

TOURISM  
**TROPICAL NORTH  
QUEENSLAND**  
*Where rainforest meets the reef*

# Cairns – Fishing Capital of Australia







*Djirri nyurramba...Nyurramba garrany gulu bulmba djanaynggu...  
Nyurramba mugu bulmba-wu maminga...Nyurramba mundu guri djanan...  
gabun-gabun galiynggu...*

*Welcome to Yirrganydji (and Djabugay) Country. We hope that you enjoy your stay. Please keep our environment clean and healthy and we wish you a safe journey on our traditional country. We also wish to acknowledge the elders and families of the Yirrganydji, Djabuganydji, Buluwai, Nyagali, and Guluu Peoples.*

The bountiful tropical waters surrounding Cairns sustained the Indigenous Peoples who first came to this naturally blessed region many years ago. The magical combination of ancient rainforest, protected mangrove systems and monsoonal rain that fed the inland rivers of the Gulf Savannah provided pristine breeding grounds and protection for many native species including barramundi, bream, jewfish, grunter, catfish, cod, eels, turtles, prawns, crayfish, oysters and periwinkles.

Today these waters sustain a vibrant tourism industry that welcomes visitors from all over the world to experience the natural beauty of this iconic destination. The Great Barrier Reef continues to provide fishing experiences of a life time and thanks to the introduction of an extensive inshore Net Free Zone in 2015 the fish here are growing in numbers and size. It's amped up fishing on another scale!

## Cast off to Cairns



### Fishing Capital of Australia

The city of Cairns is regarded as the capital of tropical North Queensland and recognised worldwide as a bucket list destination for anglers of all persuasions. It can certainly lay claim to the title of fishing capital of Australia, providing easy access to a variety of pristine freshwater, estuarine and saltwater fishing habitats that offer up an amazing diversity of iconic fish species all year round, and fishing experiences both land and water based.

Add in 235 days of sunshine, world class marinas located in one of Queensland's only net free zones close to a wide range of accommodation from budget to luxe, award winning tourist attractions and restaurants and you have all the ingredients for the perfect fishing holiday. Time your trip to coincide with a fishing tournament or one of the engaging sporting, music, cultural or food and wine events for ultimate bragging rights.

### Getting Here

Cairns not only connects you to piscatorial heaven it is well connected to the rest of the world regardless of your travel mode.

- Fly direct to Cairns Airport which is just 7km from the city centre via daily domestic and international flights [www.cairnsairport.com.au](http://www.cairnsairport.com.au) ›
- Hire a car or hitch up your boat and drive in via four uniquely different scenic routes: the Great Inland Way, Pacific Coast Way, Matilda Way and Savannah Way
- Take a more relaxed approach to viewing Queensland's spectacular countryside in style via coach and rail services from major Australian towns and cities [www.greyhound.com.au](http://www.greyhound.com.au) › [www.queenslandrailtravel.com.au](http://www.queenslandrailtravel.com.au) ›
- Sail or cruise into the aquamarine tropical waters of the world heritage listed Great Barrier Reef to arrive at Cairns Marlin Marina, Yorkey's Knob Marina, or Bluewater Marina

### Target Time

Timing your visit to when the target fish species are more prolific, or in season, heightens the chance of catching a photo worthy fish but with so many species to target there is a high chance that you will catch fish at any time of the year.

Prime summer species include barramundi, mangrove jack and fingermark, while golden trevally, queenfish, flathead, estuary cod, bream and grunter are more prolific during the cooler months.

Bring your own boat, take a half or full day fishing tour or design your own private fishing adventure with one of the local charter boat operators who can share their "secret spots". Better yet, you don't even need a boat or have to get wet to enjoy fishing here so there is no reason to go home empty handed.



## Tackle the Fishing Trail

Cairns provides the closest access to the Great Barrier Reef and this has lured many famous people to experience the sublime thrill of game and sports fishing in these bounteous tropical waters. So, it comes as no surprise that its fishing folklore is intrinsically linked to the species found in the deeper *offshore reefs* including marlin, tuna, mackerel, trevally, wahoo, barracuda, sailfish and cobia.

Then there's the best eating fish on the planet to be caught in the *inshore reefs* including coral trout, snapper, red emperor, sweetlip and nannygai.

What does come as a surprise to first time visitors, and even the locals, is the quality, and diversity of iconic fish species to be caught in the extensive *inshore estuarine Net Free Zone*. There's even a Fishing Trail to follow that will get you to all the best fishing spots.

## Popular Trail Species

All fish can be caught on lures, fresh bait is always a good choice, and live bait even better. Fish are more active around early mornings and late afternoons, but also at tide changes. Tropical fish are generally large and powerful, so make sure you're up for a fight.



Barramundi



Mangrove Jack



King Threadfin



Blue Threadfin



Grunter



Fingermark



Queenfish



Giant Trevally



Mackerel



Mud Crab

## The Northern Beaches

### Palm Cove, Trinity Beach, Yorkeys Knob, Holloways Beach and Machans Beach

Bathed by warm tropical waters with restaurants, playgrounds and plenty of shady trees to lie under, the beaches just north of Cairns provide the best holiday base for fishing families. Safe fishing locations include jetty, beach, headland and creeks. Keeping entertained won't be a problem either with Cairns, Port Douglas, famous local attractions like **Skyrail**, **Tjapukai**, **Hartleys Creek Crocodile Farm**, **Kuranda**, and the world heritage listed rainforest not far away.

Dedicated boaties love the beaches because they can access both the river and the reef from here and many of the serviced apartments that are prolific in this area have room for trailer parking. Bonus!

30km north of Cairns is the sophisticated beachside town of Palm Cove where food and wine festivals and local monthly markets complement the diverse retail offering. It's also where the big ambush predator fish like barramundi and mangrove jack use the local jetty pylons as cover to sneak up on the small fish and crustaceans that also shelter here. Go to [www.tourismpalmcove.com](http://www.tourismpalmcove.com) for all the holiday hints you'll need.

15-20km north of Cairns are the Trinity Beach and Yorkeys Knob headlands, fed by creeks and streams, and accessible by land or sea. Fishing spots are plentiful with immediate access to Moon River. Alternatively, only a few minutes by boat is the mouth of Thomatis Creek which feeds into the mighty Barron River.

Both locations boast their own first class marina where fishing and reef charter operators are based. When the fishing is done, meet the locals and enjoy a fresh seafood feast at **Bluewater** at Trinity Park or **Yorkeys Knob Boat Club**. More information can be found at [www.trinitybeachholiday.com](http://www.trinitybeachholiday.com)

If the water isn't your natural habitat but you love fishing or just want to kick back and enjoy the Coral Sea views Holloways Beach and adjacent Machans Beach offer safe fishing for all ages.

Fed by Thomatis Creek these two beaches and the rock wall at Machans Beach offer up giant barramundi and salmon that cruise by chasing the bait fish flushed out of the creek after heavy rainfall. Bait and tackle are available at the local stores if you decide to wet a line.



# Cairns Recreational Fishing Trail



Key to Symbols

- Boat Ramp
- Land-based Fishing







Image courtesy of Dan Kaggelis.



## The Barron River

### Salt, estuarine and fresh water fishing

Just a few minutes north of Cairns is the Barron River, a mangrove lined estuary fed by the picturesque Barron Falls 18km upstream. There are several points of access to the river system that includes salt and freshwater habitats, some of which are land based. These habitats offer excellent fishing opportunities, their physical structure, sand bars, rock holes, weed beds and gutters yielding a range of light tackle sportsfish.

The river mouth is the perfect place to catch big barramundi, threadfin, giant trevally and queenfish while the mangrove lined banks overhang the hiding place of massive mangrove jack and other powerful fish that now thrive in the net free waters.

The man-made Barron River fishing platform and the old Kamerunga Bridge are very popular fishing locations for bream, cod, grunter and mud crabs can be caught on the banks.

Upstream from here the water starts to turn brackish and then into fresh water. The Barron River freshwater can produce some great lure fishing for sooty grunter and the elusive jungle perch.

## Copperlode Dam

A short, very scenic drive inland to the Whitfield Range behind Cairns is Copperlode Dam (Lake Morris) which is the major water supply for the city. This water system is surrounded by world heritage listed rainforest and offers unprecedented and exclusive access to some of the most amazing wildlife encounters that Cairns has to offer. Fishing enthusiasts flock here for encounters of the scaly kind as a result of the stocking program that introduced bony bream, barramundi, sooty grunter, archerfish, sleepy cod, eel-tailed catfish and mangrove jack to this natural paradise. Copperlode Fish and Kayak is the permitted tour operator here so check them out for the best fishing tips and guides.

## Trinity Inlet

### River to Reef

Virtually in the heart of the city of Cairns is Trinity Inlet, a 90km waterway that has some of the best natural scenery and fishing conditions available in Tropical North Queensland. This protected inlet is a very healthy and thriving ecosystem with a complex network of creeks, seagrass, many deep holes, flats and numerous sunken vessels where you can drop a line. Over 40 species of fish can be caught in this magnificent waterway and tall stories about the giant catches of barramundi, mangrove jack, trevally, salmon, grunter and the ones that got away are common.

Marlin Marina is the hub of city fishing life with multiple fishing tour companies operating out of this location. Options include half day and full day tours and private charters to both the inlet and the reef with all bait and tackle provided so all you have to do is pull in the fish. These can be cleaned and prepared for you to take home, or to take to one of the local restaurants that will cook it to your taste. If you prefer your own company, why not hire boat and cruise these pristine waterways at your leisure.

If you do have your own boat, water access is via several boat ramps and land-based fishing is also an option here. The northern wall of the Marlin Marina, the esplanade adjacent to the Cairns Hospital and several fishing platforms including the one at the Tingalpa Street boat ramp fit the bill perfectly.



Image courtesy of Phil Laycock.



## Fishing Tours, Ramps and Regulations

### Fishing Operators

Getting hooked up for your fishing trip is easy as most fishing tour operators are centrally located at Marlin Marina or Yorkeys Knob Marina. Find them at their marina booking offices, book at one of the many tour desks, ask for recommendations from your accommodation provider or check out these websites to find out more:

[www.fishingcairns.com.au](http://www.fishingcairns.com.au) ›  
[www.standbycairns.com.au](http://www.standbycairns.com.au) ›  
[www.cairnsreeffishing.com.au](http://www.cairnsreeffishing.com.au) ›  
[www.tropicalnorthqueensland.org.au](http://www.tropicalnorthqueensland.org.au) ›

### Boat Ramps

There are currently 13 boat ramp facilities in Cairns providing varying degrees of access to the beaches, open waters and estuarine reaches of river and creeks. These are located at:

- Bluewater canal estate (Trinity Park)
- Yorkeys Knob
- Acacia Street, Holloways Beach
- Greenbank Road (Barron River)
- The Esplanade, Machans Beach
- Second Beach, Yarrabah Road
- Fearnley Street, Portsmith
- Tingira Street, Portsmith
- Fishermans Road, Edmonton
- Packers Camp (Redbank Road, Mackey Creek)
- Ross Road, Deeral
- Russell River Road, Bellenden Kerr
- Bramston Beach

### Regulations and Tips

Protect our wildlife. Permits are not required for fishing in Cairns waters however there is a closed season for Barramundi from November to February. Coral reef fin fish closure is from October to November. For specific dates see [www.daf.qld.gov.au](http://www.daf.qld.gov.au)

Protect this special place. Please take your rubbish home, don't use plastic that can threaten marine turtles and adhere to size and bag limits. For details go to [www.qld.gov.au/recreation/activities/boatingfishing/rec-fishing](http://www.qld.gov.au/recreation/activities/boatingfishing/rec-fishing)

Protect yourself. You are sharing tropical waters where crocodiles, sharks and marine stingers live. Please wear sunscreen, protective clothing, stay back from the water's edge and don't handle marine stingers or sharks if caught.

### Gargal daba-dabang Going fishing



Image courtesy of Cairns Reef Fishing.

