

Tropical North Queensland - Trains and the Tropics

6 - 17 August 2024

11 Nights

TOUR OVERVIEW

Embark on an exploration of Tropical North Queensland, where lush rainforests, crystal-clear waters, and vibrant wildlife converge to create a tropical paradise. This tour blends iconic rail journeys, breathtaking natural wonders, and charming coastal towns. Board the Savannahlander train for a unique outback rail experience. Travelling in a classic 1960's railmotor you will wind your way through the wet tropics area of the Kuranda range and out through the Savannah country to Forsyth and back over your 4-day journey. Along the way, you will have options for off-train excursions and visits. The journey is at a relaxed pace, and you can enjoy the company of your fellow travellers, staying in small towns and enjoying local hospitality as you go.

You will explore the best of the region with visits to the UNESCO World Heritage Daintree rainforest, and Mossman Gorge. Enjoy a four-night stay in Port Douglas with a free day to relax and enjoy this laid-back seaside town. Discover the Dreamtime stories of Aboriginal culture and have several opportunities to encounter classic Aussie wildlife such as crocodiles, koalas, cassowary, and other birdlife. If you are keen to visit the Great Barrier Reef, that is an option on your free day in Cairns.

This is a fantastic opportunity to escape the New Zealand winter and enjoy warm weather in a lesser-visited area of Australia.

TOUR INCLUSIONS

- Direct return flights Auckland to Cairns
- The services of an experienced Calder & Lawson tour manager
- 11 nights accommodation
- Breakfast daily
- Other meals as specified in the itinerary
- All group transfers as specified in the itinerary
- Admissions as detailed in the itinerary
- Sightseeing tours with local guides as detailed in the itinerary
- All tips for local guides and other service providers
- Pre-tour material

TOUR EXCLUSIONS

- Airline taxes
- Travel insurance
- Personal expenses
- Meals not specified in the itinerary
- Beverages during included meals, unless specified

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Take one of the great Australian rail journeys on the Savannahlander train
- Visit the ancient and lush Daintree rainforest, A UNESCO World Heritage site
- Gain a deeper understanding of indigenous art and culture
- Take a ride on the Kuranda scenic railway and soar above the rainforest on the Skyrail cableway
- Marvel at the diversity of the unique plants and animals that make tropical North Queensland their home.
- Enjoy a four-night stay in Port Douglas at a luxurious beachfront resort
- Spend free time exploring, swimming, or relaxing at your hotel. If you wish to visit the Great Barrier Reef there will be an opportunity to take a cruise (extra cost applies) to the reef while in Cairns

IS THIS TOUR FOR ME?

Although this tour is not physically demanding, the ability to manage your own luggage, get on and off trains and coaches, walk for 1-2 hours and stand for extended periods, and climb steps and stairs will ensure you get the maximum enjoyment from your tour.

The Chillagoe Caves tour includes several steep ramps and stairs – about 385 steps in total. There are low overhangs that require you to walk crouched for several metres at a time. A fair level of mobility is required for the Undara Lava Tubes tour as it includes stairs, ramps, and walking over uneven ground.

TOUR PRICE

Ex Auckland

Share twin per person	NZD \$8,990
Single supplement (limited availability)	NZD \$2,490

Please contact Calder & Lawson Tours if you are interested in a single occupancy place.

GROUP SIZE Minimum 10, maximum 18

VARIATIONS IN TRAVEL We can make arrangements for any travel you would like to do before or after this tour, or book business class flights. Please contact us to discuss your requirements.

[CLICK HERE TO BOOK ONLINE](#)

TOUR MANAGER: Malcolm Campbell

Malcolm Campbell will be your tour manager. He is a professional naturalist, birder, outdoor pursuit's enthusiast, who worked for 20 years on conservation and environmental issues in New Zealand's national parks, forests, and coastal marine environments.

Malcolm is a natural storyteller, a friendly and enthusiastic travel companion, and has visited the Tropical North Queensland region on numerous occasions. He is really looking forward to taking a group on an itinerary that covers so much of the diversity of this amazing part of Australia.



DAILY ITINERARY

Tuesday 6 August 2024
New Zealand - Cairns
(Australia)

Meals: In-Flight/D
Flight: 5.5 hours
Overnight: Cairns

Meet your tour manager and group in Auckland, and take an early morning direct flight to Cairns on Air New Zealand. Arriving late morning local time you will be transferred to your hotel. Cairns is considered the gateway to the Great Barrier Reef and has a lively esplanade and public swimming lagoon. In the afternoon, stretch your legs with a walk on the Esplanade where you will find public art and a number of memorials and historical monuments. Tonight you will enjoy a welcome dinner with the group.

Wednesday 7 August
Savannahlander train

Meals: B/L/D
Overnight: Chillagoe

An early start this morning to board the Savannahlander train for one of the great Australian rail journeys. You will travel up the scenic Kuranda Range, stopping for a morning refreshment in Kuranda before stopping for lunch at the Railway Hotel at Almaden. Continue on to Chillagoe, a small town located in the North Queensland. It is known for its rich mining history and spectacular natural attractions and the national park is home to over 90 limestone caves. You can take a guided tour of the caves and see the beautiful stalactites, stalagmites, and other limestone formations. Another popular attraction in Chillagoe is the Chillagoe Smelters, which are a group of historic smelters that were used to process copper, lead, and silver. You can take a guided tour of the town and smelters to learn about the history of mining in the area. You will stay in Chillagoe this evening.

Thursday 8 August
Savannahlander train

Meals: B/L/D
Overnight: Cobbold Gorge

Continue on the Savannahlander to Mount Surprise, stopping on the side of the tracks for morning tea. After lunch at Mount Surprise, you will travel onto Einasleigh where you will board a bus to Cobbold Gorge. The gorge itself is unique, as it narrows to just two metres in places and is set amid rugged sandstone formations, occupying an area of about 80 square kilometres. This narrowness indicates that Cobbold Gorge is the youngest known gorge in Queensland today, and evidence of the geological processes are clearly visible. It's surrounded by spectacular cliffs, which are 19 metres high from the waterline to the top of the escarpment. You will have a tour of the Gorge in a custom silent electric boat, and stay at the Cobbold Gorge Village tonight



DAILY ITINERARY

Friday 9 August **Savannahlander train**

Meals: B/L/D

Overnight: Undara

Board the Savannahlander and head to Einasleigh for lunch at the colourful Einasleigh Hotel, a great example of an Aussie outback pub. After lunch, you will have the opportunity to have a short walk to visit the spectacular Copperfield Gorge before returning to Mount Surprise. A short bus transfer will take you to Undara Volcanic National Park which features one of the largest lava tube systems on earth. The lava tubes were formed about 190,000 years ago when Mt Undara, a million-year-old volcano at the time, underwent a massive eruption. The tubes were formed when these rivers of lava crusted over on the outside forming an insulated tube for the rest of the lava to flow along. Eventually, the liquid lava drained out leaving behind a network of tubes. Now functioning like huge stormwater drains, the tubes collect and carry much of the summer rain. Over the years, the ceilings of the tubes have collapsed in many places, allowing vegetation to flourish in the damp interiors. Ribbons of emerald-green vine thicket, contrasting with the surrounding dry savanna woodland, mark out the courses of the tubes. The vine-thicket contains distinctive and ancient plants that have strong affinities with Gondwana species. Overnight at Undara.

Saturday 10 August **Savannahlander train to Cairns**

Meals: B/L

Overnight: Cairns

For your final day on the Savannahlander you will make your way from Mount Surprise back to Cairns. You stop at the small town of Dimbulah which was developed as a stop for trains servicing the mines at Wolfram Camp and Mount Mulligan. Visit the restored railway station for afternoon tea and to visit the small museum where interpretive panels give a fascinating insight into local history. You will travel at sunset down the scenic Kuranda Range arriving in Cairns at approximately 6.30 pm. Transfer to your accommodation for the next 3 nights which is located right on the Cairns esplanade.

Sunday 11 August **Cairns free day**

Meals: B

Overnight: Cairns

You have a free day to rest and enjoy Cairns. If you fancy a swim you can easily access the saltwater lagoon pool on the Esplanade. Today is your opportunity to take a cruise to the Great Barrier Reef or perhaps a day trip to Green or Lizard Island. Please note additional costs apply to any cruise or day trips today. The Calder & Lawson team will be happy to help with bookings and will provide options once the tour is a confirmed departure.



DAILY ITINERARY

Monday 12 August **Kuranda train and cableway**

Meals: B/D

Overnight: Cairns

Another wonderful train journey awaits today as you board the Kuranda scenic train. Opened in 1891, this famous railway ascends from the coastal plains of Cairns through Freshwater Railway Station and on to Kuranda (known as the 'Village in the Rainforest') some 328 metres above sea level. You will travel in fully refurbished vintage carriages enjoying breathtaking views. At Kuranda village, you will have entry to the Rainforest Nature Park where there are several activities available for you. Board an amphibious World War II Army Duck for a unique rainforest tour on both land and water, where your guide will identify and explain fascinating plants and wildlife as you pass by. Then meander through the Tropical Fruit Orchard, with over 40 different species of exotic tropical fruit trees. Learn about indigenous culture with the interactive Pamagirri Aboriginal Experience. Watch a traditional dance performance in a rainforest amphitheatre, then join the Dreamtime Walk which includes boomerang throwing, spear-throwing and the didgeridoo. The Koala and Wildlife Park has native Australian species such as the saltwater crocodile, Tasmanian Devils, wombats, dingoes, snakes, lizards, and the Southern Cassowary. Later in the afternoon take the Skyrail Rainforest Cableway and glide mere metres above the pristine rainforest canopy. Return to Cairns and have dinner with the group.

Tuesday 13 August **Mossman Gorge**

Meals: B/D

Overnight: Port Douglas

Travel north to Mossman Gorge Cultural Centre. This is an award-winning ecotourism facility located at the entrance to the World Heritage-listed Daintree Rainforest. The Centre is a must-do for anyone travelling in the beautiful Far North Queensland region.

To gain a deeper understanding of the Kuku Yalanji land and culture, you will join a guided Ngadiku Dreamtime Walk, led by the local Indigenous community.

There are also plenty of opportunities to learn about local Indigenous art and culture at the onsite gallery, as well as tasting some of the Daintree's delicious local ingredients at the onsite Café. You will then drive back to Port Douglas and check in to your resort hotel for the next four nights and enjoy a group dinner.



DAILY ITINERARY

Wednesday 14 August **Daintree rainforest**

Meals: B/L

Overnight: Port Douglas

Sit back and relax in comfort in a custom-built 4WD air-conditioned vehicle while listening to informative and entertaining commentary by your local naturalist guide. You drive north along the magnificent scenic coastal route along the Captain Cook Highway learning about the history of the area and admiring spectacular views of the coastline and the azure waters of the Coral Sea. Then take a guided one-hour cruise on the Daintree River. Spot and learn about estuarine crocodiles, mangrove forests, and endemic wildlife. Following your cruise and morning tea you will take a wonderful drive through the ancient Daintree Rainforest while your local guide gives you a commentary on the flora, fauna, and history of the area. Stroll along the beach with your guide and take in the sites of where the 'rainforest meets the reef'. On the way back to Port Douglas you can take a guided rainforest walk on a selection of trails and elevated boardwalks and enjoy an invigorating freshwater swim in the Mossman Gorge (subject to river conditions).

Please note that the program for this day is subject to change depending on weather and road conditions. Several stretches of road were damaged in the December 2023 tropical storm Jasper and are in the process of being repaired.

Thursday 15 August **Free day in Port Douglas**

Meals: B/D

Overnight: Port Douglas

After a couple of busy days, you will have time at your own leisure today. Your hotel, the Sheraton Grand Mirage is located on the famous Four Mile Beach and the property has two hectares of palm-fringed lagoon-style pools where you can relax and swim. The beach is good for walking or you may choose to explore the chic, yet relaxed seaside village of Port Douglas. If you fancy a more energetic walk you could take a scenic walk at the northern top of the beach that stretches and winds around a grassy bluff up to Flagstaff Hill lookout where you can see views out to the Low Isles and beyond to the Daintree rainforest.

In the early evening, the group will gather to have a special dinner. You will journey into Dreamtime legend and discover the magic of local indigenous culture at the Flames of the Forest Cultural Experience. Two Kuku Yalanji (the local Aboriginal people) will share their remarkable culture with you during the evening. The performance features a cultural background story, traditional Dreamtime storytelling, didgeridoo playing, and song and you will be served a delicious meal of local fare.

DAILY ITINERARY

Friday 16 August

Daintree

Meals: B/D

Overnight: Port Douglas

This morning you will have 'Breakfast with the Birds' at the Curlew Café. This has been a popular activity for visitors to North Queensland for over twenty years. Your breakfast will be served in the recently constructed koala habitat and you can enjoy getting up close and personal with koalas and birds and chat with their keepers. After breakfast, you can wander the elevated boardwalks of a wildlife habitat split into three sections: wetlands, rainforest, and grasslands.

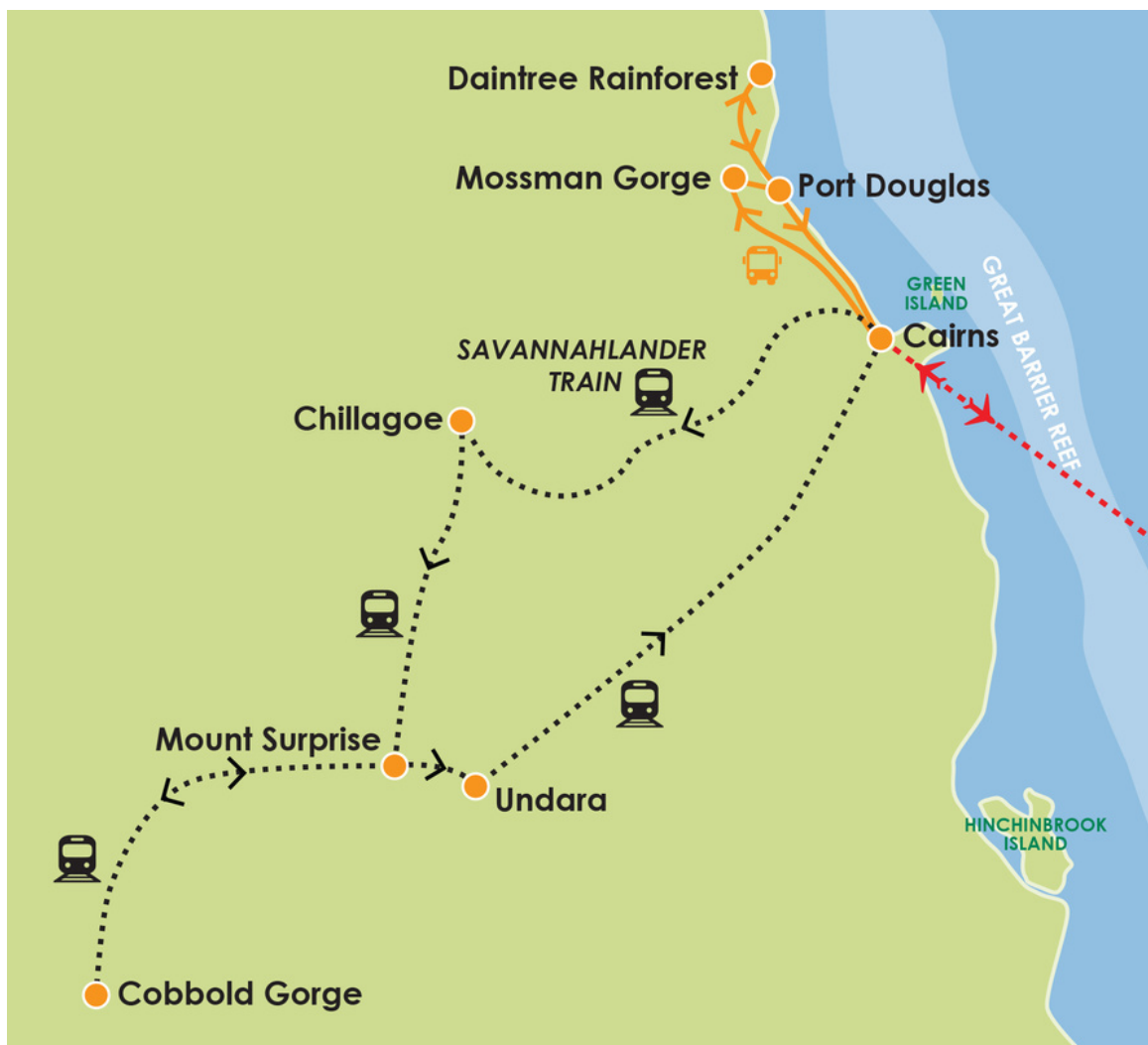
Then in the afternoon, for a wildlife encounter of a different kind, visit Hartleys crocodile farm. Wildlife exhibits include crocodiles and alligators, Komodo dragons, cassowaries, wombats, emus, lizards, kangaroos, and wallabies. There are several shows and feedings to attend and in between you can explore more than 2500 metres of timber boardwalks and pathways through eucalypt woodlands, notophyll rainforest, and wetlands. We will finish the day with our group farewell dinner

Saturday 17 August Homebound Cairns to Auckland

Meals: B/ in flight

Flight: 4.5 hours

Transfer to Cairns airport for your direct flight back to Auckland on Air New Zealand. The Calder & Lawson Tours team is happy to make any post-tour arrangements for you, including stopovers or extensions. You will depart Cairns at 11:55 AM and arrive into Auckland at 18:35 PM.



HOW TO SECURE YOUR PLACE ON THIS TOUR

A deposit of \$1,000 is required to secure your place on the tour. When minimum numbers are reached, the tour will become a 'confirmed departure' and your deposit will be non-refundable. At that point we will advise when the tour payment is due.

Click below to complete the online registration form, pay the \$1,000 deposit and your place in this tour is secured. Or you can complete a paper registration form. You can download one from our website www.calderandlawsonstours.co.nz/forms/ or give us a call and we will email or post one to you.

[CLICK HERE TO BOOK ONLINE](#)

TERMS & CONDITIONS

Can be found on our website www.calderandlawsonstours.co.nz/forms/, on the back of the paper registration form or on the summary page when you complete an online registration.

There is a 1.5% surcharge if you wish to pay by visa or mastercard.

Flights

The planned flights for this tour are as follows:

Auckland to Cairns - Air New Zealand NZ161
Departs Auckland 6 August 2024 @ 07:05 AM
Arrives Cairns @ 10:45 AM

Cairns to Auckland - Air New Zealand NZ162
Departs Cairns 17 August 2024 @ 11:55 AM
Arrives Auckland @ 18:35 PM

If you would like to extend your stay in Australia please let us know.

This information is accurate as of 8 February 2024 and is subject to change based on airline schedules and availability.

