

Queensland is blessed with an abundance of beautiful river systems and many of them offer a great range of experiences to enjoy. These experiences range from the unexpected (watching the world go by from the decks of a paddle steamer in the middle of the Outback) to the unique – drift snorkelling the pristine waters of the Daintree River. Here's a taste of how to make the most of some of Queensland's iconic rivers.

Thomson River Paddle Steamer, Longreach

Spend a relaxing evening cruising Longreach's Thomson River soaking up the sights – and sounds – of a magnificent Outback sunset. The evening cruise serves up one of the Outback's best scenes and guests enjoy nibbles and drinks while on the water. When the sun has set, a two-course Drover's-style meal and dessert is served at the 'Sheraton on the Thomson' River under the stars with country music and bush poetry for entertainment. Complete the experience with a cup of billy tea and fresh damper under a carpet of stars in the Outback sky. www.lotc.com.au

River Drift Snorkelling, Daintree

This new adventure has to be experienced to be believed. It is, as the name suggests, a river snorkelling experience where guests fully decked out in the supplied wet suits and snorkelling gear drift down the Mossman River with the current. It's a safe, fun and very enjoyable way to experience the pristine environment of the World Heritage-listed Daintree rainforest. The three-hour tour includes an experienced instructor who accompanies you on this unique journey as well as pick up and drop off transfers from Port Douglas. A low/medium level of fitness is required. www.backcountryblissadventures.com.au

Crocodile Cruises, Daintree

Cruise the famous Daintree River with Solar Whisper Wildlife Cruises and some of the lesser explored narrow rainforest creeks running off it because your vessel is small enough to negotiate them. Salt water crocodiles are spotted on almost every trip, but guests also see fabulous birds, butterflies, snakes, frogs and crabs. And if something is a little hard to see, Solar Whisper is fitted with a unique "Croc-Cam" which films and magnifies hard-to-see wildlife onto an onboard screen. The whisper-quiet boat is run by electric motors with solar panels which means no petrol or exhaust fumes. Several cruises run daily. www.solarwhisper.com

Mirimar Cruises to Lone Pine, Brisbane River

The historic MV Mirimar offers a fascinating cruise of the meandering Brisbane River from the city upstream to the world famous Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary. The 19km (12 mile) cruise passes through some of the city's most beautiful riverside suburbs with their mix of modern mansions and gracious old "Queenslander" homes as you learn about Brisbane's past. Get a close up view of another riverside community at Bat Island, home of a unique inner-city colony of flying foxes (bats) in the wild. At Lone Pine Sanctuary, guests can cuddle a koala and check out other Australian wildlife including kangaroos, wombats, dingoes and wallabies living at the sanctuary. Those taking the return cruise will have two hours to explore the sanctuary but there is also an option to stay longer and find your own way back to your accommodation. Cruises run daily except Christmas and Anzac (April 25) Days. www.mirimar.com

Gondolas of Noosa

Enjoy the Sunshine Coast's favourite destination from a completely different angle with a romantic cruise with Gondolas of Noosa. Climb onboard a seven and a half metre gondola for a cruise along the canals of Noosa Sound, home to multi-million-dollar waterfront mansions. Up to six people can be catered for on cruises which offer breakfast, lunch, dinner and sunset options. Other cruises can be pre-booked for special occasions and romantic restaurant transfers. Gondolas operate daily departing the Sheraton Jetty in Hastings Street and Ricky's Bar & Restaurant, Noosa Heads. www.gondolasofnoosa.com

Cruise Maroochy – Cultural Bush Tucker Cruise

Experience the flavours of indigenous bush tucker cuisine while cruising down the Maroochy River on the Sunshine Coast. The traditional custodians of the River - the Gubbi Gubbi people – entertain guests onboard with traditional dances and the mystical sounds of the didgeridoo’s dreamtime song. Feast on bush tucker including crocodile meat, emu kabanos and bunya nuts, while guides explain the area’s rich indigenous history and demonstrate the art of boomerang throwing. The two hour tour is available for groups of 20 people or more as a special charter. www.cruisemaroochyeco.com.au

Catch a Crab – Gold Coast

Trap live crabs, go fishing in the mighty Tweed River, and try your hand at yabbie pumping – just a few of the fun-filled adventures guests enjoy on a Catch-A-Crab cruise and Oyster Farm tour. Enjoy spectacular scenery and a fantastic seafood lunch of freshly-caught mud crab, which is cooked on board and served alfresco. The cruise now departs from the new attraction, Birds Bay Oyster Farm at Tweed Heads which includes an Oyster Bar, Pearl and Oyster Farming Displays, retail outlet with pearls, oysters, souvenirs and regional produce such as locally-grown tea, coffee, other gourmet goodies and natural body products. Cruises depart each morning. www.catchacrab.com.au

Rainbow Beach Houseboats, Great Sandy Straits – Fraser Island

The magnificent climate of the Fraser Island area and its protected waterways makes it ideal for safe house boating all year round. Combine these conditions with an abundance of nature and wildlife and you have the perfect destination. As you cruise look out for dolphins, turtles, dugong and on Fraser Island, a dingo. Bring binoculars as the bird life is prolific. The Great Sandy Straits also offers some of the best crabbing and fishing grounds. The 45 foot houseboats feature state-of-the-art navigation equipment, can sleep between two and 10 people and have simple controls. No licence is required. All bedding and linen is supplied, as are cooking utensils and cutlery, a flat screen LCD television, large shower and flush toilet along with many other features to offer the ultimate boating experience. Don’t forget to go ashore at one of the number of anchorages in the region. www.rainbowbeachhouseboats.com.au

White Water Rafting

Raging Thunder Adventures pioneered rafting in 1984 with a trip on Tropical North Queensland’s Tully River. Today they are still operating full day rafting trips on the Tully and half-day trips on the Barron River, just outside Cairns. The Tully is renowned as one of Australia’s best rafting rivers, with grade three to four rapids surrounded by stunning World Heritage-listed rainforest two hours’ south of Cairns. The full day tour includes five hours of full-on adventure on the water and a riverside barbecue lunch. The Barron River is a calmer option for the first-time adventurer (grade two to three rapids). Each raft holds a maximum of seven passengers and one river guide, who will guide you safely down your river adventure. www.ragingthunder.com.au/rafting.asp

Aurukun Fishing Charters

Aurukun Fishing Charters offer the chance to fish and explore the remote river systems stretching between the northern-most tip of Queensland and Karuma, 800km south. The charters for up to eight people are accompanied by local indigenous Pikkuw guides who utilise the skills and local knowledge of the traditional owners of these parts. Aurukun is located at the junction of three pristine rivers, 630km North West of Cairns in the tropical north. Guests will enjoy the opportunity to fish for barramundi, have a swim or a bush tucker walk can be organised, while you cruise the tropical wetland river system which is virtually unfished. To link up with the Aurukun-based charter, direct flights are available from Cairns to Aurukun on weekdays or QantasLink flies daily to nearby Weipa. www.aurukunfishingcharters.com