

TOP END HOLIDAY DELIGHTS

Why not make the most of your own backyard next holiday, and set out to explore the top-end of Australia Lifestyle Investor style?



Image courtesy of GBR Helicopter Group – private Heli tour landing on Vlasoff Cay on the Great Barrier Reef.

BY TRICIA SNELL

THE holiday season is almost upon us and this is the best time of the year to be visiting the top end of Australia, because the weather is warm rather than stifling hot, and the wet season is still months away, so the humidity is mild.

The top end of Australia is a kaleidoscope of colour and a hive of activity that has so much to offer as it caters to all tastes.

So whether you are looking for a family holiday that is action packed and going to keep the children entertained, or want to spend time alone with your partner on a romantic getaway, the top end of Australia offers an idyllic destination to relax in and absorb some of Australia's culture, whilst you enjoy some of the most spectacular scenery, magnificent wildlife and simply beautiful flora.

As Heidi Yates, director and general manager of

visitcairns.com, an Australian holiday destination provider with a difference said, "Australia is paradise."

"Cairns is blessed with the reef and the rainforest, and both are virtually on my doorstep. I love nature and the reef is so amazing to explore," Heidi said. "We live in one of the best playgrounds in Australia and possibly the world, and after 12 years of travelling my paradise is here in Cairns, after having seen so much."

Heidi who came to Australia from England ten years ago, has lived in Cairns for the past eight years but what makes this tourist operator different from anyone else is her warmth and enthusiasm, and truly unique tourism background.

"I worked as a gold bullion trader in the Philippines. I have also worked on a tour desk, and for several dive operators, I have worked as a photographer and in sales and marketing.



Image courtesy of GBR Helicopter Group – Scenic flight over Arlington Reef on the Great Barrier Reef



Image courtesy of the CAPTA Group - Aerial view of Cape Tribulation in the heart of the Daintree National Forest, a world heritage park

I have also worked for a Cape Tribulation Rainforest operator”, said Heidi. “I have swum with sharks, whales and rock cod, as well as sky-dived, scuba-dived and snorkelled, bungy-jumped and abseiled, and I can tell you that every experience was exhilarating.”

“We offer a personalised service, as many people want to experience a holiday that is special and personalised. I get a lot out of helping others to achieve their holiday goals and I like to cater specifically to their expectations, as well as their family needs.

“Not all families are able to do the same activities due to physical restrictions, and this is why I ask questions when someone phones me to arrange their next holiday, so that I can work out each persons needs,” said Heidi.

“We are able to design your holiday, no matter where you choose to travel in Australia, as we are travel agents who have seen and experienced most of what this magnificent country has to offer.”

Heidi’s recommendations when visiting Cairns, and the Outback are:

Cairns.

In Cairns, Queensland, home of two World Heritage Parks - the Great Barrier Reef, and Cape Tribulation in the Daintree Rainforest – you will see an aquamarine ocean that is home to a myriad of marine life, clear blue skies, and pristine sand that merge with lush emerald green rainforest.

Heidi’s Travel Tip: The best location to base yourself at when visiting Cairns is the Northern Beaches, because

tourist operators will pick you up from here, and it is comfortable and stylish with self-contained apartments that are only fifteen-thirty minutes away from the city, depending on which beach suburb you choose. Plus, it is so relaxing as a holiday destination as you wake up near the ocean and hear the waves roll in.

The Great Barrier Reef.

The reef is the largest coral system in the world, comprised of more than 2,800 individual reefs, and some 900 islands and cays that stretch over 344,000 square kilometres. The Great Barrier Reef is home to hundreds of species of aquatic animals and was granted World Heritage status, in 1981, to preserve its heritage for future generations.

Heidi’s Travel Tip: if you are looking for a romantic getaway then consider taking a low-level scenic flight over the Great Barrier Reef, as the views are simply stunning and you can often see turtles and large rays in the crystal clear waters from the air. Plus, you can be dropped off on a deserted sand cay for the afternoon with just an esky, a gourmet lunch, and a sun shade, as well as snorkelling equipment, and then collected at the end of the day. This is my first choice when asked by clients for the perfect location for a proposal.

Cape Tribulation Beach and the Daintree Rainforest National Park:

Cape tribulation is situated about 100 kilometres to north of Cairns and is within the Daintree National Park, which is World Heritage listed.

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Heidi's Travel Tip: Cape Tribulation has beautiful spa resorts, so stay overnight in luxury. Cape Tribulation is in the heart of the Daintree National Rainforest, when you can enjoy wildlife cruises on the Daintree River, to spot Crocodiles in the wild, and walk on boardwalks amongst lush and pristine rainforest as well as along miles of deserted golden sand beaches. They say Cape Tribulation is “where the rainforest meets the reef”, as the two world heritage parks meet one another – it is a magical location! It is very assessable for those who are not mobile, and makes for a great family destination.

Kuranda Scenic Railway:

The railway was completed in 1891, and is one of the most beautiful treks that you can ever make on a train, as it takes you through some of the lushest scenery and past many stunning water falls as the train travels from Cairns to the nearby town of Kuranda.

Skyrail Rainforest Cableway:

Completed in 1995, the Skyrail spans 7.5 kilometres over the Barron Gorge National Park, and is acclaimed as being simply breath-taking, even for those visitors who are not overly fond of heights.

Heidi's Travel Tip: When going on the Kuranda Railway and the Skyrail Cableway I also recommend going to the Tjapukai Cultural Park, because here you will learn how to throw a boomerang and a spear, play the didgeridoo and enjoy Aboriginal dancing, which is great fun for all the family, in addition to learning about Aboriginal



Image courtesy of Skyrail Rainforest Cableway



Image courtesy of Mike Ball Dive Expeditions
– Eye to eye with a Minke Whale.



Heidi Yates on board Mike Ball Dive Expeditions – about to come face to face with giant Potato Cod at the Cod Hole!

“ And if you think you can't dive then think again, an introductory dive is perfect, as long as you don't have medical conditions such as heart problems, or asthma, and it is a relaxing way to see the reef for all ages.

heritage. Also make time to visit bird world, the markets, and the butterfly sanctuary, as these are definite crowd pleasers and are sure to make your holiday enjoyable.

Lizard Island:

Situated approximately 250 kilometres north of Cairns, Lizard Island is one of the many islands found in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Heidi's Travel Tip: I highly recommend Mike Ball Dive Expedition's 3 night fly / dive expedition which starts with a stunning 250km low level flight along the barrier reef, landing at Lizard Island to meet up with the luxury vessel that takes you to some of the most pristine reefs that you will ever see. I had worked on the Great Barrier Reef for a number of years before I went on this expedition, and I was amazed by the marine life that I had never seen before like the beautiful lacy scorpion fish and the ghost pipe fish. And if you think you can't dive then think again, an introductory dive is perfect, as long as you don't have medical conditions such as heart problems, or asthma, and it is a relaxing way to see the reef for all ages.

The Outback and Ayers Rock.

Some of the delights that you will encounter when visiting Ayers Rock in the Northern Territory are vividly coloured landscapes and amazing rock formations that are awe inspiring, red earth that blazes brighter than fire embers, and indigenous art and culture that makes you understand what it truly mean to be Australian.

Undara:

Situated about four hours from Cairns, Undara is a geological phenomenon that is situated in the rich red soil of outback Australia. Surrounded by Australian desert, Undara, which was created by tubes of lava, gives visitors a taste of Mother Nature's spectacular qualities.

Heidi's Travel Tip: Due to the distance that you have to travel to reach Undara from Cairns, a two day, one night travel package is the best way to enjoy this region. I thoroughly recommend the guided 2 hour lava tube tour and the sunset wildlife tour, however there are also half, and full-day tours available for those that are keen to explore more of the area.

Ayers Rock:

Situated about 350 kilometres southwest of Alice Springs, Ayers Rock as known as Uluru is a natural rock formation that is located in the Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park. The rock is believed to be thousand of years old and is a 'must see'.

Heidi's Travel Tip: The best way to see Ayres Rock is to do a 3 day 2 night safari, so you can cover a much wider area, and so you can see Uluru at its best, at sunset and at sunrise. You can either camp, or stay in luxury accommodation. This way you are also able to see Kings Canyon and the Olgas, and the colours of the landscape as they change, which is simply beautiful. **Li**