

THE GREAT TROPICAL DRIVE

Picturesque waterways, magnificent beaches and ragged mountains make for a magical drive along the coast road, Driving North from Cairns via Cape Tribulation and the famous Bloomfield Track; this drive is rated in the top 10 of Australia's most scenic drives.

Distance 209km Total driving time approx 4.5hrs

4WD only

CAIRNS TO MOSSMAN – BITUMEN ROAD

100kms

Approx 1.5 hours

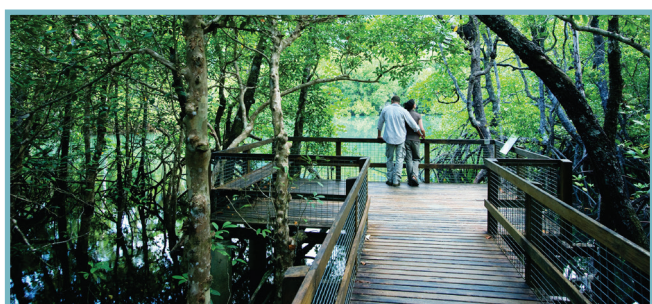


This remarkable journey begins as you travel north from Cairns along the Captain Cook Highway following the stunning coast with views of the ocean that feel at times to be touching the road. Passing a golden chain of beautiful beaches, swimming at Holloways, a beautiful palm fringed beach at Yokey's Knob, sea almond trees at Trinity Beach or tranquillity at Ellis Beach.

As you continue along the Cook Highway it is worth stopping at Rex Lookout for a magical view over the Coral Sea. When the view of the sea disappears vast sugar cane fields line the roadside as you go by the turn off to Port Douglas on your right.

With chic art galleries, swish restaurants and trendy bars, Port Douglas is a sophisticated tropical oasis. Walk along the white sands of Four Mile Beach and climb Flagstaff Hill for striking views over Port Douglas or stop for a while at the rainforest wildlife sanctuary to see a vibrant array of local bird life.

The next town on the Cook Highway is the sugar town of Mossman, with a distinctly rural feel. A fuel stop here is recommended as fuel north of here is scarce and sometimes unpredictable. A few minutes west of Mossman at the entrance of the World Heritage listed Daintree National Park is the magical and mysterious Mossman Gorge. The Gorge is an ancient Aboriginal site and home to the Kuku Yalanji Aboriginal Community. Tours take visitors through the rainforest with guides explaining local legends and traditional Aboriginal uses of rainforest plants. With good walking tracks and great swimming holes, it can get quite crowded but is definitely worth a visit.



MOSSMAN TO DAINTREE RIVER FERRY – BITUMEN ROAD

30kms

Approx 30 mins

About 30kms north of Mossman after passing Wonga Beach Community you will see the Daintree Ferry turnoff on your right. The Daintree ferry operates on a cable system and can carry up to 16 vehicles at a time. A fee is charged to cross on the ferry and return tickets are available.

DAINTREE RIVER FERRY TO CAPE TRIBULATION – BITUMEN ROAD

39kms

Approx 1 hour

As you drive off the ferry you are entering the fantastic Daintree World Heritage National Park. Your heart rate will drop, you will breathe easier and your mobile phone won't worry you any more as you experience a trek through the world's oldest rainforest.

On the north side of the Daintree River is the Daintree Ice Cream Company, tucked away in lush tropical gardens. If you love ice cream, then don't miss stopping here. This boutique ice creamery is renowned for its exquisite desserts made from tropical fruits grown in the company's own orchards such as Black Sapote, Soursop, Wattle Seed and Jackfruit. All the ice creams are made on the premises and the flavours vary throughout the year, as only fruit in season is used for the ice cream.

10kms on at the top of Alexander range is a lookout with breathtaking views of the Daintree River mouth and coastal islands – stopping here is a must do. Just north of the Alexander range is the Discovery Centre with interpretative board walks, aerial walkway and canopy tower, allowing visitors to experience the rainforest at every level.

Onto Cow Bay and Thornton Beach the road wanders among fruit farms and remote properties until you reach Cape Tribulation itself – named by Captain Cook in his trying times in 1770. Look out for Marrdja Botanical Walk an excellent 800m boardwalk at Noah Creek, which follows the Creek through the rainforest.

Cape Tribulation is a small village where the frontier of the north really begins, there is a general store and hotel on the main road if any last minute things are needed. You will find quite a few visitor centres and short walking tracks on this section of road, including the opportunity to have a go at jungle surfing, (this tour must be pre-booked as it is very popular). Other attractions at Cape Tribulation include horse riding, kayaking and fruit tasting at the Cape Trib Exotic Fruit Farm. If you do nothing else Cape Tribulation Beach is worth a visit with a walk up to the lookout. If you wish to break your journey on the way to Bloomfield Lodge then Cape Tribulation has a good range of accommodation and a number of good restaurants, cafes and roadside takeaway stores.



CAPE TRIBULATION TO BLOOMFIELD – GRAVEL ROAD

40kms

Approx 1.5 hours

Beyond Cape Tribulation is Emmagen Creek a popular picnic spot, see the 300 year old giant strangler fig by the side of the road and get a great photo from the look out. This is where the Bloomfield Track starts and beyond this point 4WD is a must.

Opened in 1984 the Bloomfield Track is an exciting drive through pristine rainforest that takes you up and down steep stony slopes and splashing through creeks, you may even spot an elusive Cassowary (6 foot rainforest emu unchanged from dinosaur days).

After South Cowie Beach you will come to a River crossing at Woobadda Creek and the Cowie and Donovan Ranges with very steep descents to traverse. In recent times the road upgrades keep the track in generally fine condition, although it can be quite rough after rainy periods.

When you next see bitumen again you are entering the local Aboriginal Community of Wujal Wujal (so nice you say it twice), located on the Bloomfield River, be sure to check water levels on crossing. Located on the left after crossing the Bloomfield River is the recently opened cultural centre (generally open Monday-Friday), where you can just browse or maybe buy a reminder souvenir or painting.

Only 10kms to go! After crossing the river turn right and you will drive around the outskirts of the community and find yourself driving alongside the Bloomfield River, this part of the river is estuarine habitat and often crocodiles are seen basking on the banks.

100 metres past the boat ramp sign is the Bloomfield Departure Area, well signposted on the right. Here the driveway will take you to our wharf pickup area where you can leave your vehicle in our secure storage unit and a guide and vessel will meet you at a pre-arranged time for the short boat journey across Weary Bay to Bloomfield Lodge.

Enjoy the drive!

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- The coastal road can be unpassable at times due to rain, with high creek levels and landslides etc, even in a 4WD. The Bloomfield River Crossing can also be unpassable at times due to rainfall or high tides. Road conditions should be checked prior to journey. Information on road conditions can be found on www.racq.com.au or **1300 130 595**.
- As access to Bloomfield Lodge is affected by low tides guests will need to contact the lodge to arrange a precise pickup time from the Bloomfield Wharf the day before arriving. Please call the Lodge direct on **(07) 4060 8166**.