

Wildlife Tracker

Be you a fan of the feathered, furred, scaly or the down-right bizarre, North Queensland is home to all of Australia's most iconic native fauna. So, pack those bags, fill up the car, and let's go wildlife tracking!

Townsville North Queensland

Trip Highlights



DURATION
3 – 5 Days



Ayr
*Cromarty Wetlands
and SS Yongala*



Townsville
*Town Common Conservation Park,
Billabong Sanctuary, ReefHQ*



Magnetic Island
*Forts Walk, West Point,
Charters & Sailing*



Hinchinbrook
*UNESCO World
Heritage-listed Rainforest*

Stop 1

Ayr & Home Hill

Heading north along the Bruce Hwy, the scenery begins to transform, taking you through an agricultural paradise. The fertile soils of the Burdekin region produce some of the region's best fruits and vegetables, making it an ideal place to grab a bite! But even more importantly are the naturally occurring wetlands that are home to some 250 species of birds, 51 species of reptiles and 44 species of mammals. Our pick would be the **Cromarty Wetlands** just north of Ayr.

For the more adventurous, dive a little deeper and discover the wonders of the underwater oasis at one of the world's top dive sites in the **SS Yongala shipwreck** – head out with Yongala Dive to experience a hive of marine activity.

The mighty Burdekin River is also teeming with aquatic life, so set a line and try your luck at catching the illusive barramundi!

**Local
Tip**



Stop 2

Townsville

Just an hour and a half north is Queensland's unofficial northern capital – Townsville. Home to both wildly natural environments and wildlife conservation parks, here you are literally guaranteed an encounter with our animal residents.

If you want to go totally wild, then take a walk in the **Town Common Conservation Park** with recreational trails spanning mountain tops, sandy beaches and coastal wetlands. Seasonal flocks of brolgas frequent the “Town Common” during the wet season, with some remaining year-round. Magpie geese and agile wallabies are the typical inhabitants, and ones to watch out for!

Looking for something a little more ‘one-stop-shop’, then **Billabong Sanctuary** cannot be missed. Recently celebrating its 35th year, the local Australian native animal wildlife park offers a tropical bushland setting on the shores of a billabong, where you can meet your favourite Australian animals – including, koalas, wombats, dingoes, and even the odd saltie! With regular shows, the Billabong rangers will educate and entertain.

Keep those textbooks closed, but learn all about the world's most spectacular natural wonder – the Great Barrier Reef! Tours depart regularly from Townsville and Magnetic Island. Open your eyes to an amazing world filled with thousands of charismatic marine creatures.

In town around mid-July – August? You're in luck! The ocean's majestic titan – the Humpback Whale – can be spotted migrating along the Queensland coast from Townsville. Hop on board a whale-watching tour with **SeaLink Queensland** for a prime seat to catch a glimpse of these gentle giants.

Local
Tip



Stop 3

Magnetic Island

Clock-up a few more nautical miles with a short 20-minute ferry ride with **SeaLink Queensland** across to the locally nicknamed “Maggie”, where the adventure is up to you.

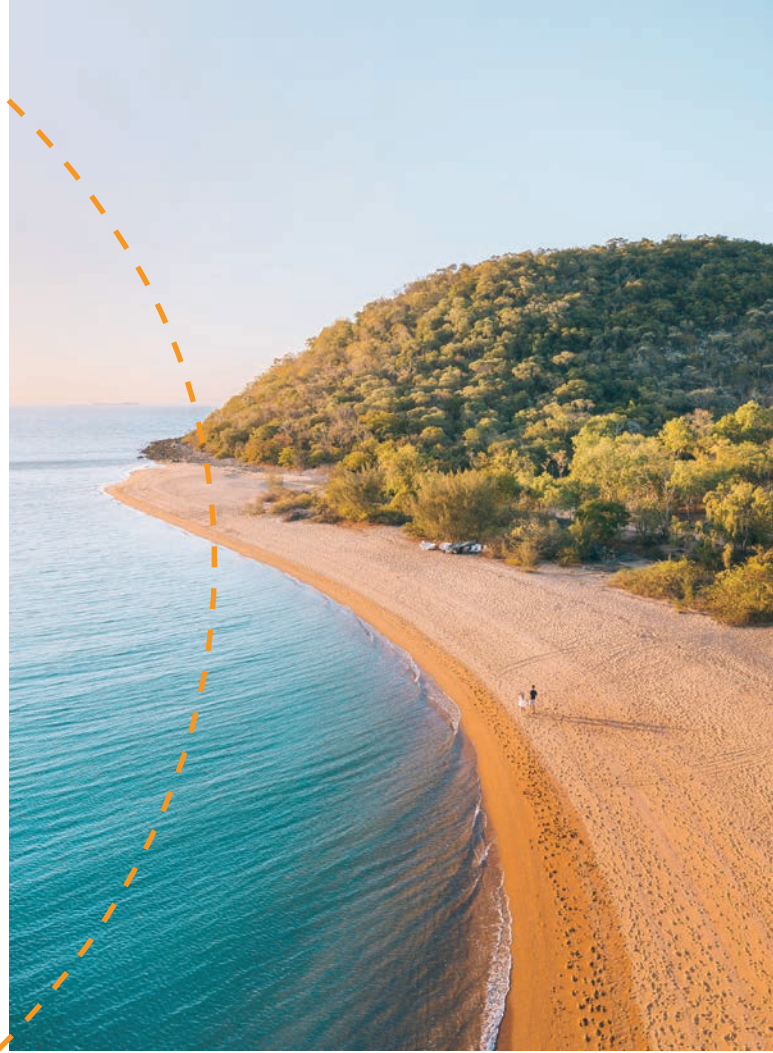
With just over half of the island protected by the Magnetic Island National Park, wildlife thrives on the island with many native species easily spotted along the walking trails, and even right at the old ferry terminal entrance.

For the land-dwelling critters, stroll over to **Geoffrey Bay** (especially early morning, or late afternoon) to spot the ever so friendly rock wallaby. These little cuties are happy to pose for a selfie – but be warned, they will probably steal the limelight!

Add to your wildlife checklist with one of Australia’s most iconic native animals – the humble koala. You’re in luck, and your chances are high at spotting one of these sleeping beauties in the wild, because Magnetic Island is also home to Northern Australia’s largest colony of wild koalas!

Wake before the sun and take the gentle stroll along the **Forts Walk** – it’s the best place to spot a furry companion, and also a pretty sweet sunrise vantage point... can’t beat a 360-degree view! Want a local’s point of view – take the Fort Walk tour with **Magnetic Island Best Bus Tours**.

Local Tip



If you feel like going off the beaten track, then cruise along to **West Point**, where the terrain is a little more rugged and undisturbed. The odd echidna and bush curlew can be spotted here – not to mention this location puts on a stunning show at sunset!

Another magical experience on Magnetic Island is the seasonal butterfly walk at **Horseshoe Bay** which happens May – August each year. The blue tiger butterfly flock to the island in their thousands for their annual winter rest (or ‘dispause’). Be careful not to disturb the, though – they are sleeping after all!

Looking to make a splash, then spend the day (or ideally days) exploring the 23 beaches and bays dotted around the island. Situated in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Area, marine life thrives in the fringing reefs that can be accessed right off the beach. Even better, take a discovery tour with **Aquascene Charters** to access some of the most remote and exclusive beaches on the island where your chances of even swimming alongside the ancient mariner of the seas – the marine turtle – are very likely!

Or you can take in the marvels of the world’s greatest natural wonder – the Great Barrier Reef – at your own pace with one (or both) of the self-guided snorkelling trails at Geoffrey Bay and Nelly Bay.

After a totally ‘wild’ day on Maggie, top it all off with a sunset sail with **Big Mama Sailing**, or **Pilgrim Sailing**. So, kick-back and relax while you sip a champagne and take in the watercolour skies across the horizon – keep an eye on the water though, because you could end up sailing beside a pod of dolphins... it’s like something out of a movie, isn’t it!



Stop 4

ADDITIONAL STOP (ADDS 274KM)

Charters Towers

One natural landscape that cannot be missed is the quintessential Australian Outback. Take a detour to Charters Towers, the gateway to the Outback, and visit some of the heritage-listed buildings that remain from the illustrious gold-mining era. Here you will encounter kangaroos and wallabies – particularly on a sunset stroll up to Towers Hill. But if you're looking to embrace your inner Cowboy, then look no further than the **Texas Longhorn Tours**. The 1100-hectare property – Leahton Park – is just 10km from Charters Towers, and home the largest herd of Texas Longhorns (cattle) in Australia. Standing proudly amongst the herd is JR – the former Guinness World Record horned steer whose horns now exceed 3.1 metres from tip to tip.



Stop 5

Ingham / Hinchinbrook

Further north of Townsville you will find the idyllic Hinchinbrook region, nestled in the ancient rainforests of the UNESCO world heritage-listed Wet Tropics. Home to many species, the hikes and trails in this area are a nature lover's dream. Be sure to stop by the southern hemisphere's largest single-drop waterfall for a truly jaw-dropping experience, and one you will remember for years to come.

Perhaps a highlight of this region is the ruggedly beautiful **Hinchinbrook Island**. One of Australia's largest national park islands, Hinchinbrook Island is renowned for its diverse habitats which is home to species – on land, in the water and in the air. The Hinchinbrook Channel is one to watch though – as you make your way to the island – as its sea grass beds make the perfect lunch spot for the passing dugong!

Stop 6

Paluma

If the iconic Aussie platypus is on your bucket list of animals to see in the wild, then your best bet is with a visit to the **Hidden Valley Cabins**. Voted by Australian Geographic as one of the top five places to see a platypus in the wild – their Platypus Safari has a 98% success rate.

Local
Tip

Stay the night at Hidden Valley Cabins to take in all the natural wonders of what is said to be the world's oldest continually living rainforest in the world

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