests are important breeding grounds for a host of marine life, and are some of Australia's richest and most diverse.

Several mountains, often shrouded in clouds, exceed 1000m. They're covered with tropical rainforests, open woodlands and fragile heathlands and cradle spectacular waterfalls and deep plunge pools.

PLANNING

When to Walk

The cooler, drier months between April and September are best for walking. Heavy rain is common in the hot, humid months between December and March, but prepare for rain at any time. Extremely dry or wet conditions, cyclone threats and controlled burning can force trail closures.

What to Bring

Long-sleeved shirts, trousers and a tent will stop mozzies, sandflies and March flies carrying you away during the night, and insect repellent will help to keep them under control during the day. Raincoats are invaluable and light sandals are great for crossing creeks. For beach camping, carry a length of cord or fishing line to hang food above the

ground – away from the island's infamous marauding native rats.

Maps & Books

The QPWS *Thorsborne Trail* map and guide can be downloaded when booking your permit (below). Collect tide timetables from the Rainforest & Reef visitor information centre (below).

Hinchinbrook Island – The Land Time Forgot, by Arthur and Margaret Thorsborne, has a wealth of natural history information. For an inspiring read, Warren MacDonald's *One Step Beyond* details his ordeal when trapped beneath a one-tonne rock while climbing Mt Bowen. He was rescued two days later and had both legs amputated. He's since climbed Africa's Kilimanjaro, America's El Capitan and Tasmania's Federation Peak. Don't ever complain about blisters!

Information Sources

Cardwell's **Rainforest & Reef visitor information centre** (☎ 4066 8601; 79 Victoria St; 🕒 8am-4.30pm) provides up-to-date info. View the excellent 15-minute video *Without a Trace* before walking the trail. The centre also houses the QPWS office.

Permits & Regulations

Permits are essential and are issued by the QPWS (☎ 13 13 04; www.qld.gov.au). There's a limit of 40 people on the trail at any one time, and groups are limited to six. Book at least 12 months in advance for holiday times. Note that special permits are required to climb any mountain other than Nina Peak, and fuel stoves are mandatory (no fires).

THORSBORNE TRAIL

Duration	4 days
Distance	32km
Difficulty	moderate
Start/Finish	Ramsay Bay/George Point
Nearest Town	Cardwell (below), Lucinda (right)
Transport	ferry/bus
Summary	Curved sandy bays, cool tropical rainforests, idyllic rock pools, cascading waterfalls and stunning vistas conspire to create an unforgettable island experience.

This trail is included on most short lists of the world's 'best treks'. It's named for local conservationist, the late Arthur Thorsborne, who with wife Margaret spent years monitoring pied (Torresian) imperial-pigeons. This migratory white bird with black outer wing feathers and tail tip nests here in summer. The trail follows the east coast and can be walked in either direction. Orange markers point north to south, and yellow south to north. Walking north to south allows a side trip to Nina Peak for spectacular views on Day 1, while you're still fresh, and finishes with an easy walk along the beach on Day 4. Add a swim in plunge pools at Zoe and Mulligan Falls on Days 2 and 3 and you have a recipe for a memorable walk.

NEAREST TOWNS

Cardwell

☎ 07 / pop 1420

Separated from the ocean by the Bruce Hwy, this sprawling town is your departure point for the trail. The Rainforest & Reef visitor information centre (opposite) books accommodation and tours. **Cardwell Hardware** (☎ 4066 8521; 71 Victoria St) sells basic camping supplies. There are several ATMs on the main drag.

SLEEPING & EATING

Hinchinbrook Hostel (YHA) (☎ 4066 8648; www.kookaburraholidaypark.com.au; 175 Bruce Hwy; unpowered/powered sites for 2 \$18/22, dm/s/d \$18/35/40; 🚻 📺 📶) has excellent facilities and also offers villas, motel units and cabins. It hires out camping gear from trowels to backpacks.

Spotlessly clean **Cardwell Central Backpackers** (☎ 4066 8404; www.cardwellbackpackers.com.au; 6 Brasenose St; dm \$18, d \$35; 🚻 📺) is a tastefully renovated squash court with a great feel, just 200m from the bus stop.

Mudbrick Manor (☎ 4066 2299; www.mudbrickmanor.com.au; 13 Stoney Creek Rd; s/d \$75/100; 🚻 📺) offers more upmarket B&B style stays. Staff will collect you from the bus and drop you at the ferry.

The only supermarket is at the town's northern end. For quality home-made meals, try **Annie's Kitchen** (☎ 4066 8818; 107 Victoria St; dishes \$7-14; 🍳 breakfast, lunch & dinner).

Enjoy ocean breezes, a view through coconut palms to Hinchinbrook Island and tasty meals at **Marine Hotel** (☎ 4066 8662; Victoria St; dishes \$8-16; 🍳 lunch & dinner). Aussie-style fish or steak sandwiches and hearty steak salads are good value.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Cardwell is 165km north of Townsville, or 184km south of Cairns, opposite the northern tip of Hinchinbrook.

Greyhound Australia (☎ 13 14 99; www.greyhound.com.au) has services to Cardwell from Cairns (\$31, three hours, six per day) and Brisbane (\$185, 26 hours, four per day). **Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10; www.premiers.com.au) also connects to Cairns (\$24, four hours) and Brisbane (\$165, 26 hours).

Cardwell is on the route of the high-speed *Tilt Train*, which runs from Brisbane (\$290, 21 hours, Monday and Friday) and Cairns (\$55, 3½ hours, Sunday and Wednesday). The *Sunlander* also stops here, departing Brisbane (\$200, 26 hours, Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday) and Cairns (\$40, four hours, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday). Book with **Queensland Rail** (☎ 13 22 32; www.traveltrain.com.au).

Lucinda

☎ 07 / pop 783

This tiny fishing port is the southern approach to Hinchinbrook Island. Fuel and limited supplies are available. There's an ATM at the shop, near the beach.

Wanderers Holiday Village (☎ 4777 8213; www.wanderers-lucinda.com.au; Bruce Pde; unpowered/powered sites for 2 \$20/24, cabins from \$70; 🚻 📺) Will transport guests to/from the boat ramp (per person \$5).

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

Ferry operators will store luggage and arrange to transfer it to the other end. Free EPIRBs are available on request.

Hinchinbrook Island Ferries (☎ 4066 8270; www.hinchinbrookferries.com.au) leave Port Hinchinbrook

Marina at 9am and drop off or collect walkers at Ramsay Bay at 11.30am (\$60). The service is daily from May to October, and runs Sunday, Wednesday and Friday from November to January and during April. There are no services in February and March.

Hinchinbrook Wilderness Safaris (☎ 4777 8307; www.hinchinbrookwildernesssafaris.com.au) runs a ferry between George Point and Lucinda (\$50) daily between April and October (other times on demand). Departures are tide-dependent and bookings are essential.

Ingham Travel (☎ 4776 5666) provides a service between Lucinda and Cardwell (\$25 per person for a minimum two people) by appointment. It will also transfer walkers to/from Townsville Airport to Lucinda or Cardwell (\$70, two hours, three per day Monday-Thursday, two per day Friday, on demand Saturday & Sunday).

THE WALK

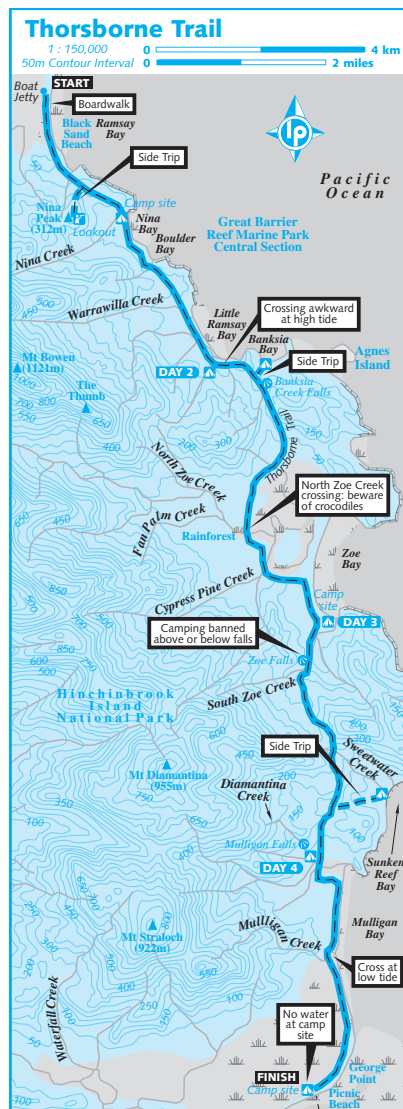
Day 1: Ramsay Bay to Little Ramsay Bay

4 hours, 6.5km
From the jetty follow a boardwalk to a sandy swale behind the dunes and make your way to **Ramsay Bay**. Follow its beautiful shoreline to a marked track near granite boulders at the end of the beach.

Head inland, climbing to a low ridge, then cross shallow gullies flanked with stringybarks before descending to Black-sand Beach. Water in a lagoon behind the beach is often brackish and shouldn't be relied upon. Follow the beach south to three huge paperbarks flanking a track leading uphill. Cross several shallow gullies before reaching a saddle. (The unmarked track to Nina Peak leads southwest; see the Side Trip opposite.)

Descend, cross more shallow gullies and follow a watercourse down to the mangrove-lined tidal reaches of Nina Creek. You may get wet feet skirting this swampy area. Cross two boulder-filled creek beds on the way to a low ridge, before descending to a camping ground at Nina Bay's northern end.

Follow the coastline and scramble across pink rocks to a track leading steeply up a short cliff. It levels out through casuarinas and grass trees before emerging at the northern end of **Boulder Bay**. Cross sloping granite slabs to the beach and hop over boulders to a small sandy patch. Climb another rocky outcrop and continue uphill



through thin, woody acacias and casuarinas to the ridge top. The track descends, following a rocky watercourse to Little Ramsay Bay. Head down the beach to a large tidal creek. (A footpad on the northern side leads 50m through the scrub, past a lagoon, to the creek bed. This is usually a reliable water point, but you may need to rock hop

further upstream.) Ford the tidal creek to reach a sheltered camp site on the southern edge of the lagoon.

SIDE TRIP: NINA PEAK

1½ hours return, 1km, 220m ascent

A distinct path leads steeply uphill to an exposed granite slab with sweeping views across Ramsay Bay. Continue uphill through grass trees, casuarinas and tea-trees to the summit. There are great views across Mt Bowen's craggy cliffs and beyond to mangrove-lined Missionary Bay. Move around the summit for views in all directions before returning to the main track.

Day 2: Little Ramsay Bay to Zoe Bay

6 hours, 10.5km

Mt Bowen dominates the skyline as you walk along the beach. Cross a small tidal creek (may be difficult at high tide) and scramble around a rocky headland to the next stony beach – a secluded, alternative camp site. Rock hop around the next headland to another small beach. At the southern end a track leads uphill, on the left of a shallow watercourse. The gradient increases as you approach the ridge top. Ignore a false trail on the left and continue for five minutes to a signed track leading to Banksia Bay.

The Thorsborne Trail descends past a small, mossy cliff before reaching a pool at the head of a permanent cascade in **Banksia Creek**. Cross black, lichen-stained rocks and continue uphill beside the creek to a saddle dividing the watersheds of Banksia and Zoe Bays. Banksias line the track as you descend, following a bouldery creek bed. After a few minutes of rock hopping, the track leads sharply left uphill, then right, paralleling the creek. Look for old-growth stringybarks as you head into a cool section of forest.

Continue southwest around a swampy plain dotted with paperbarks. Cross several rocky creek beds, avoiding the tendrils of aptly named lawyer vines, sometimes called wait-a-while.

Cross a few gullies, then descend steeply to an expanse of lichen-stained rocks in North Zoe Creek. (Crocodiles have been sighted here.) Cross diagonally and head upstream beside **Fan Palm Creek**. This permanent creek is a good spot to cool off.

Ford again near a huge fan palm on the eastern bank, cross another tributary and

continue past a bog below tall palms where the trail becomes indistinct. Cross more gullies flanked with nasty bits of lawyer vine and red beech trees with distinct red, flaky bark, before reaching **Cypress Pine Creek**. You'll almost certainly hear the distinctive 'wollack-a-woo' of wompoo fruit-doves. They love feeding on blue quandong berries.

The track passes a massive paperbark, the start of a paperbark swamp. Skirt the swamp, passing unusual granite monoliths that appear totally misplaced on the edge of a rainforest. Continue across another boggy, mangrove-lined creek and look for an enormous brush-turkey mound on the left. A few minutes later you pass more quandongs, beeches and paperbarks before emerging at **Zoe Bay**. Walk right 400m, to the camp site at South Zoe Creek. Heed the crocodile signs – they're not for decoration! To collect water, follow the Zoe Falls track for about 15 minutes to a creek crossing. After walking this far, you'll probably want to continue 100m for a swim below beautiful **Zoe Falls**.

SIDE TRIP: BANKSIA BAY

1 hour, 600m

A well-defined track leads around the side of a ridge, then descends steeply to an alternative camp site beside the bay. There's plenty of mangroves, but not a banksia in sight! It's worth exploring this rocky beach.

Day 3: Zoe Bay to Mulligan Falls

4½ hours, 7.5km

Return to Zoe Falls and climb a stony track to a slot in a rock slab, where a knotted rope aids your ascent. Continue climbing to the head of the falls. Sweeping views across Zoe Bay from smooth granite slabs are a real highlight. It's hard to leave this spot, but shoulder your pack and head upstream to a crossing. The track parallels the creek, crossing it several times.

Continue through open forest, above the right bank of South Zoe Creek. The gradient increases as you traverse more rocky gullies, before the final creek crossing. Look for turtles and crays in the small, rocky pools.

Ascend across a carpet of casuarina needles to a broad, rocky slab at a saddle. This is the highest point (220m) on the track. Contour around the ridge and descend

to cross **Sweetwater Creek**. Vegetation alternates between rainforest and dry open forest as you cross more gullies. There are glimpses of Sunken Reef Bay and Lucinda Jetty through the trees. Raw sugar is conveyed 5.6km along this jetty to ship-loaders. One of the longest of its type in the world, it dips 1.2m over its length, following the curvature of the earth. Continue downhill to a junction where a track leads to Sunken Reef Bay.

Take care on slippery casuarina needles as the Thorsborne Trail heads downhill to the broad, boulder-choked **Diamantina Creek**. These boulders are treacherous when wet! Veer right, diagonally upstream to locate the track on the opposite bank.

Leave the creek and climb southwest through open forest, high above the creek. There are good views across Mulligan Bay to the Palm Islands as you contour around a steep-sided ridge. Descend past a balancing granite tor to a series of rocky steps. Wind past more boulders to a junction. Turn left and walk 40m to the camp site. **Mulligan Falls** and a magic swimming hole is 100m beyond here.

SIDE TRIP: SUNKEN REEF BAY

1 hour, 1.4km, 100m descent

To visit this secluded bay littered with oddly-shaped driftwood pieces, turn left and head east along an almost level track for a few minutes, then descend steeply to the beach. If the lagoon is full, follow its southern edge to the beach. The bay makes an ideal alternative camp site. Collect water from Sweetwater Creek at the northern end of the beach.

Day 4: Mulligan Falls to George Point

2½ hours, 7.5km

There's no reliable water today, so collect enough from Mulligan Falls. A clear track leads through rainforest, crossing a rocky creek bed. The forest opens as you approach the next creek and veer right around a paperbark swamp. Cross another muddy creek bed with a tangle of exposed tree roots snaking across the surface. Then cross several more creeks, separated by swamps before winding left and right, avoiding thick tangles of lawyer vine until you emerge at the beach. Turn right and walk to **Mulligan Creek**. This easy low-tide crossing can rise to

waist-height or worse at high tide, so carry a tide table and time your crossing. There are great views of Mt Diamantina before you round the point. Walk 200m to a lone coconut palm marking the ferry pick-up point and entrance to the camp site.

WOOROONOORAN NATIONAL PARK

Part of the World Heritage-listed Wet Tropics region, Wooroonooran is a remote haven that's off the beaten tourist tracks – a huge plus for walkers. This is a land of wild rivers and ancient, mystical mountain massifs blanketed by 140-million-year-old rainforests.

Fit, experienced bushwalkers are lured to Mt Bartle Frere to bag the state's highest peak. As a bonus, they can appreciate the Wet Tropics' fragile ecosystems and the complex web of life they support.

ENVIRONMENT

Across the Bellenden Ker Range, tropical rainforests grow from foothills to mountain summits. Growing continuously since our island continent was connected to Gondwana, they contain an almost complete record of the evolution of plant life on earth. Large-leafed, large-trunked plants from the lowlands give way to stunted, closed-canopy plants in the uplands.

Many plant and wildlife species are unique to the region. Golden bowerbirds occur only in rainforests at altitudes above 900m. They build a bower of sticks, one pile higher than the other and joined by a branch forming a display perch. The bower may be up to 3m high, and contrary to their southern cousins who decorate in blue, these male birds prefer yellows and creams. Rare orchids are a favourite – a sure way to attract a bird!

It's not only plants that grow huge up here: giant moths (some with 25cm wing-spans), 20cm caterpillars and frogs, and scrub pythons up to 8m long (the world's fourth-largest snake) thrive in the lush, fertile conditions.

On a prettier note, bright butterflies, including the brilliant blue Ulysses, may flit past you on the track.

PLANNING When to Walk

This is Australia's wettest place, where annual rainfalls around 10m have been recorded – check the conditions before hiking. Majuba Creek rises and falls very quickly, often forcing track closures. May to September is drier and the best time to walk, while the Wet (October to March) is extremely hot and humid.

What to Bring

A sunny day at the bottom of the range can often deteriorate to wet, windy and freezing conditions at the top. Wet-weather gear, warm clothing and a good tent are essential. Carry enough food for an extra night, as it's easy to run out of daylight on the long second day of the walk. Leeches are always lurking (see the boxed text p335).

Maps

The well-defined track is marked by orange triangles. The QPWS *Bartle Frere Trail Guide* (available from park offices) shows the route. Sunmap's 1:50,000 topographic map *Bartle Frere* supplements the guide.

Information Sources

QPWS Cairns (☎ 4046 6600; www.epa.qld.gov.au) should be the first contact for current park conditions. Rangers are also based at **Josephine Falls** (☎ 4067 6304), but spend most of their time in the field.

Permits & Regulations

Book camping permits (\$8 per night for two people) online with the QPWS (www.epa.qld.gov.au). There's no camping at Josephine Falls car park. Fuel stoves are mandatory.

MT BARTLE FRERE

Duration	2 days
Distance	19km
Difficulty	demanding
Start/Finish	Josephine Falls car park
Nearest Towns	Cairns (p331) and Innisfail (right)
Transport	private or bus (with 8km road walk)

Summary It's steep and it's tough, but anyone who has experienced a fine day atop Queensland's tallest peak will say that exhilaration overcomes fatigue.

If you're lucky to hit the summit in sunshine, the panorama is awesome. Explorer and adventurer, Christie Palmerston, was the first European to scale this lofty peak, back in 1886. Today, you'll follow a route pushed by gold miners and adventurers through rainforest, mountain heath and an extensive boulder field to the summit.

But climbing a 1622m mountain from near sea level is never easy, and attempting the return trip in one day is not recommended. There's no reliable water near Eastern Camp, so if a high camp is planned, water must be lugged up from Big Rock Camp.

The best approach is to walk 3km to Big Rock Camp on Day 1, then test your fitness with a climb to Broken Nose. (This isn't possible if you've walked from the bus stop on the Bruce Hwy.) There are often great views from this 962m peak, even when the summit's cloudy. If you can't complete the side trip to Broken Nose in four hours, then you'll struggle to reach the summit of Bartle Frere the next day and return to the car park before the rainforest canopy forces an early sundown.

NEAREST TOWNS

See Cairns (p331).

Innisfail

☎ 07 / pop 8530

On the Bruce Hwy, 83km south of Cairns, Innisfail is predominantly a sugar town. It's one of the last largish towns in tropical Queensland untouched by the tourist boom and has an easy laid-back country charm.

Innisfail visitor information centre (☎ 4063 2655; www.innisfailtourism.com.au; Bruce Hwy, Mourilyan; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat & Sun) can supply walk brochures listing the town's famous Art Deco buildings. **Northern Stock Supplies** (☎ 4061 1674; 131 Edith St) is the town's camping specialist. There are supermarkets in town.

SLEEPING & EATING

Just south of town, **Mango Tree Tourist Park** (☎ 1800 008 789; www.mangotreepark.com.au; Couche St; unpowered/powered sites for 2 \$22/25, cabins for 2 from \$80; ☎ ☎) has a camp kitchen and free barbecues.

Codge Lodge (☎ 0428 820 105; www.codgelodge.com; 63 Rankin St; dm/r \$20/25; ☎ ☎ ☎), in a large Queenslander home, is run by a banana farmer. It also does meals.

On Innisfail's southern side, **Barrier Reef Motel** (☎ 4061 4988; www.barrierreefmotel.com.au; Bruce Hwy; s/r \$85/95; ♿ ♿) is clean and tidy. It also has a restaurant and bar so you don't have to go far!

Family-owned **Oliver's Continental Deli** (☎ 4061 3354; 41 Edith St; sandwiches \$6.50; ☺ breakfast & lunch, Mon-Sat) has been serving European fare since 1930s. It carries extensive range of delicacies from Australia and abroad to top *pannini* and lunch rolls.

For authentic Italian meals in a town with many Italians try **Roscoe's Piazza** (☎ 4061 6888; 3b Ernest St; mains \$12-16; ☺ lunch & dinner). It's licensed and specialises in pastas, pizzas and seafood.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Premier Motor Service (☎ 13 34 10; www.premiers.com.au) travels daily from Cairns (\$16, 1½ hours). **Greyhound Australia** (☎ 13 14 99; www.greyhound.com.au) does the same route for \$23 (seven daily).

Queensland Rail (☎ 13 22 32; www.traveltrain.com.au) services stop on the way to and from Cairns: *Tilt Train* (\$35, 1¼ hours, Sunday

and Wednesday) and *Sunlander* (\$23, 1¼ hours, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday).

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

Josephine Falls car park is 75km south of Cairns or 30km north of Innisfail. Leave the Bruce Hwy just south of Miriwinni, and drive 8km to the trailhead.

Mission Beach Dunk Island Connections (☎ 4059 2709; www.missionbeachdunkconnections.com.au) drops walkers at Josephine Falls turn-off from Cairns or Innisfail (\$14, three daily). From here it's an 8km road slog to the trailhead.

THE WALK

Day 1: Josephine Falls Car Park to Big Rock Camp & Broken Nose

6 hours, 7km, 860m ascent, 460m descent

A well-defined track enters lowland rainforest and leads uphill. Cross a tributary of Majuba Creek and climb below liana vines swinging from the canopy. Cross several shallow gullies and head through a storm-damaged area before climbing between two huge boulders, 2km from the start.

Follow the undulating spine of a narrow ridge and cross the boulder-choked bed of **Majuba Creek**. Climb to the crest of the ridge separating Kowadgi and Majuba Creeks. The blue egg-shaped fruit on the track is from grey milkwood trees. Be warned – most rainforest fruits are toxic in their natural state!

A myriad of bird calls complement the sounds of the forest as you follow the ridge to another storm-damaged area, 3km from the start. The ridge narrows and the track hugs its spine, high above the creek. Cross a jumble of mossy boulders to a clearing in a rainforest glade at **Big Rock Camp**.

A bright, sunny day often ends with a sudden squall, so make camp beside the permanent creek before setting out for Broken Nose. A signposted track leads steeply uphill past the trunk of a stately red cedar that lost its crown during a 2005 storm. Continue uphill below a dense rainforest canopy to crest the summit ridge. The track makes a distinct turn south, following the eastern edge of the ridge to a small col below **Broken Nose**. From here, it's 10 minutes to an exposed, flat rocky overhang with views across Russell River Valley. Care is definitely required. After enjoying the views, retrace your steps to the camp site.

Day 2: Big Rock Camp to Bartle Frere Summit & Josephine Falls Car Park

10 hours, 12km, 1100m ascent, 1500m descent

Collect water for the return trip, cross the creek and head steeply uphill. The track climbs between boulders and a muddy bank, then winds uphill to crest a spur. It passes close to the edge where there are views into the creek bed, then swings sharply right and almost levels out, making the walking pleasant.

After passing rounded granite boulders, look for a massive Johnson River satin ash on the right with roots from a strangler fig snaking their way down the trunk. In 50 years or so, they will almost engulf this tree. The gradient lessens near the 4km point and the narrow ridge drops off steeply on both sides. Exposed tree roots aid the climb when you reach a steep 3m mud bank. Continue up the ridge, taking care on tree roots crisscrossing the track. At a massive granite boulder, the track swings left and continues uphill.

The climb is unrelenting until you reach a U-shaped gully on the right, filled with

helmholtzia lilies. You may cop a blast of cool sea air whipping up the gully. After another slog uphill, the track levels slightly near large orania palms. Tree roots crisscross the track as you approach drier forest, before reaching a helipad on the ridge top. (This has been used for several rescues of injured or lost bushwalkers.) A rough track leads left downhill to the exposed **Eastern Camp**.

Follow an eroded path uphill through low heath to the start of a massive lichen-stained boulder field. Orange arrows define the route but extreme care is required – especially if the rocks are damp. Occasional stainless steel brackets have been bolted to the boulders where stumpy legs once struggled. From October to December, you may see striking red flowers of Australia's only native rhododendron. Continue uphill through the boulders to a level spot on the ridge top. Views stretch across Russell River Valley. Climb steeply for a few minutes to a clearing on the summit. The views are from an exposed boulder to the left. Have a well-earned rest, and then descend Queensland's tallest mountain to Big Rock Camp, via the same route. Remember, you should allow 1½ hours to walk from camp to the car park.

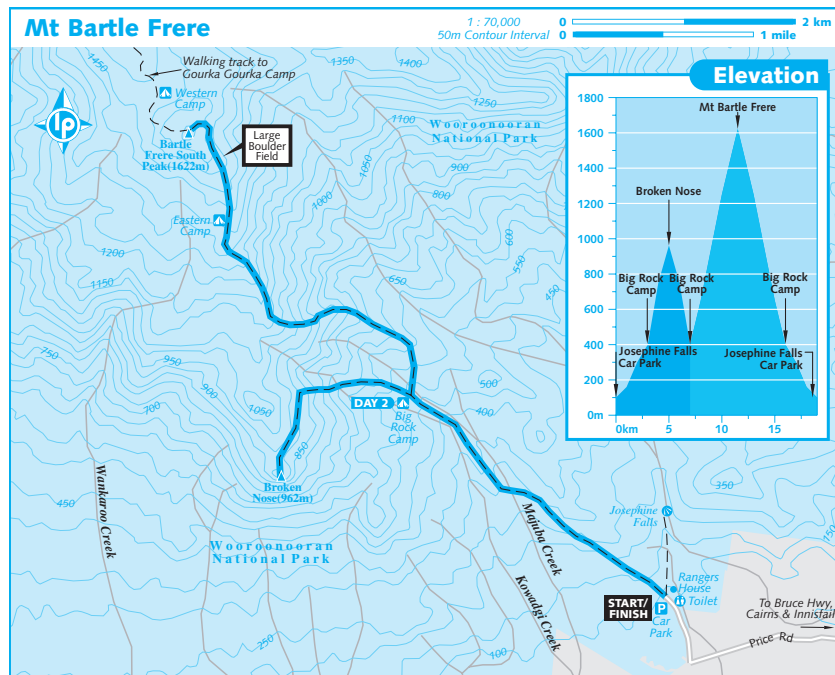
MORE WALKS

SOUTHEAST QUEENSLAND Daves Creek Circuit

From Binna Burra (p339) eastern of Lamington National Park, this 12km day walk is the park's most botanically diverse. Winding through rainforest, eucalypt forest and open heathlands, you're bound to see something flowering year-round. There are several lookouts with uninterrupted vistas of the Gold Coast's hinterland and even a cave resembling an ancient dining room. Add a rock that's a 'surprise' and a couple of creek crossings and you'll have a great day. Collect track maps from the visitor information centre.

Mt Barney

You'll need private transport but Mt Barney, southwest of Brisbane, is a bushwalker's mecca with some of Queensland's toughest routes. The classic circuit up Southeast Ridge and down Peasant's, is one of the 'easiest',



but there's no 'easy' way to scale this mountain. The 17km day or overnight challenge starts and finishes at Yellow Pinch car park and passes through woodlands and rainforests. There's a camp near the summit with good water. Camping permits are required (p328). Navigation skills are essential; use Sunmap's 1:25,000 *Mt Lindesay* topographic map. The route is described in Queensland's *Take A Walk* book (p328).

Brisbane Forest Park

Brisbane Forest Park (☎ 3300 4855; www.brisbane-forestpark.qld.gov.au) is a huge expanse of rainforest and eucalypt woodland 12km northwest of Brisbane. Graded tracks lead through Walk-About Creek and Mts Nebo, Glorious and Samson sections. England Creek and Northbrook Gorge have day and overnight routes for experienced hikers. An extensive ranger-guided *Go Bush* program includes full-day bushwalks, off-track adventure walks and evening activities. Bookings are essential. Get maps from QPWS information centre in Brisbane (p330) or the park information centre. Frequent buses (Route 385) run from the city to park headquarters.

SUNSHINE COAST

Glass House Mountains

Near the Sunshine Coast, the distinctive volcanic plugs of Glass House Mountains rise above coastal plains. Bushwalkers have been bagging Glass House summits for years but more recently rock climbing is drawing crowds. Several peaks including Mts Ngungun and Elimbah are easily walked. Mts Beerwah and Tibrogargan offer more challenging routes for walkers who don't mind a bit of air and a tricky track. Queensland's *Take A Walk* book (p328) details most routes. Contact rangers at **Maleny** (☎ 5494 3983) for added info.

Cooloola Wilderness Trail

This easy three-day, 46km trail roughly follows Eliza Fraser's mainland route after she escaped from her Aboriginal captors on Fraser Island (p341). It starts at East Mullen car park on Rainbow Beach Rd, and leads through wallum heathland, passing a

pair of camp sites at lagoons, before reaching Harrys camping area, beside the Noosa River. The tea-tree stained river, renowned for its spectacular reflections, is a canoers' paradise. The trail continues through littoral rainforest to Elanda Point, on Lake Cootharaba. You can hire canoes here. Organise permits in advance (p328); limits apply. For track notes and maps contact **QPWS** (☎ 5449 7364) at Elanda Point.

CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

Carnarvon Gorge

An oasis in the semiarid heart of Queensland, this walk features towering sandstone cliffs, decked with palms and rainforests, that form spectacular steep-sided gorges. Carnarvon Creek winds through the main gorge where sandstone overhangs are galleries for some of Australia's best Aboriginal art. There's 21km of tracks from short strolls to overnights. Battleship Spur is a must. It's best done as a two- or three-day walk, following the main gorge (19 creek crossings) and camping at Big Bend; permits are required (p328). Next day, climb to the spur. **QPWS** (☎ 4984 4505) at Carnarvon Gorge has walk details. Commercial camping grounds are located within a few kilometres of the park – details are available on the QPWS website (www.epa.qld.gov.au).

THE WET TROPICS

Goldfield Trail

Prospectors and loggers followed Aboriginal trading routes through Bellenden Ker Range in northern Queensland. The Goldfield Trail follows one of these routes between Queensland's two highest peaks. It's a spectacular walk, starting at The Boulders Scenic Reserve and camping area near Babinda, 60km south of Cairns. Winding through lush, tropical rainforest to a saddle between the two peaks, it descends to cross East Mulgrave River at a popular swimming hole. It continues beside the river, to a picnic and camping area at Goldsborough section of Wooroonooran National Park. Contact **QPWS** (☎ 4046 6600; www.epa.qld.gov.au; 5b Sheridan St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri) in Cairns or Wooroonooran Safaris (p330) for more information.

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