Cape York Peninsula
National Parks

Journey adventurously
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Park facilities

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■ near park ▲ specified camping areas only
Welcome to Cape York Peninsula

national and regional parks

‘Welcome to Cape York Peninsula, a place of untouched beauty and cultural diversity! As a park ranger and a Traditional Owner I welcome you to this special place where you can experience extreme remoteness and ever-changing landscapes. Respect this country and the places you visit as if they were your own. Leave only footprints and take home wonderful memories, so we can have this special area for future generations.’

Chris Wall, Ranger
on behalf of the rangers of Cape York Peninsula

Be inspired!

Explore
a vast wilderness on long stretches of dusty roads, with dips and bends, ruts and bull dust and challenging creek crossings.

Encounter
a tantalising history, rich in stories of pioneering spirit and overwhelming hardship, as you follow in the footsteps of many who have gone before.

Connect
with family and friends as you immerse yourself in nature in this awe-inspiring landscape, far from everyday distractions.

Experience
a ‘cultural landscape’, interwoven with significant places, traditional stories and deep spiritual meaning, and sense the strength of Aboriginal peoples’ connection to country.

Celebrate
that exhilarating feeling of reaching the Tip on your epic adventure. Savour the achievement, soak up the view—you’re at the very top of Australia!
Choose your adventure

Featuring landscapes of unsurpassed beauty and immense diversity, rich with Aboriginal traditions and customs and European history, Cape York Peninsula offers the adventure of a lifetime!

Best time to visit
The dry season between June and October is the best time to visit Cape York Peninsula. June and July are usually cool dry months with maximum day time temperatures averaging 28-30°C. From August to October temperatures increase, lagoons dry up and many rivers stop flowing. During the wet season (usually November to April) roads become impassable and most parks have wet season closures from 1 December until June, July or August, depending upon weather and road conditions.

Best way to visit
Are you a self-drive traveller or do you prefer to take a guided tour? As a self-drive traveller, are you planning to take an epic 4WD journey straight to the Tip or will you head off the beaten track in your high-clearance 4WD vehicle with full recovery gear? Any way you choose, a thrilling adventure awaits! Use the itinerary suggestions on pages 6–9 to help plan your self-drive adventure.

Guided tours
If you prefer someone else to do the planning, you can join a ‘tag-along’ tour with an experienced guide, or you can choose to explore the Cape on a guided tour. If time is short, tours are a great way to experience the best of what the Cape has to offer—without having to attend to all the details of organising your trip! Cape travellers are spoilt for choice, with tours ranging from two to 16 days, as well as fly/drive and drive/cruise options, and tours that cater for special interests such as bird watching, wildlife spotting and fishing.

Visit queensland.com for details of tour providers. When booking your tour, look for the ECO Certified logo. For more information, visit ecotourism.org.au

Events calendar
Plan your journey to coincide with some of the Cape’s many events and festivals to experience the authentic local culture of this remote area. Choose from rodeos and race carnivals; agricultural and country shows; fishing tournaments and cycling events; and cultural celebrations such as the Laura Dance Festival and Cooktown Discovery Festival.

Visit tourismcapeyork.com
4WD Epic Journey to the Tip

Your epic journey traces the route of the historic Overland Telegraph Line (OTL) through the Cape, to the northern-most tip of Australia—Cape York. Along the way you will traverse today’s Peninsula Developmental Road (PDR), Telegraph Road (TR) and Bamaga Road or the OTL track, taking in iconic national parks along the way. Allow at least 10 days for the return trip.

Peninsula Developmental Road (PDR)
The Peninsula Developmental Road (PDR) is the main access route into the Cape. Unsealed past Laura, it follows the route of the Overland Telegraph Line (OTL) from Laura to just past the Archer River, then diverges west to Weipa.

Cairns to Cooktown
Via the inland route
Drive via the Kennedy Highway to Mareeba, where the route joins the PDR north to Lakeland Downs and then east along the Mulligan Highway to Cooktown. Allow about 4 hours driving time for this 327km route.

Cooktown to Rinyirru (Lakefield) National Park (CYPAL)
Via Mulligan Hwy and PDR
Drive 80km (1hr) to Lakeland Downs along the sealed Mulligan Highway. Take a coffee break at Lakeland, and then continue 63km (45mins) to Laura on the sealed section of the PDR. VisitLaura’s Split Rock Aboriginal rock art galleries and the Quinkan Regional and Cultural Centre.

Via Battle Camp Road
Once the historic route to the Palmer River Goldfield, this unsealed road passes Isabella Falls and crosses the Normanby River. Drive 38km (30mins) out of Cooktown on Hope Vale Road, then turn onto Battle Camp Road and drive 73km (1.5hrs) to Old Laura Homestead in the southern part of the park. From here it is a further 59km (1hr 20mins) to the Lakefield ranger base.

Rinyirru (Lakefield) to Musgrave
Via Lakefield Road
To leave the park via the north, drive 110km (2.5hrs) from the Lakefield ranger base along Lakefield Road to Musgrave Roadhouse.

Via PDR
To exit via the south, return to the PDR near Laura then drive 139km (2hrs) to Musgrave, via Hann River Roadhouse.

Musgrave Roadhouse
This historic fortress telegraph station, built in 1887, was part of the Overland Telegraph Line. Today the roadhouse is an important stop for passing travellers, providing fuel, food, accommodation, camping and facilities.

Musgrave to Coen
Via PDR
Drive 110km (1.5–2hrs) along the PDR from Musgrave to Coen, climbing the Bamboo Range (part of the Great Dividing Range) with great views of surrounding mountainous country along the way. Visit Coen’s Wunthulpu Cultural Centre and the Heritage House museum (the former Mein Telegraph Station).
Coen to Archer River

Via PDR

Drive 66km (1hr) from Coen to Archer River Roadhouse. Call into the Cape York Peninsula Information Centre and Quarantine Inspection Station (20km north of Coen) where you can collect a Cape York Peninsula information pack. South-bound vehicles must stop for quarantine inspection.

Archers River to Kutini-Payamu (Iron Range) National Park (CYPAL)

Via Portland Roads Road

Travel 36km (30mins) north on the PDR and then onto Portland Roads Road. Drive 97km (1.5–2hrs), through undulating open forest, heathland and rugged rainforested ranges, until you reach the ‘3 ways’ junction of Portland Roads Road and Lockhart River Road. Travel a further 4–6km to camping areas in the rainforest or 30km (50mins) to Chilli Beach camping area on the coast.

Archer River Roadhouse

This favourite travellers’ stop near the southern bank of the Archer River offers fuel, food, accommodation, camping and facilities. The nearby river bank is also a popular camping spot. Remember to be croc-wise.

Kutini-Payamu (Iron Range) to Moreton

Via Portland Roads Road/ Telegraph Road

Drive 184km (4hrs) from ‘3 ways’ via Portland Roads Road back to the PDR, and travel north for 15km. At this point the PDR swings west to Weipa; veer right to continue along Telegraph Road north to Moreton on the Wenlock River.

Overland Telegraph Line (OTL)

The Overland Telegraph Line, completed in 1887, connected Laura with the top of the Cape, providing a communication link between Brisbane and Thursday Island. Fort-like telegraph stations were located along the telegraph line, which operated until 1964 and was dismantled in 1987. Today the PDR follows the OTL route through central Cape York Peninsula before diverging west 50km past the Archer River. The Telegraph Road continues along the OTL route as far as Bramwell Junction. From here, a rough unmaintained track known as the OTL track (alternatively, the Old Telegraph Track) follows the route to the Jardine River. Remnants of the historic line can be seen along the way. Conditions and travelling times on the challenging OTL track can be unpredictable. You need a properly-equipped 4WD, off-road experience and adequate fuel and supplies.

Via Frenchmans Track/ Telegraph Road

If you are well-prepared for a true 4WD challenge, travel the difficult 100km (6hrs) Frenchmans Track. This route is suitable only for experienced four-wheel drivers and requires a high-clearance 4WD vehicle with recovery gear. It is not recommended for vehicles towing trailers, without snorkels and recovery gear. From ‘3 ways’, drive 27km along Portland Roads Road, then turn onto Frenchmans Track and travel the difficult 52km to the junction with Telegraph Road. From here, drive a further 22km north to Moreton on the Wenlock River. Ensure you let someone know your plans for travelling this route.

Moreton to Bramwell Junction

Via the Telegraph Road

Drive 42km (45mins) to Bramwell Junction on Telegraph Road, passing through open forest featuring distinctive zamia palms.
Bramwell Junction to Heathlands Regional Park

Via Bamaga Road (Southern Bypass Road)

Drive 119km along Bamaga Road as it heads north-east to the Captain Billy Landing turn-off and then swings north-west to join the OTL track. From here, drive a further 8km to Eliot Falls camping area. This route takes about 2–3hrs driving time.

Bypass roads

Bamaga Road (Northern and Southern Bypass roads) offers an easier route to the Tip, avoiding many of the creek and river crossings of the OTL track.

Via the OTL (southern)

This route offers a challenging 4WD adventure. It is suitable only for experienced four-wheel drivers and requires a high-clearance 4WD vehicle with recovery gear. The track is not maintained, has numerous creek crossings, with informal camping spots near each crossing. From Bramwell Junction the 80km southern section of the OTL track extends to the junction with Bamaga Road (Northern Bypass Road) and takes about 6–8hrs driving time. From here, drive a further 8km to Eliot Falls camping area.

Heathlands to the Jardine River crossing

Via Bamaga Road (Northern Bypass Road)

Drive 8km south from Eliot Falls on the OTL track then turn onto Bamaga Road (Northern Bypass Road) and travel 50km to the ferry crossing. Allow about 1.5 hours driving time.

Via the OTL (northern)

The northern section of the OTL track is even more difficult than the southern. From Eliot Falls the entire 32km OTL track to the Jardine River takes about 3–4hrs driving time and involves several challenging creek crossings. To access the ferry crossing, travel 25km north from Eliot Falls, then turn west onto Nolans Brook Bypass Road and drive 11km to the Bamaga Road (Northern Bypass Road) junction. From here it is a further 24km to the ferry crossing. Allow 4–6hrs driving time for this 60km route. It is suitable only for experienced four-wheel drivers and requires a high-clearance 4WD vehicle with recovery gear.

Jardine River crossing to the Tip

Via Bamaga Road

Drive 42km (45mins) to Bamaga via Bamaga Road then a further 32km (1hr) to the car park near Cape York (the Tip). From here, a walking track leads through rainforest onto the beach and over a bluff to a monument. Then it is a short walk down onto the rock that is the northernmost tip of mainland Australia. It’s time to celebrate—you’ve made it the Tip!

Return journey

Retrace your route along the Telegraph Road and the PDR. Alternatively, put your vehicle on a cargo vessel (Sea Swift) and return by sea or take the quick route and fly from Bamaga to Cairns.

Around the Tip

( Northern Peninsula Area)

Stay in one of the many camping areas throughout the Northern Peninsula Area. Enjoy excellent fishing; explore historic Somerset Beach, home of the pioneering Jardine family; discover WW2 relics and plane wrecks; experience beautiful rainforest in the Lockerbie Scrub; and take the Thursday Island ferry to visit the Gab Titui Cultural Centre.
4WD ADVENTURES ‘OFF THE BEATEN TRACK’

Follow in the footsteps (or wheel ruts) of many who have gone before, from the earliest explorers to present day adventurers, with these side tracks off the main route through the Cape.

PALMER GOLDFIELD CONSERVATION PARK
Take a short detour from the PDR or visit the park as an alternative route to or from the Cape.

Via Whites Creek road
From the PDR, drive 67km (40mins) north of Mount Carbine and turn onto Whites Creek Road. Travel 71km (3hrs) to Dog Leg Crossing on the Palmer River and enter the park. The camping area is about 12km from the park entrance.

Via Palmerville route
From Chillagoe, drive about 165km (2hrs) north-west via the Burke Developmental Road and Palmerville Road to Palmerville, crossing the Mitchell and Palmer rivers along the way. Turn east and travel a further 40km (1hr) to Maytown. Enter the park via a rocky crossing on the Palmer River and drive along the signposted road to the camping area.

Via ‘old coach road’
From Laura, travel 80km (6–7hrs) on the very rough and challenging Old Maytown-Laura Road (‘old coach road’) to the North Palmer River crossing, then follow the tracks to the right until you reach the signposted turn-off for the camping area. This route is suitable only for experienced four-wheel drivers and requires a high-clearance 4WD vehicle with recovery gear.

ERRK OYKANGAND NATIONAL PARK (CYPAL)
(formerly Alice-Mitchell)
Via Kowanyama–Pormpuraaw road
Visit this far-flung western Cape York Peninsula park as an alternative (western) route into or out of the Cape.

Travel to Kowanyama along the Burke Developmental Road, driving 542km (8hrs) from Mareeba or 360km (7hrs) from Normanton. Contact the Kowanyama Aboriginal Land and Natural Resource Management Office (07 4060 5187) for advice before heading to the park.

Drive 32km (30mins) from Kowanyama on the Kowanyama–Pormpuraaw road to enter the park at Shello Crossing on the Mitchell River, a broad rock bar with fast-flowing water inhabited by estuarine crocodiles and sharks. Drive with extreme caution.

The track continues for about 11km through the park to the Alice River crossing. From here, drive 83km (1.5hrs) to Pormpuraaw on the Kowanyama–Pormpuraaw road.

From Pormpuraaw, drive 215km (3hrs) east to Musgrave Roadhouse where your journey can continue on the PDR.

CAPE MELVILLE NATIONAL PARK (CYPAL)
Via coastal route
Take the challenging coastal route from Cooktown to Riniyirru (Lakefield) National Park (CYPAL) via the remote Cape Melville National Park (CYPAL). This route is suitable only for experienced four-wheel drivers and requires a high-clearance 4WD vehicle with recovery gear.

Drive 220km (up to 12hrs) from Cooktown via Wakooka Road. Take a rest at Starcke River boat ramp recreational area before continuing your journey to the camping areas at Bathurst Bay or Ninian Bay. To continue onto Riniyirru (Lakefield), drive 110km (3.5–5hrs) from the camping areas at Bathurst Bay or Ninian Bay to Kalpowar Crossing via Wakooka Road.

OYALA THUMOTANG NATIONAL PARK (CYPAL)
(formerly Mungkan Kandju)
Via Rokeby Road
Venture into one of the Cape’s most remote parks with a side trip off the PDR to Oyala Thumotang National Park (CYPAL).

Drive 25km (30mins) north along the PDR from Coen then turn west onto Rokeby Road and enter the park. Drive a further 74–78km (2hrs) to camping areas in the Coen River and Langi sections or 125km (3–4hrs) to camping areas in the Archer Bend section of the park.
Venture marvellously

Parks around Cooktown

Feel the excitement build as you begin your journey discovering some of the diverse parks on sealed roads around historic Cooktown.

The imposing boulder pile of Black Mountain heralds your proximity to Cooktown while the rugged rainforest-clad Mount Cook provides a scenic backdrop to the town. Keatings Lagoon provides a wetland refuge for waterbirds during the dry season.

Did you know?
The granite boulder-strewn slopes of Black Mountain seem barren but large fig trees draw water from deep within the mountain and rainforest plants surround its base. Granite is usually pink-grey but these boulders appear black because of microscopic lichens and algae growing on exposed surfaces.

Getting there
The Mount Cook car park is located in Hannam Street, Cooktown.

Keatings Lagoon is 5km south of Cooktown on the sealed Mulligan Highway.

Black Mountain lookout is 25km south of Cooktown on the sealed Mulligan Highway.

Access
Open all year (but Keatings Lagoon can be inaccessible due to flooding between December and April).

Must dos
• Gaze at stunning views over the Great Barrier Reef and northern Wet Tropics world heritage areas from near the summit of Mount Cook.
• From a snug bird hide, marvel at the site of migratory waterbirds feeding in the scenic freshwater Keatings Lagoon, especially May to October.
• Feel awed by the mysterious looming boulders of Black Mountain and the Aboriginal legends surrounding these lichen-blackened slopes.

Cooktown–Laura discovery trails
A century after Captain Cook repaired the Endeavour on the river bank, ‘Cooks Town’ was established as a bustling port to service the Palmer River gold rush. Today Cooktown, with its historic streetscapes and scenic location, offers travellers the chance to discover a colourful and audacious past, connect with Aboriginal culture and explore diverse landscapes. Join one of the Aboriginal or historical tours around Cooktown. Visit Laura’s Split Rock Aboriginal rock art galleries and Quinkan Regional and Cultural Centre. The drive from Cooktown to Laura is an easy 143km (less than 2hrs) on sealed roads. Make it a day trip or stay overnight in historic Laura or Lakeland Downs.
Places to go

1. Black Mountain viewing area
   For memorable views of the mysterious Black Mountain, drive to Black Mountain National Park where a small viewing area with a car park overlooks the eastern side of the crest of the boulder fields. There is no access to the mountain—don’t risk injury by venturing onto the boulder field.

2. Wawu Balgal Bubu walk
   1.4km return (1hr)
   Grade: easy
   For a pleasant stroll with great birdwatching, take this easy track through Keatings Lagoon Regional Park. The walking track winds through woodland along the edge of the lagoon to a wheel-chair accessible bird hide. Take a picnic to enjoy in the shelter at the end of the walk. Remember to pack your binoculars.

3. Mount Cook summit walking track
   6km return (4hrs)
   Grade: easy to difficult
   For a mountain bushwalk and spectacular views, head to Mount Cook National Park. From the car park, the track ascends gently for 800m to a lookout and picnic shelter. For an easy walk, you can turn back at this point. If you want a longer, more difficult walk, continue on the steep climb through woodland and rainforest to a second lookout near the summit with views overlooking the Great Barrier Reef.

Safety

When walking, cover up in protective clothing and don’t forget the insect repellent.

Be croc wise in croc country (see page 23)
Seek enticingly

**MUST DOS**
- Spend a relaxing day fishing for a big barra then share it around a campfire at night with friends.
- Capture a great sunset photo as you watch the setting sun silhouette the termite mounds dotted over the grassy Nifold Plain.
- Take your binoculars to watch waterbirds feeding in the tranquil early mornings or late afternoons at one of the park’s many lagoons.
- Explore this vast park by 4WD, visiting scenic waterholes, river crossings and places of historic interest.

**RINYIRRU (LAKEFIELD) NATIONAL PARK (CYPAL)**

Feel like intrepid adventurers as you savour the iconic sights and discover hidden treasures and a colourful history in this enormous national park, just waiting to be explored!

This park is renowned for its large river systems—the North Kennedy, Normanby, Hann and Morehead rivers—with spectacular wetlands, floodplains clad in open woodlands and vast grassland plains dotted with termite mounds and expanses of unique corypha palms.

The landscape has important Aboriginal cultural significance, containing sites associated with occupation, ceremonies and stories of ancestral spirits. This park is jointly managed by the Rinyirru (Lakefield) Land Trust and QPWS.

**GETTING THERE**

See page 6 for directions.

**Access**

Usually from 1 June (south of Lakefield ranger base) and 1 July (north of Lakefield ranger base) to November.

**GETTING AROUND**

Old Laura to New Laura—25km (40mins)
New Laura to Lakefield ranger base—34km (40mins)
Lakefield ranger base to Hann Crossing—26km (45mins)
Hann Crossing to Saltwater Crossing—31km (1hr).

**MUST DOS**

- Spend a relaxing day fishing for a big barra then share it around a campfire at night with friends.
- Capture a great sunset photo as you watch the setting sun silhouette the termite mounds dotted over the grassy Nifold Plain.
- Take your binoculars to watch waterbirds feeding in the tranquil early mornings or late afternoons at one of the park’s many lagoons.
- Explore this vast park by 4WD, visiting scenic waterholes, river crossings and places of historic interest.

**RANGER’S TIP**

‘Keep quiet and still while watching any of the permanent waterholes for the chance to spot a croc. You can see salties (estuarine crocs) and freshies here.’

**Ranger Doug**

Top: Bird watching is rewarding
Left: Termite mounds of Nifold Plain
Right: Rarda-Ndolphin (Low Lake)

Photo (top): © Kerry Trapnell
Photo (left and right): Maxime Coquard © Tourism and Events Queensland
PLACES TO CAMP
Numerous secluded bush camp sites are located near scenic waterholes and along river banks throughout the park. Large popular camping areas with toilet facilities are located along the river banks at Kalpowar and Hann crossings. A self-service camping booking facility is located at Lakefield ranger base.

PLACES TO GO
1. **Old Laura Homestead**
   Step back in time to the days of early European exploration and ‘gold fever’, as you explore this original homestead for Laura Station, one of the first cattle stations on the Cape.

2. **Catfish Waterhole**
   Discover a deep, permanent waterhole on the North Kennedy River where waterbirds, turtles and crocodiles congregate during the dry season.

3. **Kalpowar discovery walk**
   4km (1.5hrs) return
   Grade: easy
   From Kalpowar Crossing, this walk meanders through vine forest along the Normanby River and loops back through open woodland, passing picturesque waterholes along the way.

4. **Red and White Lily lagoons**
   Enjoy close-up views of pink lotus lilies and white water lilies carpeting these pretty lagoons.

5. **Breeza Homestead**
   Explore this scenic lagoon with its 100-year-old mango trees that, along with remnant buildings and cattle yards, mark the site of Old Breeza Homestead.

6. **Rarda-Ndolphin (Low Lake) and Sweetwater Lake**
   Watch wetland birds in action at these picturesque lakes (stay inside the viewing area at Rarda-Ndolphin as the rest of the area has restricted access).

THINGS TO DO

**Wildlife spotting**
Around waterholes in the early morning or late afternoon look for waterbirds including magpie geese, comb-crested jacanas, black-necked storks, brolgas, sarus cranes and a variety of ducks. Spot crocodiles along river banks and wallabies in open woodland and grasslands.

**Fishing**
Fish in rivers and waterholes at all camping areas in the park, and in the marine waters of Princess Charlotte Bay, adjacent to the park. Canoes are not recommended due to the presence of crocodiles. Limit boat speed to prevent bank erosion and water turbidity. Fishing regulations and marine park zoning restrictions apply (see page 23).

**Safety**
Be alert for snakes when exploring the park. Wear protective clothing and footwear, use lights at night and keep tents closed at all times.

Be croc wise in croc country (see page 23)
Discover Uniquely

**MUST DOs**
- Find hidden meanings in the heath-clad landscape of Mount Tozer through the Aboriginal story of Kutini (cassowary).
- Let the sea air revive you as you wander along the white quartz sands of wind-swept Chilli Beach, relishing the remoteness of this ancient coastline.
- Feel the thrill of wildlife-spotting for the ‘big four’—spotted cuscus, green python, eclectus parrot and palm cockatoo—in their lowland rainforest refuge.
- Enjoy the evening spectacle of metallic starlings flying overhead at Chilli Beach during winter.

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**Kutini-Payamu (Iron Range) National Park (CYPAL)**

Unwind and immerse yourself in nature in this exceptional park famed for iconic wildlife, rich in Aboriginal cultural significance and with a unique war history.

Featuring the rugged heath-clad Tozer Range, lush lowland tropical rainforest (part of the largest remnant in Australia) and long sweeping beaches, this park provides a refuge for wildlife found only in northern Cape York Peninsula and New Guinea.

The area is rich in Aboriginal cultural significance with story places, ceremonial sites and occupation places dotted across the landscape. The park is jointly managed by the Northern Kuuku Ya’u Kanthanampu Aboriginal Corporation Land Trust and QPWS.

**Did you know?**
The Iron Range airbase was constructed in 1942. American 90th Bomb Group, known as the ‘Jolly Rogers’, described it as the worst airfield they were ever posted at during the war. Difficult conditions were made worse during the monsoonal rains and possibly contributed to several military aircraft crashes in the area.

‘The strips were a disaster... muddy and flooded most of the time.’ W. Rollins, 197th Coast Artillery (AA) Regiment.

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**Getting there**

See page 7 for directions.

**Access**

Usually from July to November.

**Getting around**

‘3 ways’ junction to Iron Range ranger base—2.5km via Lockhart River Road

‘3 ways’ to Lockhart River community—11km via Lockhart River Road

‘3 ways’ to rainforest camping areas—3.9km (Rainforest), 4.8km (Cooks Hut), 5.5km (Gordon Creek) via Portland Roads Road

‘3 ways’ to Chilli Beach camping area—23km via Portland Roads Road to Chilli Beach turn-off then 6km to the camping area

Chilli Beach turn-off to Portland Roads township—6km via Portland Roads Road.

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**Ranger’s tip**

‘Bring a good headlamp for spotlighting in the rainforest at night. Be very quiet and avoid sudden movements.’

*Ranger Russel*
**Things to do**

** Wildlife spotting**
Look for eclectus parrots, palm cockatoos and magnificent rifledbirds around camping areas and walking tracks. At Chilli Beach, see coastal birds such as pied oystercatchers, little terns and white-bellied sea-eagles. Spotlight in the rainforest at night for nocturnal birds—owls, owlet-nightjars and Papuan frogmouths—along with frogs and small mammals such as spotted cuscus and striped possums.

** Fishing**
Fish from the beach at Chilli Beach; fishing regulations and marine park zoning restrictions apply (see page 23). Fishing is not permitted in any freshwater rivers or creeks within the national park (CYPAL).

** Places to go**

1. **Mount Tozer lookout**
Near the park entrance, enjoy scenic views of Mount Tozer and surrounding heathlands from a viewing platform.

2. **Old Coen track**
10km (5hrs) one way
Grade: moderate
Starting from Rainforest camping area, this track winds through rainforest and open woodland and offers excellent birdwatching. Arrange a vehicle pick-up at the end of the track, on Portland Roads Road.

3. **Chilli Beach forest walk**
720m (10mins) return walk
Grade: easy
From Chilli Beach camping area, stroll through coastal dune and swamp vegetation.

4. **Chilli Beach walk**
From Chilli Beach camping area, walk to the northern end of the beach for views of Restoration Island, now Ma’alpiku Island National Park (CYPAL), where Captain Bligh landed after being cast adrift from his ship, the Bounty, in 1789.

** Safety**
Take care if driving on the beach near creek mouths and between the tides where quicksand can develop.

Be croc wise in croc country (see page 23)
Be astonished by the sudden abundance of fresh water, soak up the beauty of the heath-clad landscape and delve into the area’s colourful history in our northern-most parks.

These parks are a vast remote wilderness in an ancient sandstone landscape, dominated by the mighty Jardine River with its many small streams and swamps. Dry heaths, coastal heaths, grasslands, rainforest and woodlands are home to diverse wildlife, including some found nowhere else.

The area is a living cultural landscape containing story-places and story-beings, and occupation and ceremony sites. The parks are managed by QPWS, in collaboration with the Aboriginal Traditional Owners from the Atambaya, Angkamuthi, Yadhaykenu, Gudang and Wuthathi language and social groups.

Did you know?
Early European explorers called this area the ‘wet desert’ because it had abundant freshwater but lacked food for horses and cattle.

Getting there
See page 8 for directions.

Access
Usually from June to November.

Getting around
Bramwell Junction to Heathlands ranger base—56km via Bamaga Road (Southern Bypass Road) to turn-off then 13km west

Bramwell Junction to Captain Billy Landing—93km (2.5hrs) via Bamaga Road (Southern Bypass Road) and Captain Billy Landing track

MUST DOS
• Wash away dust from the long days of travelling as you refresh in crystal-clear waters at Eliot Falls day-use area, a surprising oasis surrounded by vast open savannah.
• Discover unusual carnivorous plants—tiny sundews and straggly pitcher plants—growing along creek edges, and find banksias and grevilleas in the dry heath.
• Camp beneath clear starry skies and fall asleep listening to the wind whispering through the trees and nocturnal rustlings of wildlife.

Unwind delightfully

HEATHLANDS CONSERVATION/JARDINE RIVER NATIONAL PARKS

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Top: Fruit Bat Falls
Far left: Twin Falls
Above left: Captain Billy Landing
Left: Tiny carnivorous sundew

Photo (top): Peter Lik © Tourism and Events Qld
Photo (far left): Maxime Coquard © Tourism and Events Qld
Photos (above left/left): © Qld Govt
Places to go

1. Captain Billy Landing
   Explore this remote coastline to discover sea caves, rock pools and white sandy beaches.
   From the car park at Fruit Bat Falls, a track and boardwalk leads to Fruit Bat Falls and follows Eliot Creek, providing swimming access.

2. Fruit Bat Falls
   500m return (10mins)
   Grade: easy
   From the car park at Fruit Bat Falls, a track and boardwalk leads to Fruit Bat Falls and follows Eliot Creek, providing swimming access.

3. Twin Falls and Eliot Falls
   550m return (15mins)
   Grade: easy
   From Eliot Falls day-use area, a circuit track meanders through woodland to Twin Falls and then continues along Eliot Creek to a natural sandstone platform with views over Eliot Falls.

4. ‘The Saucepan’
   670m return (15mins)
   Grade: easy
   From Eliot Falls day-use area, a track descends through dry heath to Eliot Creek, where shallow waters tumble between fingers of sandstone, known as ‘The Saucepan’.

Things to do

Wildlife spotting

Look for the yellow-billed kingfisher and fawn-breasted bowerbird (found only in remote north Cape York Peninsula and New Guinea). See the northern race of the Australian brush-turkey, with its purple (instead of yellow) wattle. Spotlight at night for the common spotted cuscus and spiny knob-tailed gecko.

Fishing

Fish in the Jardine River, except for the section of the river (and its tributaries) from the river mouth to a point 5km upstream of South Jardine camping area sites 4 and 5. You can also fish in marine waters adjacent to the parks.

Fishing regulations and marine park zoning restrictions apply (see page 23). Fishing is not permitted in Eliot Creek.

Ranger’s tip

‘Take up the challenge of driving the OTL, if you are well-prepared.’

Ranger Peter

Safety

At Eliot Falls, water levels can rise rapidly and there may be slippery rocks and submerged objects.

Be croc wise in croc country (see page 23)
Palmer Goldfield Conservation Park

Discover relics of North Queensland’s biggest gold rush, reminders of the region’s prosperous and colourful past, in this park.

Old mines, rusting machinery and traces of the once-thriving Maytown township, dating from the Palmer River gold rush of 1873, are scattered across this landscape. Today the park is managed to protect the area’s rich cultural heritage.

Things to do
Wildlife spotting
Look for burrowing frogs emerging after rain and waterbirds around the river during wet periods.

Getting there
See page 9 for directions.

Access
Usually from April to November.

Getting around
From Dog Leg Crossing, drive for about 12km following the signs past the mine ruins. Turn left onto the rough track to the North Palmer River camping area.

Places to camp
The camping area on the southern bank of the North Palmer River has remote and undeveloped bush camp sites. There are no facilities.

Places to go
Follow the signposted road through the park and visit the Maytown township site, old mines, Chinese alluvial workings and a Chinese cemetery. These rusted relics and ruins are all that remain of the once thriving settlements which sprang up around the Palmer Goldfield more than a century ago.

Safety
When exploring, stay on signposted tracks marked on the map and don’t venture into mining leases. Beware of previously mined areas, as open and collapsed shafts are common.

Top: Old coach road to Laura
Right: Mining relics

Photos © Nicole Brown
Journey into western Cape York Peninsula to experience the ‘Gulf country’, and discover a landscape of incredible contrasts in this park.

Bounded by two mighty rivers, the Alice and the Mitchell, this savannah landscape is inundated with nutrient-rich floodwaters during the wet season, as rivers spill over their banks. The park is jointly managed by the Errk Oykangand National Park Land Trust and QPWS.

**Getting there**
Before you set out, contact the Kowanyama Land Office on (07) 4060 5187 for advice. See page 9 for directions.

**Did you know?**
The hard, cracked ground of the savannah becomes an inland sea in the wet season.

**MUST DOs**
- Picnic on the banks of the Mitchell River near Shelfo Crossing and spot a surprising variety of birdlife.
- Find out about this park’s traditional significance for the Uw Oykangand people (‘people of the outside waterholes’).

**Places to camp**
Camp outside the park in the campground near Shelfo Crossing. Bookings are essential—phone the Kowanyama Aboriginal Land and Natural Resources Management Office on (07) 4060 5187 or email admin@klco.org.au. Camping is not permitted inside the park.

**Safety**
Ensure you are well prepared and self-sufficient with adequate food, water, fuel and basic vehicle repair equipment.

Be croc wise in croc country (see page 23)

**Things to do**

- **Wildlife spotting**
  Look for wompoo fruit-doves and figbirds in the lush green canopy of gums and milky pines fringing the Mitchell River. See emus, Australian bustards and eastern grey kangaroos in the open savannah country. Watch white-bellied sea-eagles and whistling kites soar high above in search of prey.

- **Access**
  Usually from August/September to October.

- **Did you know?**
  The hard, cracked ground of the savannah becomes an inland sea in the wet season.
Cape Melville National Park (CYPAL)

Tackle corrugations, washouts and tidal creeks to reach this rugged remote park with a spectacularly diverse landscape.

Massive tumbled boulders of Melville Range, sandstone escarpments of Altanmoui Range and a high diversity of plants and animals characterise this park, which is jointly managed by the Cape Melville, Flinders and Howick Islands Aboriginal Corporation and QPWS.

Getting around
Wakooka Outstation to Bathurst Bay or Ninian Bay camping areas—40km (2.5–3hrs). All roads into this park are suitable only for high-clearance 4WD vehicles and experienced drivers. They are not suitable for trailers, caravans or campervans.

Things to do

Must dos
• Feel the excitement of a true 4WD challenge!
• Throw a line in from the beach to catch your dinner fresh from the sea.
• Enjoy stunning sunsets on the sands at Cape Melville, cool drink in hand.

Places to go
1 Mahina Monument track
300m return (30mins) Grade: easy
From near Granite camping area in Bathurst Bay, walk up to a monument commemorating lives lost during Cyclone Mahina in 1899.

Places to camp
Remote camping areas are located on the beach at Bathurst Bay and Ninian Bay. There are no facilities.

Getting there
See page 9 for directions.

Access
Usually August to November.

Getting around

Fishing
Fish from the beach and in all creeks and rivers in this park. Fisheries regulations and marine park zoning restrictions apply (see page 23).

Safety
Travel with another vehicle, and be self-sufficient in food, water and fuel, vehicle spare parts and recovery equipment. Reliable communications are essential and personal locator beacons (PLBs) are recommended.

Be croc wise in croc country (see page 23)

Photo: © Qld Govt
Venture westwards to this sprawling park where the Archer and Coen rivers meet, and feel immersed in a vast isolated landscape.

Eucalypt woodlands and melaleuca swamps stretch from the McIlwraith Range foothills to the junction of the Archer and Coen rivers. This park is a living cultural landscape and is jointly managed by the Oyala Thumotang Land Trust and QPWS.

Getting around
Park entrance to Coen River and Langi sections—74–78km (2hrs) and park entrance to Archer Bend section—125km (3–4hrs).

Things to do

Wildlife spotting
See waterbirds, such as green pygmy geese, radjah shelducks, black-necked storks, brolgas and sarus cranes, as well as forest birds, such as palm cockatoos, trumpet manucodes and magnificent riflebirds.

Fishing
Fish in all creeks and rivers in the park except Peach Creek (east of the PDR). Governors and Horsetailer waterholes have boat access suitable for hand-launching small boats. Fishing regulations apply (see page 23).

Places to camp
Secluded bush camping areas are located beside waterholes and river banks throughout the park. There are no facilities.

Places to go
1. Pandanus Lagoon
   Pandanus Lagoon, fenced to exclude feral pigs, is a great place to see waterbirds in a natural wetland setting.

2. Old Archer Crossing
   Visit this historical river crossing site, once the main route to northern Cape York Peninsula.

3. Archer Bend
   Travel to the far western end of the park where the floodplain of the Archer River is 8km wide. Allow plenty of time—this is one of the most remote destinations on the Cape.

Safety
Be croc wise in croc country (see page 23)

Photo: Qld Govt
**BE PREPARED**

**Vehicle, gear and supplies**
You need a 4WD vehicle to travel on most unsealed roads throughout the Cape. For visiting remote parks, you must be self-sufficient with navigation equipment, recovery gear and plenty of fuel, food and water. Fuel and most standard supplies are available in major towns and from roadhouses along the PDR. Limited vehicle repair services are available in Cooktown, Coen, Weipa and Seisia, and several roadhouses.

**Navigation**
Carry a detailed map of Cape York Peninsula in your vehicle; you may also find a GPS useful. Consider purchasing an adventure travel guide to Cape York Peninsula. These comprehensive guides contain detailed road descriptions and useful advice for travellers.

**Communication**
Mobile phone coverage is generally not available in Cape York Peninsula, although some networks may have service in major towns, and public payphones are available at several locations. Carry a satellite phone or UHF or HF radio. A Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) is also advisable. Inform family or friends of your itinerary and keep an eye on park alerts at npsr.qld.gov.au/park-alerts for park access and conditions.

**Camping in parks**
To camp in national and regional parks, you need to book your camp sites and purchase camping permits before you arrive. It’s best to book well in advance as camp sites in popular parks are in great demand during peak periods such as long weekends and school holidays. Even for non-peak periods, it is still advisable to plan your journey and book your camp sites in advance as communications on the Cape can be unreliable.

**Using generators**
In some parks, you can use generators that operate at a noise level less than 65dB(A) when measured at a distance of 7m from the generator (see page 2). When booking your camp site, remember to check if generators are permitted in your selected camping area and if operating times are specified.

**Other places to camp**
There are also many camping options outside national parks. All roadhouses have camping areas with facilities, and most towns have caravan parks with camp sites. Visit tourismcapeyork.com

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**How to book a camp site**
Before you leave:
- book online at qld.gov.au/camping using a payment card or camping credit
- visit an over-the-counter permit booking office accepting cash, eftpos and payment cards
- use a self-service booking facility at QPWS offices or ranger bases using a payment card or camping credit
- phone 13 QGOV (13 74 68) to book using a payment card or camping credit. Mobile phone charges may apply.

Along the way:
- visit an over-the-counter permit booking office in Atherton (Visitor Information Centre), Cooktown (The Lure Shop) or the Moreton Telegraph Station
- use a self-service booking facility at QPWS offices in Cairns, Cooktown and Coen, and at ranger bases at Rinyirru (Lakefield), Kutini-Payamu (Iron Range) and Heathlands
- use a public payphone, or mobile phone if coverage is available, to phone 13 QGOV (13 74 68).

See map (page 4) for locations of payphones, booking offices and booking facilities.
Be safe

Care on the road
- Drive according to local conditions, and be prepared for constantly-changing road surfaces. Expect corrugations, wheel ruts, deep sand, bulldust, rough and rocky sections, slippery gravel and wet surfaces. Slow down when visibility is obscured by dust and avoid travelling in the dust raised by another vehicle.
- Watch out for animals (wildlife and stock) and oncoming vehicles. Move to the left and slow down or stop when nearing oncoming vehicles.
- Avoid taking risks at flooded crossings.
- Consider operating hours of roadhouses, shops and ferries and plan your stops in advance. Fill your fuel tanks at every opportunity—driving on rough roads in low gear uses more fuel than normal driving conditions.
- If you break down, always stay with your vehicle until help arrives.
- Travel with another vehicle where possible and make sure someone else knows your itinerary.

Be croc wise
Cape York Peninsula is crocodile country.
- Don't be ambushed—stay out of the water and away from the water's edge, especially when fishing.
- Watch children closely—they can be easily distracted and may forget the potential danger.
- Camp as far from the water as possible—which makes it difficult for a crocodile to visit your camp.
- Don't leave food scraps or fish waste around—this attracts crocs and endangers lives.
- Never approach, feed or harass crocodiles—stay well away!

Be responsible

Fishing
Fishing regulations apply to all fishing and collecting in national and marine parks. For details visit Fisheries Queensland at fisheries.qld.gov.au. All waters adjacent to coastal national parks are protected within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the Great Barrier Reef Coast Marine Park. For marine park zoning maps and fishing information visit the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority at gbrmpa.qld.gov.au.

Caring for parks
- Avoid disturbing animals and plants.
- Leave your pets at home.
- Don't feed wildlife or leave food or scraps around camp sites or day-use areas.
- Light campfires responsibly using existing fire rings.
- Avoid the spread of weeds by checking clothing and equipment regularly for seeds.
- Use the vehicle wash-down facilities at Lakeland Downs.
- Pack your rubbish for dumping at waste disposal sites.
- Don't use chainsaws, firearms or quad bikes.
- Don't place rubbish or contents of chemical toilet tanks in the toilets.
- Camp only in the sites provided.
- Minimise your use of soaps and detergents.
- Where toilets are not provided, use a trowel to bury human waste and toilet paper at least 15cm deep and 100m away from camp sites, tracks and watercourses.

National parks—a shared responsibility
Many national parks on the Cape are now called ‘national park (CYPAL)’ and some have new names. A new class of protected area has been created for Cape York Peninsula in recognition of important Aboriginal cultural values—‘national park (Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal land)’, usually called ‘national park (CYPAL)’. This change allows national parks (and other lands) to become Aboriginal land that is jointly-managed as a national park (CYPAL). Most national parks on Cape York Peninsula are now jointly managed by the Aboriginal Traditional Owners, represented by a land trust or corporation, and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS). The name changes recognise the parks’ cultural values.

‘Thanks for helping us look after our parks.’
Cape York Peninsula rangers and CYPAL rangers
Connect with Queensland National Parks

queenslandnationalparks.com.au

Reserve your camp sites at qld.gov.au/camping

Check npsr.qld.gov.au/park-alerts for park access, closures and conditions

facebook.com/qldnationalparks

@QldParks; #QldParks

Useful contacts

Emergencies:
Dial (Triple Zero) 000 or 112 with a digital or satellite mobile phone.

Queensland Government information:
Phone 13 QGOV (13 74 68)

Alcohol restrictions:
Many communities on the Cape have restrictions on carrying/possessing alcohol. For more information, visit tourismcapeyork.com/know

Road conditions:
Visit the Department of Transport and Main Roads at 131940.qld.gov.au or phone 13 19 40.

Also visit Cook Shire Council at cook.qld.gov.au/current-road-status

Ferry services:
For the Jardine River ferry, contact the Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council on (07) 4069 1369. For Thursday Island (TI) ferry, contact Peddles TI Tours on (07) 4069 1551.

Waste disposal sites:
Visit North Queensland Councils’ lawmac.org.au for an interactive map of waste disposal sites.

Quarantine:
The Quarantine Inspection Station at Coen will inspect all south-bound traffic for damaged or diseased fruit and vegetables; for details visit daf.qld.gov.au