



Cape York Queensland trip

The Journey

Starting from Adelaide and travelling via the Flinders Ranges, Innaminka, The Sturt Sony Desert to Birdsville. Then north via the Diamantina, Channel country to Dajraa, after Dajraa taking the Great Nothern Line to Cloncurry, then north to 3 ways and north to Normanton.

From Normanton the plan was to travel up the east coast of Cape York to the tip via the Overland Telegraph Track (OTT), then out to Thursday Island.

From the tip back down the east coast of Cape York to Lockhart River, Lakeside national park to Laura. From Laura out to Hope Vale and Elim beach and on to Cook Town.



Cape York Queensland.

Cape York Peninsula is 220,000 sq km of land located in Far North Queensland, Australia. It is the largest unspoiled wilderness in northern Australia starting at Normanton in the west and Innisfail in the east.

The land north of the Jardine river, the true Cape York, is a narrow peninsula with the Coral sea to the east the Arafura sea and Gulf of Carpentaria to the west and the Torres Strait to the north. Only 80 miles south of Australia's nearest neighboring country Papua New Guinea the land is traditionally owned by the indigenous Australians of the area.

There are 5 communities that collectively form the Northern Peninsula Area (NPA) at the tip of Cape York, the Bamaga, Injinoo, Umagico (Alau), New Mapoon and Seisia communities make up the NPA.

From Musgrave it is 570km of travel on the Peninsula Development Road (PDR) to Pajinka the tip, the road is sometimes very corrugated with bulldust holes, if it rains can be very slippery, so care must be taken.

If you are not driving the Old Telegraph Track (OTT) there are bypass roads around it. When you get to the Jardine River you have 2 choices: To pay to use the ferry to cross the Jardine River. To drive down river and attempt to cross the river using your own vehicle.

When you use the ferry you are paying a fee to enter Aboriginal land run by the Injinoo people. Supplies for the Cape come by boat as the road is not suitable for trucks.

The Equipment.

My vehicle is a Toyota pop top camper with dual 90 litre fuel tanks, and a 50 litre water tank.

The vehicle can sleep four people with the roof extended, it has a cooker, sink, fridge, storage cupboards for food utensils and clothing.

The vehicle has a 150 watt solar panel and a 2000 watt inverter for 240 volt power, it also has dual batteries so as to keep the fridge going day and night.

I have recovery equipment consisting of a snatch strap, high lift jack, Max trax, long handled shovel and an exhaust air jack.

Safety equipment is a first aid kit, fire blanket, 2 fire extinguishers one at the front and one at the back, a satellite phone and UHF radio.





Normanton

Normanton is a small cattle town in the Shire of Carpentaria in Queensland, Australia. It started life as a port for the Gulf of Carpentaria's cattle industry and grew with the discovery of gold at Croydon in 1885. Today it is primarily driven by tourism with the Purple Pub Officially known as the National Hotel, the Albion Hotel which was built in Croydon in the late 1800s and transferred to Normanton in the early years of the twentieth century.





The Savannah King

A model of the largest crocodile ever shot. A woman named Krystyna Pawlowski a professional crocodile hunter shot the 8.63 metre (that's 28 feet 4 inches) Crocodile and ended up in the Guinness Book of Records. The crocodile was shot on the MacArthur Bank, Norman River, downstream from Normanton in July, 1957.

Normanton

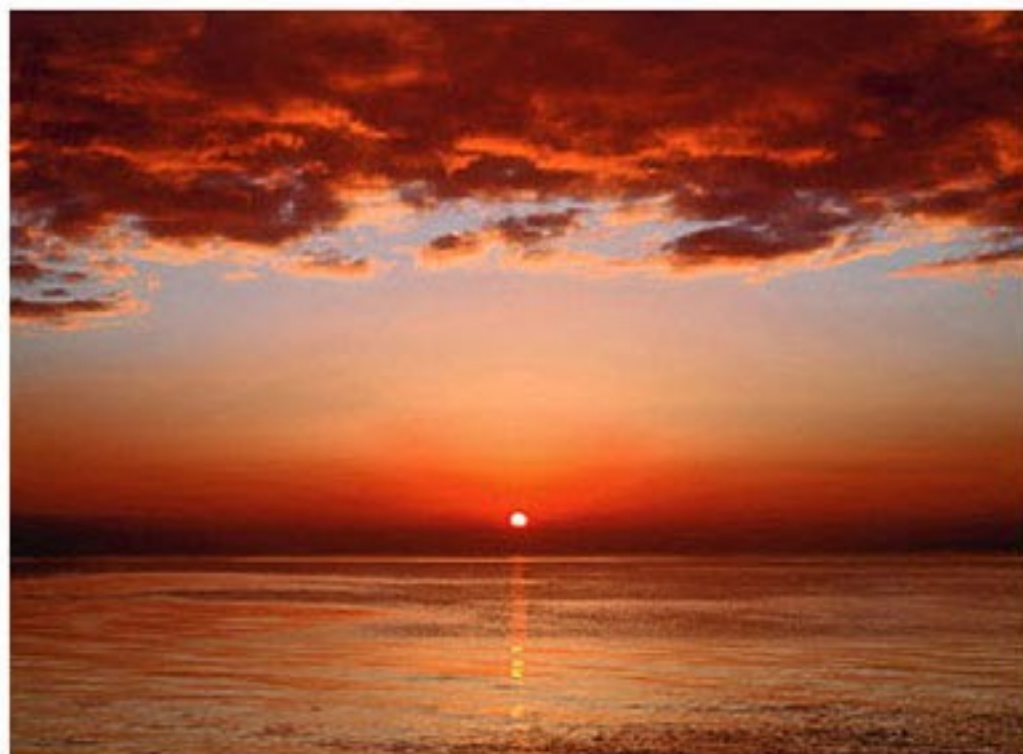
Left; The big Crocodile

Top right; The Gulflander is rail link between Normanton and Croydon. The train leaves Normanton on Wednesday at 8.30 am and arrives in Croydon at 1.30 pm, returns next day at 1.30.

Bottom right; The 42nd Annual Normanton Rodeo & Campdraft

Bottom left; Mutton Hole is a 9000 hectare Wetlands





Kurumba

Right; Sunset in the beer garden at the Sunset Tavern

Top left; Sunset on the Gulf of Carpentaria

Top right; Sunrise in the beer garden of the Sunset Tavern

Bottom right; morning in the Sunset Tavern





Burke Development road

right; Savannah Way Alternate Route

Top left; Sow and piglets

Top right; Kangaroo with Joey in pouch

Bottom left; Brolgas in Jenny Lind creek



Burke Development road

I decided against travelling the 1013kms from Normanton to Musgrave on highway 1 instead i travelled the Burke Development Road north from Normanton to Dunbar then across the Mitchell river, taking the Dixie track to the Peninsula Development Road (PDR) to Musgrave cutting the distance to 500kms. There is no fuel available between Normanton and Musgrave so i had to make sure i did not make any mistakes and take any other track than the right one. The Hema satellite navigation is very good as you can see your location on the map and quickly see if you are on the right or wrong track.

The journey to Dunbar was 300kms of dirt and corrugations with cattle roaming free. Around 70kms from Normanton i came to the Smithburne river to cross then shortly after the Gilbert river neither much of a problem. Another 100kms on i stop at Mentana waterhole, the golden savannah grasslands and wetlands have native animals and birds including herons, jabirus, brolgas, sarus crane and many other waterbird species that migrate here.

From Dunbar i take the Drumduff road to Koolatah then on to the Dixie road, the road has washouts bulldust holes, i reach the Alice river and stop for the day.





Crossing the Mitchell River

was looking a bit scary as i am travelling alone, sat and watched for a while eventually deciding to cross the river.

Selected low range second gear and started the crossing, got to the other side of the river only to find a long dug out channel of water and sand, not a problem for the troopy.



Dixie road

right; Outback cow with Lick. Lick contain minerals calcium, phosphorous, magnesium, sulphur and salt, as well as micro-elements like copper, zinc, selenium, cobalt, manganese, iodine, plus vitamins A, D and E.

Top left; Washout

Bottom right; Alice river

Bottom left; Dixie road



Musgrave Telegraph Station

Musgrave Telegraph Station Musgrave was first built as an overland telegraph station in 1887. It is now a heritage listed former telegraph station and a now roadhouse at Peninsula Developmental Road, also known as Musgrave Roadhouse. Frederick Shepard bought Musgrave off the PMG in the 1930's, the roadhouse is still operated by the Shepherd family today and offers free hot showers for travellers.





Coen

Coen is the traditional homelands of the Kaanju people, it was first settled from the exploration of Cape York by William Hann in 1872. In 1876, Robert Sefton found gold at the Coen River, he built a log fort there for protection from local Aboriginals and prospected for gold.

Coen has a general store where i stocked up with food after being out bush for a week or so, it also has the Echange pub which has been renamed as the Sexchange pub where i had a couple of beers with the locals, i wanted a photo of Cedric an aboriginal man with a beard and cowboy hat, but after another beer he asked me for money for the photo which i refused and deleted.





Archer River

The traditional owners are the Wik, Kaantju and Wikampama people. The river was named after the Archer family of Rockhampton in 1865 by the Jardine's during an expedition of the area. Archer River Roadhouse is on the Peninsula Developmental Rd, 64 km north of Coen, where i decided to stay, i met some locals from Lockhart river who invited me to stay in the Archer riverbed for the night, i had already booked into the enclosed campsite so just had tea with them.





Weipa and Mapoon

Weipa is a mining town on the Gulf of Carpentaria coast of the Cape York Peninsula, and is the largest town on the Cape.

The majority of land around Weipa is Rio Tinto mining lease. There are two continuous mining operations at East Weipa and Andoom mining bauxite, a 3rd site Amrun is under construction.

Mapoon was a Presbyterian mission, aboriginal children were removed from all over the Cape and placed on Mapoon. Mapoon is now back in the hands of Tjungundji people.





Morton Telgraph Station

Moreton Telegraph Station was part of the Cape York Telegraph Line and was completed in 1887, it is located on the Wenlock River and is a 6 hectare (15 acre) clearing in natural bushland. The Wenlock River flows all year, the levels can vary dramatically between the 'wet' season and the 'dry' season.

Before the bridge was built the only way across the Wenlock river was by the 44 gallon drum raft (seen in the top left picture). The station has a hot shower after a hard day's drive.





Bramwell Station

Bramwell Station is a working cattle station with room for travellers, it is 6km from the Overland Telegraph Track and a good place for cooked meal. They have a restaurant with live music, at 5.30 it is happy hour with cold beer, then a talk about the station history by Manager Ken Godfrey. I had a 3 course meal with roast meat and vegies and met a great bunch of people some coming back down from the cape with good stories. The entertainment artists fly in on the weekly mail plane.



30 km GRAVEL ROAD BEGINS 1.3 km AHEAD

**PLEASE DRIVE ACCORDING TO PREVAILING
WEATHER CONDITIONS**

**THIS ROAD IS SUBJECT TO SEASONAL FLOODING,
LANDSLIPS, LOSS OF TRACTION, POTHOLING,
AND FALLEN TREES.**

**THIS IS AN ADVISORY SIGN ONLY.
THE ROAD COULD BECOME IMPASSABLE WITHOUT NOTICE
AT ANY TIME.**



Peninsula Development Road (PDR)

The Peninsula Developmental Road (known as the PDR) is a sealed road of 558 km (347 miles), located in Queensland, Australia. The road links Lakeland in the Shire of Cook and Weipa on the Gulf of Carpentaria coast of the Cape York Peninsula.

Some parts of the unsealed road are severely corrugated with dust holes and washouts. A high clearance vehicle is recommended





Top left; Bramwell junction

Bottom left; The Overland
Telegraph Track

Overland Telegraph Track

The OTT track is an unmaintained track following the path of the original overland telegraph line, starting from Bramwell Junction and continuing to the Jardine River. The road has a length of 350km and it's definitely 4WD only. The track is generally narrow, with some sections being very rocky and eroded with several creeks to cross some are quite deep so a high clearance four wheel drive is required with a snorkel and recovery gear.

Top right; Start of the Overland
Telegraph Track

Bottom right; The first water
crossing



Palm Creek

Top left; Palm Creek north

left; The Overland Telegraph Track

Top left; Palm Creek

Bottom right; Palm Creek south





Top left, page left: **Alice Creek**
Alice creek was reasonable dry

Page left: **Bertie Creek**
Bertie creek had water and rock holes. the crossing of Bertie creek was okay, the exit a bit challenging and bumpy.

Page right: **Gunshot**
Gunshot is a steep entrance, i did not attempt this creek, there is a chicken track for the cautious.





Cockatoo Creek

Cockatoo Creek is a creek with clear water and green vegetation around it. The bottom is rocky but there are bog holes to avoid

Sailor Creek

You cross Sailor Creek on a small bridge. After the bridge, on your left hand side is an old linesmen's shelter with names of previous travellers under the ceiling.

Right; Sailor Creek





Fruit Bat Falls

Water from the Jardine river travels south via Eliot creek to Fruit bat falls into a swimming hole called the sauspans. You can safely swim and play in the waterfalls, there are fish and the bottom is sandy with rocks.

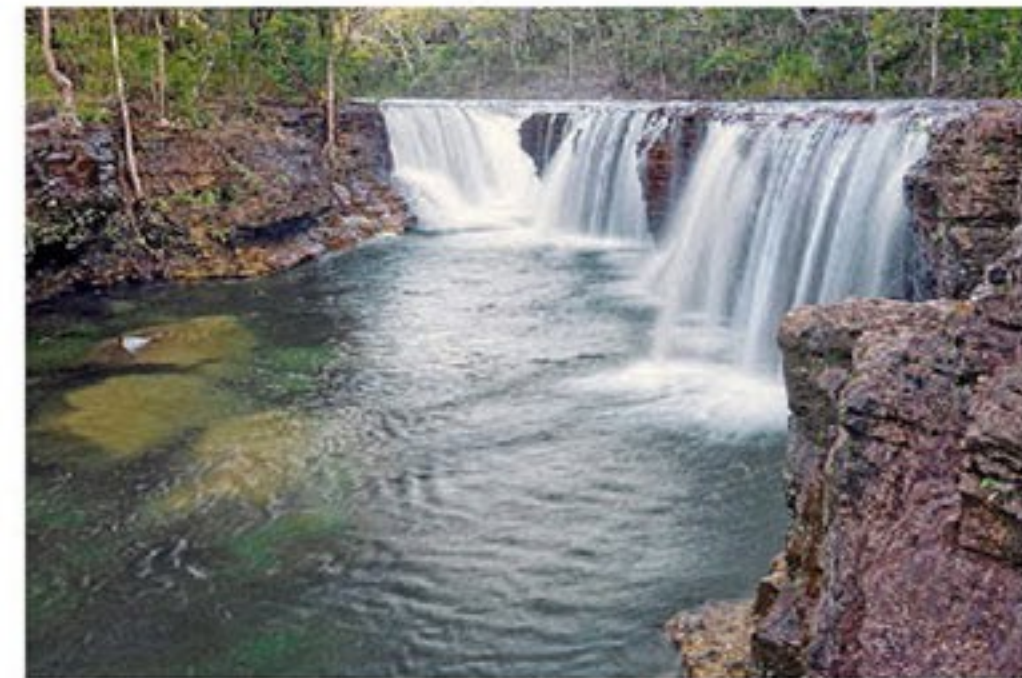




Scrubby Creek

Eliot & Twin Falls

As you leave Fruit Bat falls and head north the track becomes slow going and you reach Scrubby creek a deep water crossing, with water coming over the bonnet. When you reach Eliot falls it is another safe swimming hole with water from the Jardine via Eliot creek. There is camping at Eliot falls but you must book before arriving.





Canal Creek

Top left; Canal Creek going north

Top right; Canal Creek going south

Sam Creek

Bottom right; Sam Creek

Right; Sam Creek





Mistake Creek

Left; Canal Creek going north

Top right; The exit from Mistake Creek going south.

Bottom right; The entrance to Mistake Creek from the north.

Bottom Left; OTT telegraph pole.





Caniball Creek

Top left; Caniball Creek approach from the north

Bottom left; Caniball Creek going south

Bottom right; I stayed overnight at Caniball Creek

Right; The exit at Caniball Creek going south





Cypress creek

Left: Wooden bridge over Cypress Creek, troopy only just fits.

Top Left: Approach to Cypress Creek

right: An old Telegraph pole on the Overland Telegraph Track





Logans creek

Logans Creek is a long crossing, with the water lapping the bonnet in sections and the sandy base, used low range 2nd gear get through.

Top Left: Approaching Logans Creek from the north.

Top right; Crossing Logans Creek.

Right; Crossing Logans Creek.

Bottom left; Entrance to Logans Creek from the north.





Nolan creek

Nolans is the deepest creek crossing, the entrance from the north is shallow and gets deeper, the bottom is sandy and there are 3 exits all steep i chose the left side exit.

Top Left: Entrance from the north to Nolans creek.

Left: Crossing Nolans creek

Top right; View of Nolans Creek from the north

Bottom right; Exiting Nolans Creek.





Jardine river

The Jardine river mouth is at Muttee head and flows east through the Jardine national park, with lots of tributaries flowing inland such as Eliot creek. There is a ferry allowing travellers to cross the Jardine river for a fee (this includes any bush camping north of the Jardine). There is a free crossing down river, with a sign warning people not to try to cross the river at the old ford, i watched 2 cars attempt it and get stuck in the river, another ute came and did cross the river, he pulled the other 2 cars out of the river. i paid the ferry fee.





Mutee head

Mutee Head had the No 52 Radar Station during World War II, past the old radar station is a track that gets bumpy and very sandy to to the mouth of the Jardine river.

Top Left: The old bridge to Mutee head

Bottom Left: Number 52 radar station

Bottom right; the beach at Mutee head

Right; The mouth of the Jardine river.





Bamaga Tavern & Bistro

The Most Northerly Pub on the Mainland

Free WiFi | ATM | Drive-Thru | Bistro | Big Screen

Bamaga Tavern and Bistro offers ice cold beverages, local entertainment, pool tables, dart boards, a juke box and a landscaped beer garden.

With the Bistro providing lunch and dinner, the Bamaga Tavern is the perfect spot to unwind after your drive up "The Track".

Alcohol restrictions apply. Each vehicle can carry:

- 2LT of wine together with
- 30 cans of beer OR
- 24 cans of pre mixed drinks

P: 07 4069 3256 E: hotel@bament.com.au

Bamaga

Bamaga is the most northerly town on the Australian mainland, water supply is from the Jardine river via a treatment plant. Supplies come by boat which docks at Seisa for the supermarket and fuel station, there are several mechanics as travellers often need repairs due to the road conditions, i had to renew the starter motor contacts on the troopy. Horses and dogs wander around the town freely some look quite poorly.



Seísa

In 1977 the name Seisia was adopted by the community at Red Island Point. The name 'Seisia' was taken from the first letters of the names of Mugai Elu's fathers and brothers Sunai, Elu, Ibuai, Sagaukaz, Isua and Aken.

Seisa is a small town on the west coast of the Cape. There is a jetty that is used by boats to bring supplies to Bamega, the jetty is also used by people travelling to Thursday Island.

Top left: The Trinity unloading supplies.

Bottom left: An old refugee boat.

Top right: Mum watching the kids at the jetty.

Right: Sunset.





Loyalty beach

Loyalty beach is 13 acre campsite that has 11 acres of open bush camping and allows you to camp on the beachfront. Lookout for palm cockatoos, green tree frogs, dingoes, kangaroos, green tree snakes, pythons, wild horses, crocodiles or the beautiful Ulysses Butterfly all seen here.

Top right: Helicopter trips over the cape.

Top left: Loyalty beach at low tide

Bottom right: My spot Loyalty beach.

Right: Sunset





Thursday Island

Thursday island is accessible from Seisa by boat, it is about 45 mins travelling past other islands.

Thursday island was a military base during WW2 and is under Australian rule.

Top left: Thursday island beach

Top right: There was a pearling industry on TI with Japanese and aboriginal divers

Bottom left: Thursday island harbour.



Punsand bay

Punsand Bay is like a resort base with a bar, cooked food, swimming pool, laundry, shower and toilets, pre booking is advised, i was lucky enough to share a spot with other travellers. A great place to stay for any Cape York adventurer, angler, beachcomber, birdwatcher or history buff looking to explore and discover the Cape York Peninsula.

The beach here is great, water is beautiful but you are unable to swim in the turquoise waters due to crocs.





Pajinka

Pajinka is the Aboriginal name for the land at The Tip, after the red, bumpy, dusty roads for almost 1000km you come to the most northerly point on the Australian mainland with York and Eborac islands facing you in the Torres Strait. Frangipani Beach stretches for almost 3km from the west of The Tip, a beautiful beach to walk along with turquoise water, but beware of the crocs. There was resort called Pajinka Wilderness Lodge, it closed in 2002 for renovations and was due to reopen in 2003, but it never did.

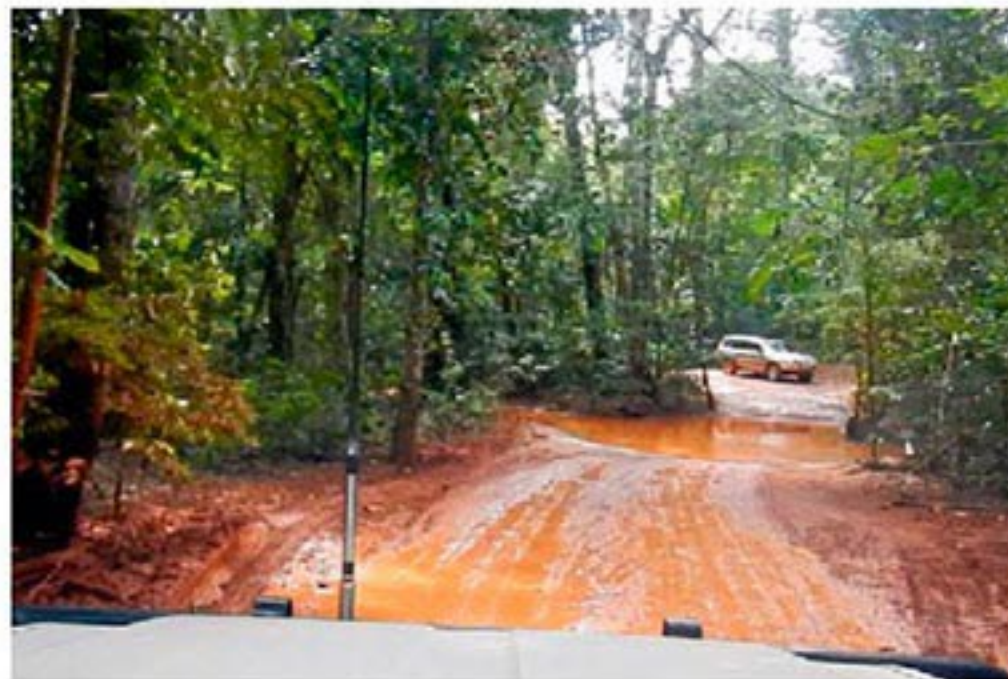




Somerset beach

Somerset Bay is the site of the historic Somerset settlement, which was abandoned in 1942 leaving the ruins and some gravestones that remain. The beach faces east across Albany Passage, and consists of a steep high tide beach, with 200 m wide intertidal sand flats grading into deeper patch reefs. If you go for a climb over the rocks and through the mangroves you will come to a cave with aboriginal rock art, i stayed here for a couple of days, there is great history to Somerset beach.





Lockerbie Rainforest

Lockerbie rainforest is between the croc tent and the tip of Cape York. When it rains the rain seems to collect on the canopy and make the rainfall even heavier, making the track wet n slippery.

The Croc Shop was opened by Cape York pioneer Linda Rowe in 1984, Dale and Lea run the Croc tent as managers since 2010, after 4 years they brought the Croc tent.

The Croc Tent is only 17 kilometres from the northern most point of Australia. Get your free map and helpful advice on things to see, the current road conditions and a clean shirt if you have not been keeping up with the washing.





Ussher point

The track to Ussher Point is 60km long, it is variable and interesting. It travels open dry sclerophyll forest, through patches of vine scrub, and over rocky bauxite outcrops. Not too many people travel this track so you have to be able to rescue yourself if need be.

The camping area is very small and only suitable for 3 cars MAX. You cannot drive to the beach as the track is blocked by posts but it is only a short walk to the entrance to the river, as always be aware of crocs.





Captain Billy's landing

Captain Billy's is a very remote place on the eastern side of the Cape York Peninsula. The track to Captain Billy's is 27km of narrow track with water crossing and washouts, the camp site is very remote and wind swept and the facilities very basic.

At low tide you can access the caves, Captain Billy's landing is surrounded by lush rainforest.





Chilli Beach

Chilli beach is located on the east coast of Cape York near Lockhart river, i travelled by a track from the old telegraph station via the Rocky creek, Wenlock river and the Pascoe river. The camping is very limited so booking in advance is advisable. The beach is surrounded by tropical rainforest and turquoise water, the sunrise at Chilli beach is well worth the early morning viewing, the days are warm with plenty to explore in the rainforest or on the beach.





Lakefield NP

Lakefield National Park has grasslands and woodlands, wetlands, coastal estuaries, mangroves and mudflats. In the south, sandstone hills and escarpments dominate the landscape. I stayed at Saltwater Creek, the birds kept me awake they were noisy all night and as the sign says there were saltwater crocs and lots of mosquitoes.



Top left: Entering Lakefield NP

Top right: Big Saltwater Croc
Bottom right: Cape Flattery

Right: Crossing the Normanby River.





Laura

Laura is a small town in the bottom of Lakefield National Park, it has a few buildings and the old Quinkan Pub nestled in the shade of mango trees. Quinkan country is the Aboriginal spirits shown at Split Rock and Qu Qu Yalangi sites the largest collection of prehistoric rock art in the world.

Top left: Laura and the railway to Cooktown.
Bottom Left: Split rock Aboriginal art.

Top left: Old Laura homestead.
Top right: Aboriginal art
Bottom right: Mushroom rock art.





Elim Beach

Elim beach has soft squeaky white sand, towering paperbark trees, great views out to Coloured Sand cliffs and room to camp under shady trees. After saying G'day to Eddie i set up camp by the waters edge with a view to the coloured sands enjoying a fresh coconut off the tree. Late in the arvo i joined some young crew for a walk to the coloured sands, we then climbed to the top and watched the sunset. Walking back in the dark inland so as to miss any crocs that might be about the waters edge.

Top right: Elim camp spot
Bottom right: Coloured sands

Right top: Coloured sand cliffs.
Right bottom: Sunrise over Cape Bedford.





Hope Vale

Hope Vale is a town on the way to Elim beach, it is surrounded by tropical native bushland, mountain ranges, pristine coastal and diverse flora and fauna. On my return i sat and talked to an elder who told me about the area, the church being a lutheran mission until 1968, it is now the local church. Hope Vale has a population of arround 1500 made up of thirteen clan groups who mostly speak Guugu Yimithirr.

Top right: Endeavour falls
Bottom right: Issabella falls

This page: Hope Vale





Cook Town

Cooktown is in Guugu Yimithirr country and was named by Captain James Cook when his ship ran aground on a reef in 1770. In October 1873 it became a supply port for the goldfields further north along the Palmer River. From 1873 to 1890 over half a million ounces of gold was exported from Cooktown, the towns population was greater than 6000 people and had 47 pubs.

Top right: Endeavour rivermouth

Bottom right: Finch Bay

Top left: Cooktown from grassy hill

Bottom left: Sunrise at the lighthouse

This page right: Captain Cook



The trip to Cape York took me 4 months.
A total distance covered was 10000 kilometers.
I travelled from South Australia up through the middle of Australia to Normanton
on the Gulf of Carpentaria.
Then up the West Coast of Gulf of Carpentaria to the tip of Australia at Cape York.
Returning down the east coast of Australia via the Overland Telegraph Track (OTT,
Captain Billy's landing, Chilli Beach, Lakeside National Park and onto
Cooktown.

