



Australian Government
Director of National Parks

Tourism Australia

Wet Tropics

So entrancing is this landscape of emerald forests and cascading waterfalls that interest turns to intrigue.

The story of earth's evolutionary history continues to unfold in the world's oldest continuously surviving rainforest: the Wet Tropics of North Queensland, Australia. Nature's true masterpiece, a living exhibition, the Wet Tropics tells the story of how plants and animals have evolved across time.

Situated on the north east coast of Queensland, the Wet Tropics is a mega diverse environment with the greatest variety of plants and animals found anywhere in Australia, many of which are found nowhere else in the world. It is also a significant meeting point, with the two World Heritage Areas of the Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics meeting along the Daintree coast. The rainforests of the Daintree contain outstanding examples of flora and fauna that represent eight major stages in the earth's evolutionary history.

WORLD HERITAGE WET TROPICS: LIVING EXHIBITION OF ANCIENT TIMES

Crowned with World Heritage status in 1988, the Wet Tropics is a place that links past and present. It is a major evolutionary centre for the world's rainforest flora and fauna, offering a living record of the ecological and evolutionary processes that have shaped Australia's fauna over the past 415 million years. Continental drift, fragmentation and the cycles of climatic change have driven the processes of speciation, extinction and adaptation.

The rainforests of the Wet Tropics, in particular the Daintree region, have more plants and animals with primitive characteristics than anywhere else on earth. Home to half of Australia's bird species, one third of the continent's mammals and over 3,000 plant species, it is also a crucial habitat for rare and threatened species including the spectacular, flightless Southern Cassowary and the elusive tree kangaroo.

The Wet Tropics is an area of captivating natural beauty, described by Sir David Attenborough as "the most extraordinary place on earth".

DISCOVER THE OLDEST RAINFOREST CULTURE IN THE WORLD

The human story of the Wet Tropics can be seen through the eyes of the local Indigenous people. Within the boundaries of the World Heritage Area there are eighteen Rainforest Aboriginal tribal groups who have ongoing traditional connections to the landscape dating back 60,000 years. This incredible cultural timeline reaching back through hundreds of generations means Wet Tropics Rainforest Aboriginal people are the oldest rainforest culture in the world.

Today, the Wet Tropics continues to evolve as a 'living' cultural landscape, created during the ancestral period known as the 'Dreamtime.' Natural features are interwoven with Rainforest Aboriginal people's religion, spirituality, economies and social and moral organisation to create this rich cultural landscape, which is an essential resource for food, medicine, culture and tools.

The Wet Tropics offers you the opportunity to discover, learn and nurture a greater appreciation and respect for this ancient culture that will likely enrich your own.



CAIRNS INDIGENOUS ART FAIR (CIAF)

Witness and experience the diverse artistic expression of Indigenous people of the Wet Tropics at the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair (CIAF). This three day art event is committed to providing an ethical marketplace for the sale and purchase of Queensland Indigenous art and supporting the career development of Queensland Indigenous artists. To find out more visit: www.ciaf.com.au

HIGHEST RAINFALL IN AUSTRALIA

During summer months, the Wet Tropics experiences the highest rainfall in Australia. This is the best time to witness the majestic thundering waterfalls plummeting down deep rainforest gorges on the Waterfall Circuit that encompasses the dramatic Millaa Millaa Falls and captivating Josephine Falls. Waterfalls are often biodiversity hotspots and lucky visitors may glimpse a dazzling blue Ulysses butterfly, brilliant rainbow lorikeet or scaly breasted lorikeet. Less vividly coloured, but equally as interesting are the little musky rat kangaroos, the smallest and most primitive of macropods and of considerable evolutionary significance. To find out more about touring routes visit: www.greattropicaldrive.com.au

THE DINOSAUR BIRD

The Southern Cassowary is an icon of the Wet Tropics. When one appears, you might be forgiven for thinking you've come face-to-face with a dinosaur! The vivid purple blue neck, drooping red wattles and amber eyes of this large flightless bird dramatically contrast with its glossy black plumage. Cassowaries also have a tall brown casque (helmet) on their heads, which scientists believe helps them hear low-frequency sounds over long distances, an ability shared with elephants and some dinosaurs. These birds are endangered and there is still much we don't know about cassowary populations. You can help us learn more by sharing details of your sightings with local communities and scientists. Learn more at: www.cassowaryrecoveryteam.org

GO BATTY!

Bats play a critical role in helping to pollinate plants and spread seeds, and are vital to the health of the Wet Tropics rainforest and neighbouring ecosystems. You can learn more about bats and support their conservation by visiting or volunteering at The Tolga Bat Hospital near Atherton: www.tolgabathospital.org

WET TROPICS MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY: CONSERVING, SHARING AND ENRICHING

The Wet Tropics Management Authority is responsible for managing the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area in accordance with Australia's obligations under the World Heritage Convention to protect, conserve and present the unique values of the area for future generations. For more information visit: www.wettropics.gov.au

GET ON YOUR BIKE!

Make a contribution through eight unforgettable days of cycling; climbing through the rainforest-clad mountains of the Wet Tropics between Innisfail, Ravenshoe and Cairns on the Far North Wilderness Bike Tour. This annual September event raises money for the Cairns and Far North Environment Centre (CAFNEC), one of the peak non-government conservation organisations in far North Queensland.

Visit: www.fnqbiketour.org.au and www.cafnec.org.au



Southern Cassowary



Flying Fox

HELP US PROTECT THIS UNIQUE ENVIRONMENT

The Wet Tropics contains one of the largest concentrations of eco-certified tourism operators in all of Australia. This region means business when it comes to conserving and hundreds of businesses have put their money where their mouths are, gaining eco-tourism accreditation.

Visit: www.ecotourism.org.au

Lend a hand planting a wildlife corridor to reconnect fragments of forest on the Atherton Tablelands to support the weird and wonderful tree kangaroo. Find out more at:

www.conservationvolunteers.com.au

For more information on this Landscape or to learn about other naturally beautiful places which offer a different but uniquely Australian experience, visit www.australia.com/nl