

Given the size and vast spaces of Queensland it is relatively easy to find a place to get away from it all – and because we like our visitors to be comfortable, here are some places you can get back to nature in style...

An Outback Oasis

Queensland's Outback is filled with spectacular wonders ranging from vast expanses of open plains, rugged mountain ranges, desert sand dunes to vast fossil-filled areas, lush gorges and fishing holes.

Tyrconnell Outback Experience & Historic Gold Mine - Closer to Cairns, Tyrconnell adds another colour to the stunning Outback landscape – gold. Located 150km west of Cairns by road, Tyrconnell can cater for up to 12 overnight guests in one of three heritage-style cottages or fully equipped luxury canvas tents which feature beds, matting, drapery, table and toiletries. Enjoy a meal provided by your hosts or have an Aussie barbecue and BYO. Several original buildings and machines remain from the bustling gold era and guests can enjoy a variety of activities including mine site tours, gold panning, bird-watching, bushwalking and star-gazing. Tyrconnell is also a refuge for orphaned and injured native wildlife. Visit www.tyrconnell.com.au

Undara Experience - An Aboriginal word meaning 'a long way', Undara is a multi-award winning experience located a four hour drive inland from Cairns. Tour the nearby Lava Tubes, formed 190,000 years ago when molten lava flowed down a dry river bed leaving hollow tubes you can walk through. Highly qualified guides take guests on tours that give a unique insight into the geology and ecology of the Undara Volcanic National Park, the local history and bushcraft of the Gulf Savannah region. Your stay at Undara Experience includes wildlife spotlighting walks, campfire evenings, delicious dining featuring the region's best produce, or a quiet drink in the bar as the Outback sunset fades into the clearest starlit night. Guests can stay in a range of accommodation including authentic turn-of-the-century railway carriages. Visit www.undara.com.au

Carnarvon Gorge Wilderness Lodge - This fully eco-accredited retreat is located at the entrance to spectacular Carnarvon Gorge, which is home to some of Australia's most vivid Aboriginal rock art sites. Situated about 250km north of Roma in the heart of Queensland, guests at the Wilderness Lodge stay in luxurious timber and canvas safari style cabins. Take in the sights and sounds of native plants, birds and animals from one of the wide verandahs, curl up in the recreation room or get out in the spectacular surroundings for some of the best bushwalking in the country. Enjoy interpretive full and half day walks through the gorge with fully qualified guides to places such as the Moss Garden and the Aboriginal Rock Art Gallery as well as early morning platypus search tours. The lodge closes each year in mid-December through to March. Visit www.carnarvon-gorge.com

Rainforest and Wetland Wonderlands

Queensland has the most diverse collection of rainforests in the world and some truly spectacular wetland areas.

Jabiru Camp - Camp out in style on the Mareeba Tropical Savanna & Wetland Reserve where the fully-furnished safari style tents come complete with timber verandahs and chairs to soak up the tranquillity of this wetlands oasis. The Mareeba Reserve is only one hour's drive north-west of Cairns and features more than 5,000 acres of savannahs and wetlands providing a sanctuary for much of tropical Queensland's unique flora and fauna. With the assistance of volunteers, the reserve is run by a not-for-profit environmental organisation, the Wildlife Conservancy of Tropical Queensland, and all income realised from sustainable tourism is reinvested into managing the wetlands as well as valuable research work, education and conservation such as the critical Gouldian Finch re introduction programme. By visiting the Mareeba Tropical Savanna and Wetland Reserve you are ensuring that this important work is continued and a sanctuary for Australian wildlife is preserved. Visit www.mareebawetlands.com

Bloomfield Lodge – As one of Australia’s most exclusive luxury resorts and a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World, Bloomfield Lodge guarantees nothing but the best during your stay - where even the trip of getting to the lodge is special. Guests begin their experience with a 30-minute scenic flight from Cairns along the coastline over the fringing reefs and tiny islands of the Coral Sea, then board a launch for a gentle cruise down the Bloomfield River and across Weary Bay, before arriving at this luxurious resort in the rainforest. The individually designed natural timber retreats at Bloomfield encircle the main lodge with stunning views of the rainforest or Bay. Unwind by the pool, stroll along a deserted beach, cruise along the Bloomfield River, enjoy a spot of fishing, a rainforest walk or a magical trip to Hope Islands. Visit www.bloomfielddodge.com.au

Mungumby Lodge – Located a four hour drive north of Cairns, Mungumby Lodge is a private wilderness retreat situated on the northern edge of the World Heritage-listed Australian Tropical Rainforest National Park. The retreat features 10 wooden bungalows with private ensuites and a large main building with open plan living areas right on the edge of the spectacular Mungumby Creek. For meals, reading or just plain relaxing by the pool guests use the spacious main house, which is surrounded by large tropical gardens. Mungumby Lodge offers easy access to the area’s many well known attractions including the Great Barrier Reef, Bloomfield Falls, Black Mountain, Daintree and Cape Tribulation National Parks. Visit www.mungumby.com

Back to Nature Island-style

Visitors are spoiled for choice with island resorts in Queensland, but these will certainly take you back to nature.

Lady Elliot Island Eco Resort – Located on the southernmost island of the Great Barrier Reef, 80km off central Queensland, Lady Elliot offers direct flight access to the island airstrip from points in Southern Queensland. Famous for a resident population of 40 Manta Rays which form the iconic logo of the island, the beautiful coral cay is home to 57 species of birds, nesting sea turtles and a stunning underwater world of coral formations and diverse marine life. Lady Elliot’s lagoon is a safe haven for curious beginner snorkelers, while experienced snorkelers and divers can plumb the depths of the Coral Sea a little further out. The island offers four styles of accommodation – island suites, reef units, shearwater rooms and tent cabins, all free of the usual distractions of working life. Visit www.ladyelliott.com.au

Fraser Island – The world’s largest sand island and a haven of rainforests, endless beaches, pristine freshwater lakes and exotic flora and fauna, the World Heritage-listed Fraser Island is located offshore from Queensland’s Fraser Coast a short flight or four hour drive north of Brisbane. Guests to the island can choose from a range of accommodation options including The Fraser Island Company’s permanent and well-appointed tented accommodation and Kingfisher Bay Resort’s hotel-style rooms, self-contained villas and full resort facilities, including swimming pool and restaurants. The resort has been named best eco resort in the prestigious Australian Tourism Awards. Both are the perfect bases to explore the island. Visit www.fraserislandco.com.au and www.kingfisherbay.com

Poruma Island Resort – Poruma Island, located between Australia and Papua New Guinea within the Torres Strait Archipelago is home to 180 saltwater people. Accommodation at the resort is in thatched guest suites cleverly combining the original Island style with modern comforts. Each open-plan suite includes a master bedroom that leads, via a plunge pool and bath garden, to your lounge room on the edge of the beach. From here, the sunset views to the west are spectacular. Visit www.poruma.com

Wilson Island - This tiny coral cay is part of, and surrounded by, the Great Barrier Reef. Accommodation for a maximum of 12 guests is offered in comfortable, designer-inspired tents all with reef and ocean outlooks. Solar power allows for hot showers and other creature comforts to be enjoyed in the central amenities building. Relax in a hammock, take a self-guided nature walk, experience the wonder of watching Green and Loggerhead turtles laying their eggs or their baby hatchlings emerging from their nests (in season), and enjoy world class snorkelling directly off the beach. Your Island Hosts prepare all meals in the Longhouse where everyone joins together at the table set for a dinner party style gathering of friends, with light music playing and candles lit. This luxury Robinson Crusoe style-resort is accessible via Gladstone and Heron Island. The resort is closed each February for bird nesting season. Visit www.wilsonisland.com

And just one more...

Fantasea Reefsleep – Spend a night right on the Great Barrier Reef with only a handful of guests and the local marine life for company. Sit back with a glass of champagne from the top deck. Then check out the reef life from the comfort of the underwater viewing chamber. Accommodation is offered on the Reefworld pontoon in two choices – the “Room for Two” with its luxurious king size bed and in another suitable for groups of up to four people. Guests are cared for by their own personal deck steward, drinks are served at dusk, then enjoy dinner under the stars on the reef and breakfast the following morning.

<http://www.fantasea.com.au/Reefworld/ReefSleep.aspx>