

Fraser Coast



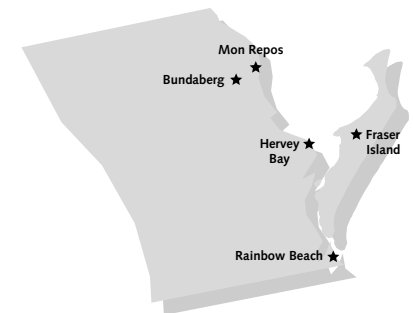
The sassy, social bustle of the Sunshine Coast diminishes north of Noosa, giving way to the sleepy coastal villages and rural inland towns of the Fraser Coast. The undisputed highlight of the region is Fraser Island, the world's largest sand island. Essentially one long, forest-backed beach, Fraser Island is a land sculpted by wind and surf; a mystical land of giant dunes, ancient rainforests, luminous lakes and endemic wildlife that includes the purest strain of dingo to be found in Australia. Whether on a 4WD camping trip or in five-star luxury, the Fraser experience is not to be missed.

Across the calm waters of the Great Sandy Strait, the mellow coastal community of Hervey Bay is the gateway to Fraser Island, and a chill-out bay for migrating humpback whales. From July to October each year, whales stream into the bay for a few days before continuing on to Antarctica. Further south, tiny Rainbow Beach is a refreshingly unaffected seaside village in a pristine natural setting and is fast gaining popularity as an alternative launch pad to Fraser Island.

Fishing, swimming, boating and camping are hugely popular along this entire stretch of coastline, while further inland dry bushland and agricultural fields surround old-fashioned country towns steeped in history. Bundaberg, the largest city in the region, overlooks a sea of waving cane fields that gives birth to its famous liquid-gold rum – a fiery, gut-churning spirit guaranteed to scramble a few brain cells!

HIGHLIGHTS

- Cruising up the beach 'highway', hiking through the rainforest and cooling off in the vivid lakes of **Fraser Island** (p374)
- Watching the whales play in **Hervey Bay** (p363)
- Witnessing turtles take their first flipper-stumble down the beach at **Mon Repos** (p372)
- Copping an eyeful of the coloured sand cliffs at **Rainbow Beach** (p359)
- Sampling 'liquid gold' at the rum distillery in **Bundaberg** (p371)



FRASER COAST

The Fraser Coast runs the gamut from coastal beauty, beachfront national parks and tiny seaside villages to agricultural farms and sugarcane fields surrounding old-fashioned country towns. Mellow Hervey Bay draws the biggest crowds with its easy access to Fraser Island and pumping whale-watching action. Nestled in a picturesque bay south of Hervey Bay, pretty little Rainbow Beach, with its stunning coloured-sand cliffs, is even closer to Fraser and has a good surf beach.

Far removed from the cruisy beach scene, Maryborough and Gympie are inland country towns steeped in history and heritage. A little further north, Bundaberg rises out of a sea of sugarcane fields, fruit orchards and vegetable patches. Seasonal picking and harvesting attract long-staying backpackers, or maybe the pull is Bundaberg's wickedly famous rum!

GYMPIE

☎ 07 / pop 10,933

Gympie's gold once saved Queensland from near-bankruptcy but that was in the 1860s

and not much has happened since. A few period buildings line the main street but most travellers on the Bruce Hwy bypass the town centre.

For information on the Fraser Coast region you can stop at one of the three offices of the **Cooloolo Regional Development Bureau** (www.cooloolo.org.au); Matilda (☎ 5483 5554; Matilda Service Centre, Bruce Hwy; ☎ 9am-5pm); Lake Alford (☎ 5483 6411; Bruce Hwy, Gympie; ☎ 9am-4.30pm); Gympie (☎ 5483 6656; 107 Mary St; ☎ 8.30am-4pm). They also stock the (free) *Heritage Walking Tour Map*, which details Gympie's relics of the gold-mining days.

The **Woodworks Forestry & Timber Museum** (☎ 5483 7691; cnr Fraser Rd & Bruce Hwy; adult/student \$4/2; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 1-4pm Sun) on the highway displays memorabilia and equipment from the region's old logging days.

The **Gympie Gold Mining & Historical Museum** (☎ 5482 3995; 215 Brisbane Rd; adult/child/family \$8.80/4.40/20; ☎ 9am-4pm) is set up to exhibit a large collection of mining equipment and functioning steam-driven engines, as well as the more traditional exhibits of a historical museum.

For a scenic tour of the pretty Mary Valley you can chug through the countryside on a restored 1923 steam train, **The Valley Rattler** (☎ 5482 2750; www.thevalleyrattler.com; half-day tours per adult/child \$20/10, day tours \$36/18). The train leaves from the old Gympie train station on Tozer St every Wednesday and Sunday morning at 10am and steams along to the tiny township of Imbil 40km away. On Saturday, **half-day tours** (☎ 9.30am, 11.45am & 1.45pm) only go as far as Amamoor, 20km away. Amamoor is the site of the annual **Muster**, a country music hoe-down held over six days in late August each year.

If you don't want to camp at the Muster, the **Cooloolo Country B&B** (☎ 5482 5018; cooloolocountry@hotmail.com; 69 Duke St; s/d \$95/110) has homey rooms in a classic Queenslander. Otherwise, the **Gympie Muster Inn** (☎ 5482 8666; 21 Wickham St; d \$100; ☎ ☎) is a large, central motel with business facilities and a restaurant.

Although Gympie's attractions are somewhat lacking, gourmet travellers will salivate over the lovely **Kingston House Restaurant** (☎ 5483 6733; 11 Channon St; mains \$18-29; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Sun). Nestled inside a beautifully renovated, sprawling Queenslander, this restaurant is pure class. The menu features delicious dishes using local produce and has a boutique wine list. Long lunches, tapas nights and a cosy fireplace are worth the trip.

Another novelty in country Gympie is **Emilia's** (☎ 5482 8885; 201 Mary St; mains \$8-20; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri), an Italian-run deli and café adorned with heavy brocade, ornate gold-framed mirrors, a tempting range of imported deli items – and excellent espressos.

Greyhound Australia (☎ 1300 473 946; www.greyhound.com.au) has numerous daily services from Brisbane (\$34, 3½ hours), Noosa (\$18, two hours) and Hervey Bay (\$28, 1¼ hours). **Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10; www.premiers.com.au) operates the same routes (once daily). Long-distance coaches stop at the bus shelter in Jaycee Way, behind Mary St. **Polley's Coaches** (☎ 5482 9455; Pinewood Ave) has buses to Rainbow Beach (\$15, 1¼ hours), departing from the RSL on Mary St at 1.15pm on weekdays.

Queensland Rail (☎ 1300 131 722; www.traveltrain.com.au) operates the *Tilt Train* (adult/child \$39.60/19, 2½ hours) on Sunday to Friday and the *Sunlander* (adult/child \$39.60/19, 3¼ hours, three weekly), which travel from Brisbane to Gympie on their way to Rockhampton and Cairns.

ELIZA FRASER'S LEGENDARY PHRASES

In 1836, a group of castaways from the shipwrecked *Stirling Castle* landed on the island after six weeks adrift. In the group was a Scottish woman, Eliza Fraser, the wife of the captain of the ill-fated ship. After her rescue some months later, Eliza penned a lurid (and unverified) account of her husband's death and her 'terrifying' ordeal with the island's Aborigines, the Butchulla. Although other survivors disputed her story, Eliza was feted for battling through being 'captured' by so-called 'savages', 'stripped naked' and forced into 'slavery' in the bush. Aboriginal accounts of the same events tell how Eliza was 'rescued' and 'nurtured' by the local women.

Such was the popularity and notoriety of her story, however, that the island became known as Fraser Island.

RAINBOW BEACH

☎ 07 / pop 999

Gorgeous Rainbow Beach is a smidgeon of a town at the base of the Inskip Peninsula with spectacular multicoloured sand cliffs overlooking its rolling surf and white sandy beach. Still relatively 'undiscovered', the town's friendly locals, relaxed vibe, and convenient access to Fraser Island (only 10 minutes by barge; see p377) and the Cooloolo Section of the Great Sandy National Park has made this a rising star of Queensland's coastal beauty spots.

Information

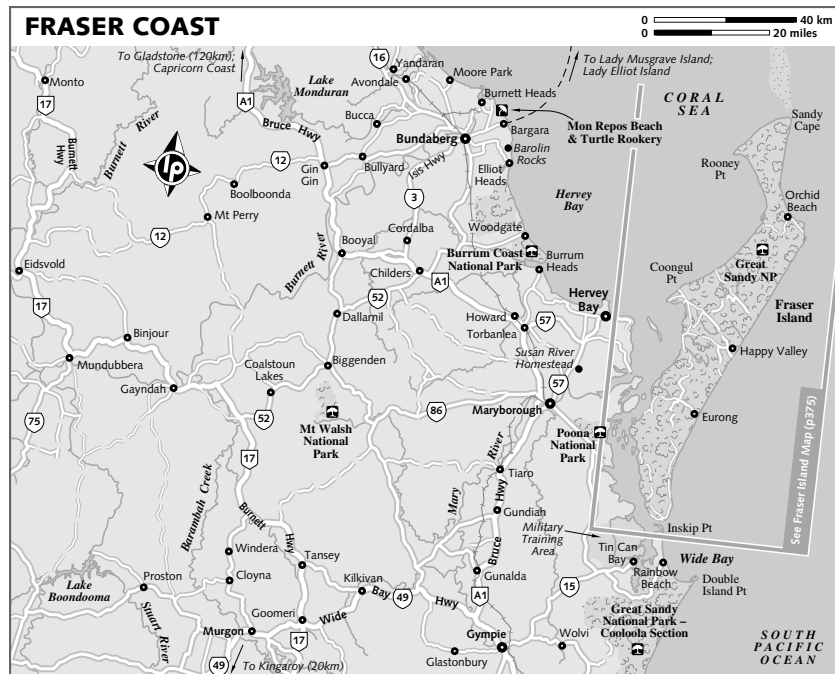
QPWS office (☎ 5486 3160; Rainbow Beach Rd; ☎ 7am-4pm) Has walking maps and 24-hour vending machines that issue car and camping permits for Fraser Island (credit cards only).

Rainbow Beach visitors centre (☎ 5486 3227; 8 Rainbow Beach Rd; ☎ 7am-5pm)

Sights & Activities

The town is named for the **coloured sand cliffs**, a 2km walk along the beach. A 600m track along the cliffs at the southern end of Cooloolo Drive leads to the **Carlo Sandblow**, a spectacular 120m-high dune.

Double Island Point has a good surf break, but fishing is the most popular activity here. The vast shoreline provides abundant beach fishing and really serious anglers can access



Tin Can Bay (opposite) inlet from either the Carlo Point or Bullock Point Boat Ramps. Both are just north of town.

Beyond Double Island Point is the Cooloola Section of the **Great Sandy National Park** (p352) and with a 4WD it's possible to drive all the way to Noosa. Bushwalkers will find tracks throughout the national park (maps from the QPWS office) including the 46.2km Cooloola Wilderness Trail, which starts at Mullens car park (off Rainbow Beach Rd) and ends near Lake Cooloola.

Rainbow Paragliding (☎ 5486 3048, 0418-754 157; www.paraglidingrainbow.com; glides \$150) offers tandem glides above the Carlo Sandblow. If you get hooked you can do a one-day introduction (\$220) or an eight-day full licensed course (\$1400). **Skydive Rainbow Beach** (☎ 0418-218 358; www.skydiverainbowbeach.com; 2440m/4270m dives \$305/400) gets your knees in the breeze and lands on the main beach.

Horse types can get their equine fix on a beach-and-bush ride with **Rainbow Beach Horse Rides** (☎ 0438 710 530; 1hr ride adult/child \$50/40, 1½hr ride \$60/50).

Rainbow Beach Dolphin View Sea Kayaking (☎ 0408-738 192; 4hr tours per person \$65) operates kayaking safaris and rents kayaks (half day \$65), but if you'd rather surf with the dolphins, the company also runs the Rainbow Beach Surf School (one-hour session \$55). Board hire is \$15 per hour or \$40 per day. **Carlo Canoes** (☎ 5486 3610; per half/full day \$30/45) hires canoes if you want to do your own exploring.

Teeming with gropers, turtles, manta rays and harmless grey nurse sharks, Wolf Rock, a congregation of four volcanic pinnacles off Double Island Point, is widely regarded as one of Queensland's best scuba-diving sites. The **Wolf Rock Dive Centre** (☎ 5486 8004; www.wolfrockdive.com.au) offers four-day PADI courses (\$595) that include two dives at Wolf Rock.

Rainbow Dreaming (☎ 0428-895 576; ☎ by appointment) at Pippies Beach House (right) entertains with cultural talks and Dreamtime legends while you spend half a day fashioning a didgeridoo (\$100) or boomerang (\$25).

Tours

Surf & Sand Safaris (☎ 5486 3131; www.surfandsand safaris.com.au; adult/child \$80/40) has a combined 4WD and amphibious vehicle tour through the national park, and along the beach to the coloured sands and lighthouse at Double Island Point.

Dolphin Ferry Cruise (☎ 5486 8085, 0428-838 836; www.dolphinferrycruise.com.au; adult/child \$18/9, 3hr cruise \$35/20; ☎ 7.20am & 9.30am Tue-Sun) run leisurely houseboat cruises from Carlo Point across the inlet to Tin Can Bay. The highlight of the trip is hand-feeding Mystique, a wild Indo-Pacific Humpback dolphin who makes regular breakfast visits to the Tin Can Bay marina (see boxed text, opposite).

Sleeping

Rainbow Beach Holiday Village (☎ 1300 366 596, 5486 3222; www.beach-village.com; 13 Rainbow Beach Rd; unpowered/power sites from \$22/28, cabins from \$90; ☎ ☎) This excellent park spreads over 5 acres, overlooking the beach and ocean. The cabins are fully self-contained, and it's extremely popular. Rates are for two people.

Pippies Beach House (☎ 1800 425 356, 5486 8503; www.pippiesbeachhouse.com.au; 22 Spectrum St; dm/d \$22/60; ☎ ☎ ☎) With only seven rooms, this small, super-chilled hostel is the place to relax. Learn to fashion a didgeridoo, then play it around the campfire at the free BBQs every Wednesday night. Other bonuses include free breakfasts and water toys, and plenty of space in the garden for tents and vans (\$12 per person).

Dingo's Backpackers Resort (☎ 1800 111 126, 5486 8222; www.dingosatrainbow.com; 20 Spectrum Ave; dm/d \$22/65; ☎ ☎ ☎) The bar is as lively as the vivacious English manager in this party hostel. There's live music every Wednesday night, a Balinese-style gazebo for recovery, free tours to Carlo Sandblow, free pancake breakfasts, and cheap meals every night.

our pick Debbie's Place (☎ 5486 3506; www.rainbow beachaccommodation.com.au; 30 Kurana St; d/ste from \$69/79; ☎) The charming rooms inside this beautiful timber Queenslander are fully self-contained and have private entrances and private verandas. The effervescent Debbie is a mine of information and makes this a cosy home away from home. Laundry facilities are available and there's a BBQ in the tropical gardens.

Rainbow Sands Holiday Units (☎ 5486 3400; 42-46 Rainbow Beach Rd; d \$89, 1-bedroom apt \$100; ☎ ☎) This low-rise, palm-fronted complex has neat, appealing motel rooms with poolside glass doors and bar fridges, and self-contained units with full laundries.

Rainbow Shores Resort (☎ 5486 3999; www.rainbowshores.com.au; 12 Rainbow Shores Dr; r from \$875 per week, villas & beach houses from \$1075 per week; ☎ ☎) The accommodation options in this luxury bush retreat include standard holiday units,

DETOUR: TIN CAN BAY

En route from Rainbow Beach to Maryborough, turn north off Rainbow Beach Rd on to Tin Can Bay Rd. After 10km you reach the idyllic and quiet fishing village of Tin Can Bay. Sitting at the southern tip of the Great Sandy Strait, it's the perfect place to escape the beaten track.

Mystique, the resident dolphin, makes regular breakfast visits to the Tin Can Bay marina boat ramp and monitored feeding takes place from 8am to 10am.

On the main road into town, the **Sandcastle Motel** (☎ 5486 4555; Tin Can Bay Rd; d \$75; ☎ ☎) has large rooms with small kitchenettes, or you could live it up at **Dolphin Waters** (☎ 5486 2600; www.dolphinwaters.com.au; 40-1 The Esplanade; d per night/week from \$125/700; ☎ ☎), which has spotless, self-contained units.

The seafood platter at **Codfather Too** (☎ 5486 4400; 1 Oyster Pde; mains \$12-30; ☎ lunch & dinner) has piles of mud crab, Moreton Bay bugs, prawns, calamari, scallops, and fish and chips; the marina restaurant has lovely water views.

funky, individual three-bedroom beach houses and stylish split-level villas. There's a restaurant, nine-hole golf course, tennis courts, BBQs – and a minimum five-night stay in high season.

Also recommended is **Fraser's on Rainbow** (☎ 1800 100 170, 5486 8885; www.fraseronrainbow.com; 18 Spectrum St; dm/d from \$22/64; ☎ ☎). In a nicely converted motel this hostel has clean, roomy dorms and a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere.

Eating

Self-caterers will find a supermarket on Rainbow Beach Rd.

Archies (☎ 5486 3277; 12 Rainbow Beach Rd; mains \$7-15; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This popular café perfectly encapsulates Rainbow's laid-back surfer chic, serving delicious smoothies, veggie burgers, and fish in various guises.

Waterview Bistro (☎ 5486 8344; Cooloola Drive; mains \$23-28; ☎ breakfast Sun, lunch Wed-Sat, dinner Wed-Sun) Sunset drinks are a must at this swish restaurant with sensational views of Fraser Island from its hilltop perch. Interesting seafood dishes include crumbed garfish fillets and Sandy Straits crab linguini.

Getting There & Around

Greyhound (☎ 1300 473 946; www.greyhound.com.au) has several daily services from Brisbane (\$52, five hours), Noosa (\$33, 2½ hours) and Hervey Bay (\$28, 1½ hours). **Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10; www.premiers.com.au) has less expensive services. **Polley's Coaches** (☎ 5482 9455) has buses from Gympie (\$15, 1¼ hours).

Most 4WD hire companies will also arrange permits, barge costs and hire out camping gear. Some recommended companies:

All Trax 4WD Hire (☎ 5486 8767; Karoonda Rd)

Rainbow Beach Adventure Centre 4WD Hire

(☎ 5486 3288; www.adventurecentre.com.au; Rainbow Beach Rd; ☎ 7am-5pm)

Safari 4WD (☎ 1800 689 819, 5486 8188; 3 Karoonda Ct)

Cooloola Coast Realty (☎ 5486 3411; Shop 2, 6 Rainbow Beach Rd; per night \$10) rents lock-up garages if you need to leave your own car in town.

MARYBOROUGH

☎ 07 / pop 21,500

Born in 1847, Maryborough is one of Queensland's oldest towns, and its port was the first shaky step ashore for thousands of 19th-century free settlers looking for a better life in the new country. Heritage and history are Maryborough's fortes, the pace of yesteryear reflected in its beautifully restored colonial-era buildings and gracious Queenslander homes.

Orientation & Information

The helpful **Maryborough/Fraser Island visitors centre** (☎ 1800 214 789, 4190 5742; City Hall, Kent St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat & Sun) has free copies of self-guided walking tours.

Kent St is the main strip but you'll find Portside with most of the museums and the Mary River Parklands along Wharf St.

Sights

Portside in the historic port area beside the Mary River has 13 heritage-listed buildings, parklands and museums. Today's landscaped gardens and tidy colonial-era buildings paint a different story from Maryborough's once-thriving port and seedy streets filled with sailors, ruffians, brothels and opium dens. The **Portside Centre** (☎ 4190 5730; cnr Wharf &

Richmond Sts; ☎ 10am-4pm) located in the former **Customs House** has interactive displays on Maryborough's history. Part of the centre but a few doors down, the **Bond Store Museum** also highlights key periods in Maryborough's history. Downstairs is the original packed-earth floor and even some liquor barrels from 1864.

To trace your genealogical tree, cross the road to the **Heritage Centre** (☎ 4123 1842; cnr Wharf & Richmond Sts; ☎ 9am-4pm) where you'll find colonial immigration records from ships logs; and if dear old great-great-granddaddy arrived in Australia courtesy of Her Majesty's prison system, you'll find convict records as well.

Also on Wharf St, the **Maryborough Military & Colonial Museum** (☎ 4123 5900; 106 Wharf St; adult/child \$5/2; ☎ 9am-3pm) has the only surviving three-wheeler Girling car. Originally built in London in 1911, this fully restored model zips along at a blistering 29kph. The museum also houses a replica Cobb & Co coach and one of the largest military libraries in Australia.

The **Mary River Parklands** on the riverfront has pleasant walkways and picnic areas. Further down the river is pretty **Queens Park** (heritage-listed) with a profusion of glorious trees, including a Banyan fig that's more than 140 years old.

Lining the streets around Portside are many fine old buildings including Queensland's oldest **post office** (cnr Bazaar & Wharf Sts) built in 1866. On Richmond St is the revival-style **Woodstock House** and the neoclassical **former Union Bank**, birthplace of *Mary Poppins* author, PL Travers. The life-size **Mary Poppins statue** on the street depicts the acerbic character Travers created rather than the saccharine-sweet Disney version. Back on Wharf Street is the **Customs House Hotel** (closed for renovations), one of the oldest portside hotels, which once had an opium den and now has a resident ghost!

You'll have to leave Portside to visit the National Trust-classified **Brennan & Geraghty's Store** (☎ 4121 2250; 64 Lennox St; adult/child/family \$5.50/2.50/13.50; ☎ 10am-3pm), which traded for 100 years before closing its doors. The museum is filled with tins, bottles and packets, including early Vegemite jars and curry powder from the 1890s, all crammed onto the ceiling-high shelves. Look for the 1885 tea packet from China, the oldest item in the store.

Activities

On a **Tea with Mary** (☎ 1800 214 789, 4190 5730; per person \$10.50) tour of the historic precinct, a costumed guide spills the beans on the town's past. The tour includes morning tea.

Maryborough Riverboat Cruises (☎ 4123 1523; www.maryboroughrivercruise.com; 1hr tour adult/child \$15/8, 2hr lunch cruise \$30/15; ☎ 10am, noon & 2pm Tue-Sun) provide informed commentaries while you cruise past heritage homes and historic buildings along the Mary River.

On the last weekend of each month you can catch an outdoor flick at **Moonlight Movies** in the Mary River Parklands on Friday night; get spooked on a torch-lit tour of the city's grisly murder sites, opium dens, haunted houses and town cemetery with **Ghostly Tours & Tales** (☎ 1800 214 789, 4190 5742; tour incl progressive 3-course dinner \$75) on Saturday night; and top it off with a leisurely morning of food, brass bands, steam train rides and river cruises the next morning at **Sunday in the Park**.

Sleeping

Wallace Caravan Park & Units (☎ 4121 3970; www.wallacecaravanpark.com.au; 22 Ferry St; unpowered/powerd sites \$17/22, cabins \$35-70; ☎) This pleasant park spreads itself across a gentle slope underneath a bevy of towering trees. Modern cabins, self-contained motel units, and camp kitchens cater to all tastes. Rates are for two people.

Royal Centrepoint Motel (☎ 4121 2241; www.centrepointmotel.com.au; 326 Kent St; s/d \$70/75; ☎) The faded carpets and 1920s-style corridors give this old building in the town centre a Heartbreak Hotel feel. The rooms and the communal kitchenette are spotless and a continental breakfast is included in the tariff.

Blue Shades Motor Inn (☎ 4122 2777; www.blue.shades.com; 35 Ferry St; r/ste from \$86/120; ☎) A close second to the Parkway, this large motel complex has a range of accommodation, from generic and simple motel rooms to modern executive rooms.

McNevin's Parkway Motel (☎ 1800 072 000, 4122 2888; www.mcnevin.com.au; 188 John St; r/ste from \$99/125; ☎) This well-run complex is popular with business folk but the rooms are comfortable, regardless of why you are staying. A step up in style and price are the smart executive suites, which have separate bedrooms and spas.

Eating

Toast (☎ 4121 7222; 199 Bazaar St; dishes \$5-7.90; ☎ 7am-4pm Mon-Sat, 7pm-11pm Fri & Sat) Stainless

steel fittings, polished cement floors and excellent coffee (served in paper cups) stamp the metro-chic seal on this groovy café.

Muddy Waters Café (☎ 4121 5011; 71 Wharf St; mains \$15-32; ☎ 10am-3pm Tue-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat & Sun, dinner Wed-Sat) The shady riverfront deck and summery menu at this classy café will keep you happy with tempting seafood dishes such as Heineken-battered barramundi and salt-and-pepper squid.

Port Residence (☎ 4123 5001; Wharf St; mains \$12-25; ☎ lunch Wed-Mon, dinner Fri & Sat) An elegant restaurant and tea room in the old Custom House residence. Light meals and traditional Aussie favourites including scones and tea are served on the shady veranda, which has lovely views over the parklands.

Drinking & Entertainment

A few *salutés* and *chin-chins* are in order at the **Post Office Hotel** (☎ 4121 3289; cnr Bazaar & Wharf St), a lovely building designed by an Italian architect, Caradini, in 1889.

For a touch of culture, the strikingly contemporary **Brolga Theatre** (☎ 4122 6060; 5 Walker St) hosts musical and theatrical events.

Getting There & Away

Both the **Sunlander** (\$56.10, five hours, three weekly) and **Tilt Train** (\$56.10, 3½ hours, Sunday to Friday) connect Brisbane with the Maryborough West train station, 7km west of the centre. There's a shuttle bus from the main bus terminal beside the Maryborough train station on Lennox St.

Greyhound Australia (☎ 1300 473 946; www.greyhound.com.au) and **Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10; www.premierms.com.au) have buses to Gympie (\$25, one hour), Bundaberg (\$34, three hours), Hervey Bay (\$9, 40 minutes) and Brisbane (\$54, 4½ hours).

Wide Bay Transit (☎ 4121 3719) has hourly services between Maryborough and the Urangan Marina in Hervey Bay (\$7.60, one hour) every weekday, with fewer services on the weekend. Buses depart Maryborough from outside the City Hall in Kent St.

HERVEY BAY

☎ 07 / pop 41,225

Named after an English Casanova, it's no wonder Hervey Bay's seductive charms are difficult to resist. A warm subtropical climate, long sandy beaches, calm blue ocean and a relaxed and unpretentious local com-

munity lures all sorts of travellers – backpackers, families and sea-changing retirees – to its shores. Throw in the chance to see the majestic humpback whales frolicking in the water, and the town's convenient access to the World Heritage-listed Fraser Island and it's easy to understand how this once sleepy fishing village seduces you without even trying.

Don't bother packing a surfboard though: Fraser Island shelters Hervey Bay from the ocean surf and the sea here is shallow and completely flat – perfect for kiddies and post-card summer holiday pics.

Orientation

Hervey Bay covers a string of beachside suburbs – Point Vernon, Pialba, Scarness, Torquay and Urangan – but behind the flawless beachfront and pockets of sedate suburbia, the outskirts of town dissolve into an industrial jungle. Unfortunately, when you enter town on the Maryborough–Hervey Bay Rd, the only way to reach the beach is through this frenzied traffic snarl.

Information

The official tourist office is a fair way from the centre.

Great Adventures (☎ 4125 3601; 408 The Esplanade, Torquay; internet per hr \$4; ☎ 8.30am-10pm) Located at Koala Beach Resort. Offers internet access and is a booking agent for tours and activities.

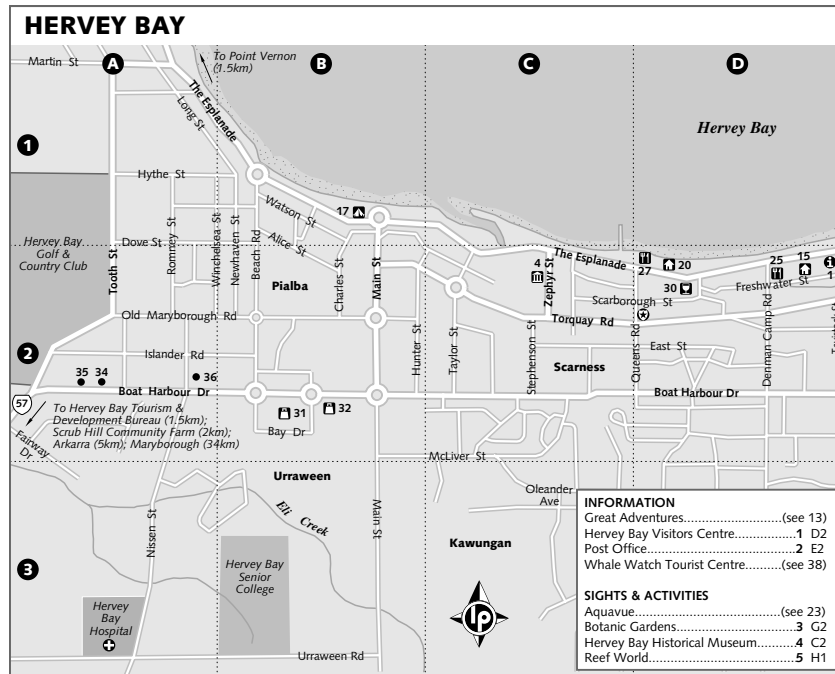
Hervey Bay Tourism & Development Bureau (☎ 1800 811 728, 4125 9855; www.herveybaytourism.com.au; cnr Urraween & Maryborough Rds; ☎ 9am-5pm) Helpful and professional tourist office on the outskirts of town.

Hervey Bay visitors centre (☎ 1800 649 926, 4124 4050; 401 The Esplanade, Torquay; per hr \$4; ☎ 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun) Privately run booking office with internet access.

Post office (☎ 4125 1101; 414 The Esplanade, Torquay) **Whale Watch Tourist Centre** (☎ 1800 358 595; Urangan Marina, Urangan; ☎ 7am-5pm) Privately run and has good information.

Sights

Reef World (☎ 4128 9828; Pulgul St, Urangan; adult/child \$16/8, shark dives \$60; ☎ 9.30am-4.30pm) is a small aquarium stocked with some of the Great Barrier Reef's most colourful characters, including a giant 18-year-old groper. You can also take a dip with lemon, whaler and other nonpredatory sharks.



Run by the Korrwanga Aboriginal Community, the **Scrub Hill Community Farm** (☎ 4124 6908; Scrub Hill Rd; tours adult/child \$16.50/\$5.50), about 2km southwest of town, produces organic vegetables, tea-tree oil and excellent art works. Guided tours (call to arrange) detail how the farm operates and the slightly more expensive option (adult/child \$25/10) includes bush tucker and a traditional dancing display.

Hervey Bay's pretty **Botanic Gardens** (Elizabeth St, Urangan; ☎ 6.30am-8.30pm) has a few small lagoons, dense foliage and walking tracks. There's also a small but beautiful **orchid house** (admission \$2; ☎ 10am-3.45pm Mon-Fri) and an Aboriginal bush-tucker garden.

For a nature walk with a difference, head 5km north along the Burrum Heads Rd to **Arkarra** (☎ 4128 7300; www.arkarra.com.au; 28 Panorama Dr, Dundowan Beach; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-4pm Sat & Sun). This popular eco-tourist Balinese tea garden is set on 30 acres of subtropical rainforest, melaleuca wetlands and lagoons. Finish off a walk with lunch or afternoon tea in the authentic thatched-roof Balinese huts overlooking the lagoons.

The **Hervey Bay Historical Museum** (☎ 4128 1064; 13 Zephyr St, Scarness; adult/child \$5/0.50; ☎ 1-5pm Fri-Sun) has more than 3000 items on display, but the emphasis is on quantity rather than quality.

Activities

WHALE-WATCHING

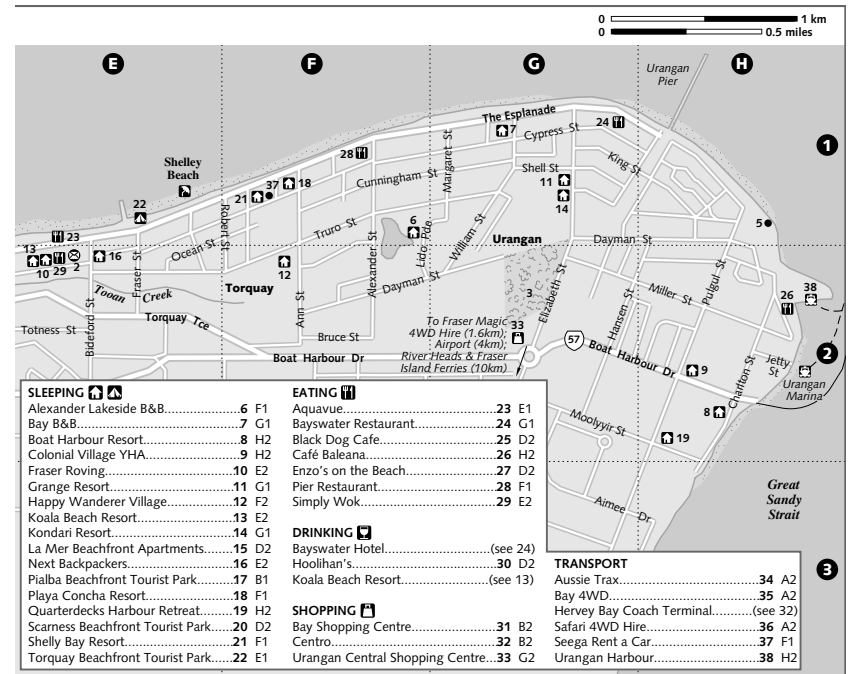
Whale-watching tours operate out of Hervey Bay every day (weather permitting) during the annual migrations between late July and early November. Sightings are guaranteed from August to the end of October (with a free return trip if the whales don't show). Off season many boats offer dolphin-spotting tours. Boats cruise from Urangan Harbour out to Platypus Bay and then zip around from pod to pod to find the most active whales. Most vessels offer half-day tours for around \$100 for adults and \$60 for children, and most include breakfast or lunch. Tour bookings can be made through your accommodation or the information centres.

Some recommended operators:

Blue Dolphin Marine Tours (☎ 4124 9600; www.bluedolphintours.com.au; ☎ 7.30am) Maximum 20 passengers on a 10m catamaran.

INFORMATION
Great Adventures.....(see 13)
Hervey Bay Visitors Centre.....1 D2
Post Office.....2 E2
Whale Watch Tourist Centre.....(see 38)

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES
Aquavue.....(see 23)
Botanic Gardens.....3 G2
Hervey Bay Historical Museum.....4 C2
Reef World.....5 H1



SLEEPING (A)
Alexander Lakeside B&B.....6 F1
Bay B&B.....7 G1
Boat Harbour Resort.....8 H2
Colonial Village YHA.....9 H2
Fraser Roving.....10 E2
Grange Resort.....11 G1
Happy Wanderer Village.....12 F2
Koala Beach Resort.....13 E2
Kondari Resort.....14 G1
La Mer Beachfront Apartments.....15 D2
Next Backpackers.....16 E2
Pialba Beachfront Tourist Park.....17 B1
Sue Concha Resort.....18 F1
Quarterdecks Harbour Retreat.....19 H2
Scarness Beachfront Tourist Park.....20 D2
Shelly Bay Resort.....21 F1
Torquay Beachfront Tourist Park.....22 E1

EATING (I)
Aquavue.....23 E1
Bayswater Restaurant.....24 G1
Black Dog Cafe.....25 D2
Café Baleana.....26 H2
Enzo's on the Beach.....27 D2
Pier Restaurant.....28 F1
Simply Wok.....29 E2

DRINKING (C)
Bayswater Hotel.....(see 24)
Hoolihan's.....30 D2
Koala Beach Resort.....(see 13)

SHOPPING (P)
Bay Shopping Centre.....31 B2
Centro.....32 B2
Urangan Central Shopping Centre.....33 G2

TRANSPORT
Aussie Trax.....34 A2
Play 4WD.....35 A2
Hervey Bay Coach Terminal.....(see 32)
Safari 4WD Hire.....36 A2
Seega Rent a Car.....37 F1
Urangan Harbour.....38 H2

Descarada (☎ 1800 606 136; www.descarada.com.au; ☎ 8.30am) Maximum of 30 passengers on a 70ft luxury motor yacht. **MV Tasman Venture** (☎ 1800 620 322; www.tasmanventure.com.au; ☎ 8.30am & 1.30pm) Maximum of 80 passengers, underwater microphones and viewing windows.

Quick Cat II (☎ 1800 671 977, 4128 9611; www.herveybaywhalewatch.com.au; ☎ 8am & 1pm) With underwater cameras, a maximum of 80 passengers and wheelchair access.

Whalesong (☎ 1800 689 610, 4125 6222; www.whalesong.com.au; ☎ 7.30am & 1pm) Maximum of 70 passengers. Caters to disabled travellers.

FISHING

MV Fighting Whiting (☎ 4124 6599; adult/child/family \$60/35/160) and **MV Princess II** (☎ 4124 0400; adult/child \$120/85) offer calm-water fishing trips that include lunch. **Lapu Charters** (☎ 4194 2440; www.lapucharters.com.au) can tailor make fishing or diving expeditions.

WATERSPORTS

Aquavue (☎ 4125 5528; www.aquavue.com.au; The Esplanade, Torquay) a beach shed and café on the foreshore rents out jet skis (\$40/135 per 15 minutes/hour), kayaks (\$20 per hour), fish-

ing boats (\$80 for two hours) and SeaKarts (\$50 per hour).

SCENIC FLIGHTS

Air Fraser Island (☎ 1800 247 992, 4125 3600) operates whale-watching flights and scenic flights over Fraser Island from \$70. **MI Helicopters** (☎ 1800 600 345) has a range of scenic flights from 10 minutes (\$95) to one hour. Flights of 35 minutes (\$255) and longer take you over Fraser Island.

To really feel like a bird, ditch the metal shell and cruise the skies in a microlite with **Fraser Coast Microlites** (☎ 1300 732 801; flights per 20/30/45/70min \$75/120/175/230).

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Hervey Bay Skydivers (☎ 1300 558 616, 4183 0119; www.herveybayskydivers.com.au) offers tandem skydives for \$250 from 3050m and \$270 from 4270m. Add an extra \$30 for skydives over the beach.

The **Susan River Homestead** (☎ 4121 6846; www.susanriver.com; Hervey Bay-Maryborough Rd; 2hr bush ride \$60), about halfway between Maryborough and Hervey Bay, has popular horse-riding packages (\$165/126 per adult/child), which include accommodation, all meals and use

A WHALE OF A TIME

Every year, from August to early November, thousands of humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) cruise into Hervey Bay's sheltered waters for a few days before continuing their arduous migration south to the Antarctic. Having mated and given birth in the warmer waters off northeast Australia, they arrive in Hervey Bay in groups of about a dozen (known as pulses), before splitting into smaller groups of two or three (pods). The new calves utilise the time to develop the thick layers of blubber necessary for survival in icy southern waters, by consuming around 600L of milk daily.

Viewing these majestic creatures is simply awe-inspiring. Showy aqua-acrobats, you'll see humpbacks waving their pectoral fins, tail slapping, breaching or simply 'blowing', and many will roll up beside the whale-watching boats with one eye clear of the water making those on board wonder who's actually watching whom.

of the on-site swimming pool and tennis courts.

Tours

Besides tours to Fraser Island (see p368), you can fly to Lady Elliot Island (see p385).

Festivals & Events

Hervey Bay Whale Festival (www.herveybaywhalefestival.com.au) celebrates the return of the whales in August with a week-long parade including a jazz festival and 'blessing of the fleet'.

Sleeping BUDGET

Hervey Bay's hostels will usually pick you up from the bus station.

Beachfront Tourist Parks (www.beachfronttouristparks.com.au; unpowered/power sites \$20/26) are appealing council-run parks right on the beach at Pialba (☎ 4128 1399), Scarness (☎ 4125 1578) and Torquay (☎ 4128 1274). Rates are for two people.

Colonial Village YHA (☎ 1800 818 280, 4125 1844; www.cvyha.com; 820 Boat Harbour Dr, Urangan; unpowered/power sites \$18/24; dm/d/cabins from \$20/50/80; ☎ ☎ ☎) This excellent YHA is set on 83 hectares of tranquil bushland, close to the marina and only 50m from the beach. It's a lovely spot, thick with ambience, possums and parrots. Facilities include a spa, tennis and basketball courts, and a funky bar. Breakfast is free and dinners cost \$8 to \$10.

Next Backpackers (☎ 4125 6600; www.nextbackpackers.com.au; 10 Bideford St, Torquay; dm \$22-25, d \$65; ☎ ☎) Having won the Best Budget Accommodation Award for the Fraser Coast you'd expect this modern hostel to be a cut above the usual suspects. With polished wooden floors, ultra-clean roomy rooms and a well-equipped stainless

steel kitchen, it certainly is. There's a 'girls only' dorm, a café and a bar open until midnight.

Koala Beach Resort (☎ 4125 3601; www.koalaadventures.com; 410 The Esplanade, Torquay; dm/d \$24/60) This sprawling complex covers almost a hectare of land in Hervey Bay's main hub. Low level housing clusters around the colonial-style bar, central pool and shady BBQ area. If you want privacy, you can book into one of the motel rooms (\$75), but don't expect a quiet time here. This is party central, and the bar and nightclub goes off every night of the week. Great Adventures (p363) here can book all tours and adventure activities.

Also recommended:

Fraser Roving (☎ 1800 989 811, 4125 6386; www.fraserroving.com; 412 The Esplanade, Torquay; dm \$20-25, d with/without bathroom \$60/65; ☎ ☎) A well-deserved reputation as one of the friendliest hostels in Qld.

Happy Wanderer Village (☎ 4125 1103; www.happywanderer.com.au; 105 Truro St, Torquay; unpowered/power sites from \$28/32, cabins/villas from \$62/116; ☎ ☎) The manicured lawns and profuse gum-tree cover at this large park make for great tent sites, and the cabins and villas are clean and roomy.

MIDRANGE

Playa Concha Resort (☎ 4125 1544; www.playaconcharesort.com; 475 The Esplanade, Torquay; r from \$88; ☎ ☎) This lovely spot across from the beach has clean and airy rooms, masses of trees in the courtyard and a Spanish restaurant with a paella and sangria meal deal for \$25.

Boat Harbour Resort (☎ 4125 5079; www.boatharbourresort.net; 651-652 Charlton St, Urangan; r \$110-130; ☎ ☎) Close to the Hervey Bay marina, these timber studios and cabins are set on attractive grounds. The studios have sizable decks out the front and the roomy villas are great for families.

Kondari Resort (☎ 4125 4445; www.kondarilakeidevillas.com.au; 49-63 Elizabeth St, Urangan; r \$120-135; ☎ ☎ ☎) Set on 20 acres beside a lake this sprawling, low-rise resort has two pools, tennis courts, BBQs and a profusion of native bush. All cabins have private verandas and kitchenettes with limited cooking facilities.

Shelly Bay Resort (☎ 4125 4533; www.shellybayresort.com.au; 466 The Esplanade, Torquay; 1-/2-bedroom units \$125/170; ☎ ☎) The bold, cheerful self-contained units at this complex have slightly dated facilities, but the beach is just across the road and all rooms have water views.

Alexander Lakeside B&B (☎ 4128 9448; www.herveybaybedandbreakfast.com; 29 Lido Pde, Urangan; r \$130-160; ☎) In a quiet street, this warm and friendly B&B offers lakeside indulgence. There's an Asian beach-chic feel, a heated lakeside spa, and all rooms have private bathrooms and TVs. Guests also have access to a kitchen and laundry.

Bay B&B (☎ 4125 6919; www.baybedandbreakfast.com.au; 180 Cypress St, Urangan; s \$75, d \$135-150; ☎ ☎ ☎) This cosy and homey B&B is run by a friendly, well-travelled Frenchman. Guest rooms are in a comfy annexe out the back and breakfast is served on an outdoor patio in a tropical garden surrounded with birds and masses of greenery. Families can take over the separate fully self-contained unit.

La Mer Beachfront Apartments (☎ 1800 100 181, 4128 3494; www.lamer.com.au; 396 The Esplanade, Torquay; r per night/week \$180/800; ☎ ☎ ☎) Behind the generic façade are fresh and modern luxury apartments with open plans and new mod cons including full laundries, DVDs, cable TV and even coffee plungers.

TOP END

Ourpick Quarterdecks Harbour Retreat (☎ 4197 0888; www.quarterdecksretreat.com.au; 80 Moolyir St, Urangan; 1-/2-/3-bedroom villas \$160/210/240; ☎ ☎) These brand-new contemporary villas are fantastic value. Each villa is stylishly furnished with a private courtyard, all the mod cons you could wish for, and little luxuries such as fluffy bathrobes. Backing onto a nature reserve, it's quiet apart from the wonderful bird life, and is only 60m from the beach. Pets welcome.

Grange Resort (☎ 4125 2002; www.thegrange-herveybay.com.au; cnr Elizabeth & Shell Sts, Urangan; 1-/2-bedroom villas \$195/225; ☎ ☎) Reminiscent of a stylish desert resort with fancy split-level condos and filled with life's little luxuries, this place is close to the beach and to town. Glossy kitchens and bathrooms with stainless-steel

appliances, plump couches, spacious boudoirs and commodious decks are the norm.

Eating

Enzo's on the Beach (☎ 4124 6375; 351a The Esplanade, Scarness; mains \$7-15; ☎ 6.30am-5pm) A shabby-chic outdoor café with a superb beachfront location, you can dine on sandwiches, salads and light meals or just sip a coffee, listen to chill music and wallow in the perfect ocean views.

Aquavue (☎ 4125 5528; www.aquavue.com.au; 415 The Esplanade, Torquay; mains \$8-13; ☎) breakfast & lunch) Another outdoor café on the beachfront offering unbeatable sea views and the usual assortment of sandwiches and light meals. There are plenty of water toys for hire.

Simply Wok (☎ 4125 2077; 417 The Esplanade, Torquay; mains \$14-25; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner) Noodles, stir-fries, seafood and curries will satisfy any cravings for Asian cuisine, and there's an all-you-can-eat hot buffet for \$13.90.

Black Dog Café (☎ 4124 3177; 381 The Esplanade, Torquay; mains \$14-33; ☎) lunch & dinner) This funky café oozes groove, starting with the chilled funk on the speakers and ending with the East-meets-West inventions on your fork. Sushi, Japanese soup, fresh burgers, club sambos and seafood salads will tame any black dog.

Café Balaena (☎ 4125 4799; Shop 7, Terminal Bldg, Buccaneer Ave, Urangan; mains \$10-25; ☎) breakfast & lunch daily, dinner Thu-Mon) This waterfront café provides expensive views, atmosphere with a laid-back twist, and wallet-friendly prices. The menu is hip café fare – mountainous paninis and salads – with a good dose of fresh seafood.

Pier Restaurant (☎ 4128 9699; 573 The Esplanade, Urangan; mains \$20-40; ☎) dinner Mon-Sat) Although sitting opposite the water the Pier makes little use of its ocean views but this à la carte restaurant has an interesting seafood menu (mud crab claws with chilli mango, and oysters with frozen margarita) and is highly recommended by the locals.

Bayswater Restaurant (☎ 4194 7555; 569 The Esplanade, Urangan; mains \$26-39; ☎) lunch & dinner) This stylish contemporary restaurant in Peppers Pier Resort dishes up modern Australian cuisine with European influences. Signature dishes include crispy-skinned salmon and chilli blue swimmer crab linguini. It's open and airy and the views are sensational.

Drinking & Entertainment

Bayswater Hotel (☎ 4194 7555; 569 The Esplanade, Urangan) Adjacent to The Bayswater Restaurant

SAND SAFARIS

There's a sci-fi other-worldliness to Fraser Island, as 4WDs and buses with towering wheel bases and chunky tyres pull in to refuel against an idyllic beach backdrop of white sand and waving palm trees. The surfeit of sand and the lack of paved roads mean that only 4WD vehicles can negotiate the island. For most travellers there are three transport options: self-drive tours, organised tours or 4WD hire.

Be aware of your environmental footprint. When choosing, bear in mind that the greater the number of individual vehicles driving on the island, the greater the environmental damage.

Self-Drive Tours

Unbeatable on price, these tours are incredibly popular with backpackers. Nine new friends are assigned to a vehicle, given some 4WD instruction, and head off in a convoy for a three-day, two-night camping safari.

Unfortunately, there have been complaints about costly, dodgy vehicle-damage claims upon return, but booking through a local hostel reduces the risk. Either way, check your vehicle beforehand.

Rates hover around \$140 and exclude food and fuel. Recommended operators:

- **Colonial YHA** (☎ 1800 818 280, 4125 1844; www.cvyha.com) Hervey Bay.
- **Dingo's Backpacker's Resort** (☎ 1800 111 126, 5486 8200; www.dingosatrainbow.com) Rainbow Beach.
- **Fraser Roving** (☎ 1800 989 811, 4125 6386; www.fraserroving.com.au) Hervey Bay.
- **Koala Adventures** (☎ 1800 354 535, 4125 3601; www.koalaadventures.com) Hervey Bay.

Tours

There are plenty of tours in anything from private 4WDs to large coaches carrying up to 40 passengers. Most include accommodation and all meals, and cover the highlights: rainforests, Eli Creek, Lakes McKenzie and Wabby, the coloured Pinnacles and the *Maheno* shipwreck.

Among the many operators:

- **Footprints on Fraser** (☎ 1300 765 636; www.footprintsonfraser.com.au; 4-/5-day walk \$1250/1670) Highly recommended guided walking tours of the island's natural wonders
- **Fraser Experience** (☎ 1800 689 819, 4124 4244; www.fraserexperience.com; 2-day tours \$265) Small groups and more freedom about the itinerary.
- **Fraser Explorer Tours** (☎ 4194 9222; www.fraserexplorertours.com.au; day tours adult/child \$145/85, 2-day tours \$253/170) Overnight at Eurong Beach Resort.
- **Fraser Island Company** (☎ 1800 063 933, 4125 3933; www.fraserislandco.com.au) Offers a range of tour options.
- **Kingfisher Bay Tours** (☎ 1800 072 555, 4120 3333; www.kingfisherbay.com; Fraser Island; day tours adult/child \$155/85, 2-/3-day tours \$265/355) Ranger-guided ecotours. Multiday tours targeted at 18-35-year-olds.

4WD Hire

You can hire a 4WD from Hervey Bay, Rainbow Beach and even on Fraser Island. All companies require a hefty bond, usually in the form of a credit-card imprint, which you *will* lose if you drive in saltwater – don't even think about running the waves!

A driving instruction video will usually be shown, but when planning your trip, reckon on covering 20km an hour on the inland tracks and 50km an hour on the eastern beach.

Rates for multiday rentals start at around \$130 per day and most companies also rent camping gear. See Car & Motorcycle (opposite) and Getting There & Around (p361) for rental companies in Hervey Bay and Rainbow Beach. On the island, **Kingfisher Bay 4WD Hire** (☎ 4120 3366) hires out 4WDs from \$250 per day.

at Peppers Pier Resort, this breezy bar and bistro is ultra-cool. Cocktails on the outdoor cane lounges come with the same fantastic ocean views.

Hoolihan's (☎ 4194 0099; 382 The Esplanade, Scarness). Like all good Irish pubs, Hoolihan's is cosy and packed with interesting characters.

Koala Beach Resort (☎ 4125 3601; 410 The Esplanade, Torquay) Backpackers will gravitate to Hervey Bay's party central at Koala's, with loads of drinking and fun every night of the week.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Hervey Bay airport is off Booral Rd, Urangan, on the way to River Heads.

Qantas (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au) has several daily flights to/from Brisbane (\$140, 45 minutes) and a daily flight to/from Sydney (\$186, two hours). **Virgin Blue** (☎ 13 67 89; www.virginblue.com.au) and **Jetstar** (☎ 13 15 38; www.jetstar.com) fly daily from Sydney (\$110, two hours).

BOAT

Boats to Fraser Island leave from River Heads, about 10km south of town, and Urangan Marina (see p377). Most tours leave from Urangan Harbour.

BUS

Buses depart **Hervey Bay Coach Terminal** (☎ 4124 4000; Central Ave, Pialba). **Greyhound Australia** (☎ 1300 473 946; www.greyhound.com.au) and **Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10; www.premierms.com.au) have several services to/from Brisbane (\$65, 5½ hours), Maroochydore (\$46, 3½ hours), Bundaberg (\$18, 1½ hours) and Rockhampton (\$80, six hours).

Suntours (☎ 4125 2221; www.suntours.net.au) has daily services to Brisbane airport (\$55) and the Sunshine Coast airport (\$42).

Wide Bay Transit (☎ 4121 3719) has hourly services from Urangan Marina (stopping along The Esplanade) to Maryborough (\$7.60, one hour) every weekday, with fewer services on weekends.

Trainlink buses connect Maryborough West train station with the Coach Terminal (\$7.50, 45 minutes).

Getting Around

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Seega Rent a Car (☎ 4125 6008; 463 The Esplanade) has small cars from \$30 to \$40 a day.

Plenty of choice makes Hervey Bay the best place to hire a 4WD for Fraser Island:

Air Fraser Island (☎ 1800 247 992, 4125 3600; www.airfraserisland.com.au)

Aussie Trax (☎ 1800 062 275; 56 Boat Harbour Dr, Pialba)

Bay 4WD (☎ 1800 687 178, 4128 2981; www.bay4wd.com.au; 52-54 Boat Harbour Dr, Pialba)

Fraser Magic 4WD Hire (☎ 4125 6612; www.fraser-magic-4wdhire.com.au; Lot 11, Kruger Crt, Urangan)

Hervey Bay Rent A Car (☎ 4194 6626) Also rents out scooters (\$30 per day).

Safari 4WD Hire (☎ 1800 689 819, 4124 4244; www.safari4wdhire.com.au; 102 Boat Harbour Dr, Pialba)

BICYCLE

Bay Bicycle Hire (☎ 0417-644 814; per half-/full day \$15/20) rents bicycles from various outlets along The Esplanade, or can deliver bikes to your door.

CHILDERS

☎ 07 / pop 1350

Surrounded by lush green fields and rich red soil, Childers is a charming little town, its main street lined with tall, shady trees and lattice-trimmed historical buildings. Backpackers flock here for fruit-picking and farm work, although, sadly, Childers is best remembered for the 15 backpackers who perished in a fire in the Palace Backpackers Hostel in June 2000. There is now a moving memorial, with poignant images of those who perished, at the **Childers Palace Memorial & Art Gallery** (☎ 4126 1994; 72 Churchill St; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat & Sun). You'll also find the visitors centre here.

Childers' lovely 100-year-old **Federal Hotel** has batwing doors while a bronze statue of two fighting pig dogs sits outside the **Grand Hotel**. On the outskirts of town, the **Isis Historical Complex** (Taylor St; adult/child \$2/free; ☎ 9am-noon Mon-Fri) is a mock historical town, with cottages, a general store and a post office.

On the last Sunday in July, Childers' main street is swamped with street performers, musicians, dancers, and global food stalls during its annual **Festival of Cultures**, which draws over 50,000 people.

A little out of town, **Sugarbowl Caravan Park** (☎ 4126 1521; 4660 Bruce Hwy; unpowered/powerd sites \$20/22, cabins \$66; ♿ ♿) has plenty of space and spectacular views over the surrounding countryside. Backpackers will want to stay here for the views, the facilities and the friendly owners

who can help with work placement (by prior arrangement) and transport to the farms.

In the centre of town, **Motel Childers** (☎ 4126 1177; 136 Churchill St; s/d \$75/85; 🏠) has clean, basic rooms with the usual facilities.

For warm, country hospitality the cute cane-cutter cottages at **Mango Hill B&B** (☎ 4126 1311; www.mangohillcottages.com; 8 Mango Hill Dr; s/d/tr \$90/120/140; 🏠), 4km south of town, are decorated with handmade wooden furniture, country décor and comfy beds that ooze charm and romance. A bottle of preservative-free, organic wine from the on-site boutique winery, **Hill of Promise Estate** (cellar door 🕒 10am-4pm, or by appointment), goes well with the picture-pretty views from the cottage veranda.

If you're stopping for lunch, **Kapé Centro** (☎ 4126 1916; 65 Churchill St; mains \$9-15; 🍴 breakfast & lunch) in the old post office building dishes up light meals, salads and pizzas on the veranda.

A little more upmarket, **Laurel Tree Cottage** (☎ 4126 2911; 89 Churchill St; dishes \$10-20; 🍴 breakfast & lunch) has an even balance of frills and funk; the interior is very tea shoppe but the gourmet sandwiches, burgers and breakfasts are definitely from this century.

Childers is 50km southwest of Bundaberg. **Greyhound Australia** (☎ 1300 473 946) and **Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10) stop at the Shell service station north of town and have daily services to/from Brisbane (\$75, 6½ hours), Hervey Bay (\$18, one hour) and Bundaberg (\$18, 1½ hours).

BURRUM COAST NATIONAL PARK

The Burrum Coast National Park covers two sections of coastline, on either side of the little holiday community of Woodgate, 37km east of Childers. The Woodgate section of the park begins at the southern end of The Esplanade; it has attractive beaches, abundant fishing and a **QPWS camping ground** (per person \$4) at Burrum Point, reached by a 4WD-only track. Several walking tracks start at the camping ground or Acacia St in Woodgate. There are more isolated bush-camping areas in the Kinkuna section of the park, a few kilometres north of Woodgate, but you'll need a 4WD to reach them. Contact the **park rangers** (☎ 4126 8810) or go online at www.epa.qld.gov.au to book camping permits.

Woodgate Beach Tourist Park (☎ 4126 8802; www.woodgatebeachtouristpark.com; 88 The Esplanade; unpowered/power sites \$20/23, cabins \$79-89, beachfront villas \$130;

🏠) is a tidy, tranquil park close to the national park and opposite the beach. There's a lovely outdoor café open for breakfast and lunch.

The **Woodgate Beach Hotel-Motel** (☎ 4126 8988; 195 The Esplanade; d \$88), at the northern end of The Esplanade, has a block of reasonable motel units just across from the beach and dishes up decent pub grub.

BUNDABERG

☎ 07 / pop 46,961

Boasting a sublime climate, coral-fringed beaches and waving fields of sugarcane, 'Bundy' should feature on the Queensland tourist hit parade. But this old-fashioned country town feels stuck in a centuries-old time-war and nothing much seems to happen here. The pleasant main strip is a wide, palm-lined street, and the surrounding countryside forms a picturesque checkerboard of rich red volcanic soil, small crops and sugarcane stretching pancake-flat to the coastal beaches 15km away. Born out of these cane fields is the famous Bundaberg Rum, a potent and mind-blowing liquor bizarrely endorsed by a polar bear but as iconically Australian as Tim Tams and Vegemite.

Hordes of backpackers flock to Bundy for fruit-picking and farm work; others quickly pass through on their way to family summer holidays at the nearby seaside villages.

Information

Bundaberg Email Centre (☎ 4153 5007; 197 Bourbong St; per hr \$4; 🕒 10am-10pm) Internet access.

Bundaberg visitors centre (☎ 1300 722 099, 4153 8888; www.bundabergregion.info); 271 Bourbong St (🕒 9am-5pm); 186 Bourbong St (🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat & Sun)

Cosy Corner Internet Cafe (☎ 4153 5999; Barolin St; per hr \$5; 🕒 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 11am-5pm Sun) Internet access.

Post office (☎ 4151 6708; cnr Bourbong & Barolin Sts)
QPWS (☎ 4131 1600; 46 Quay St)

Sights

From the lookout on top of the **hummock** (96m), an extinct volcano and the only hill in this flat landscape, you see Bundaberg's patchwork fields of sugarcane and small crops spread against an ocean backdrop. During the cane-harvest season from July to November, the horizon blazes with spectacular and incredibly quick-lived and furious cane fires.

Bundaberg's biggest claim to fame is the iconic Bundaberg Rum – you'll see the Bundy

Rum polar bear on billboards all over town. At the **Bundaberg Rum Distillery** (☎ 4131 2999; www.bundaberg.com.au; Avenue St; self-guided tour adult/child \$10/7; 🕒 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat & Sun) tours follow the rum's production from start to finish, and include a tasting.

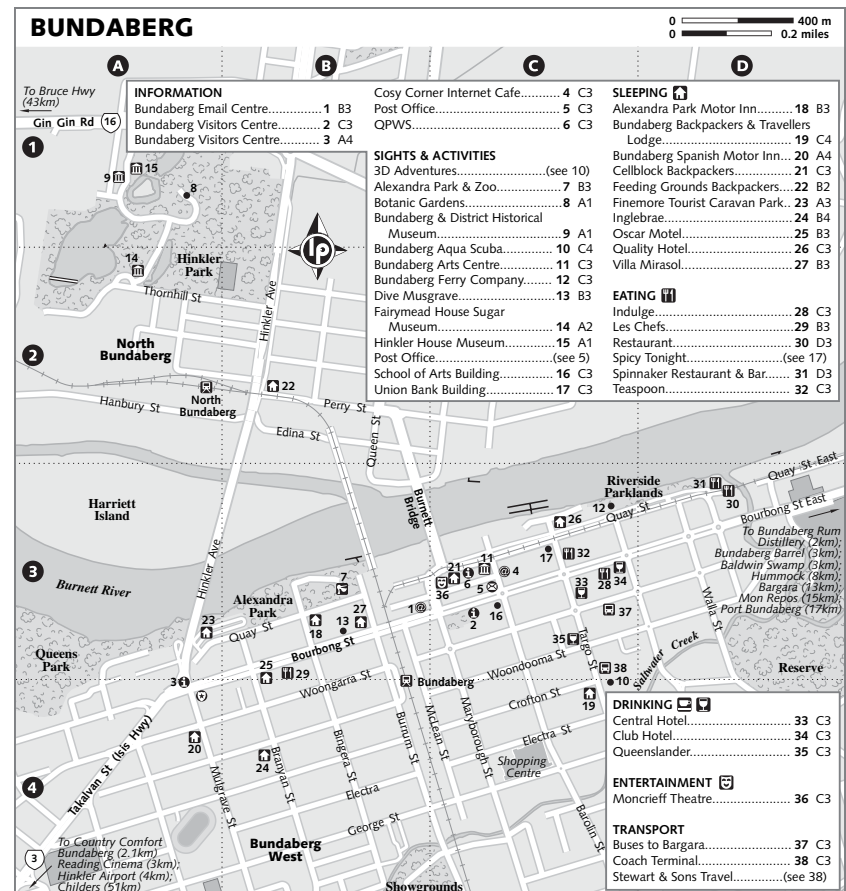
Not quite as famous (probably because it's nonalcoholic) is Bundaberg Ginger Beer. To see how the ginger is mused, crushed, brewed and fermented visit **The Bundaberg Barrel** (☎ 4154 5480; www.bundaberg-brew.com.au; adult/child \$5/3; 🕒 9am-4.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun).

The **Botanic Gardens** (Mt Perry Rd; 🕒 5.30am-6.45pm Sep-Apr, 6am-6.30pm May-Aug), 2km north of the centre, is a pleasant oasis of tropical shrubs, towering trees, and flowering gardens

surrounding a few small lakes. Within the grounds are three museums. The **Hinkler House Museum** (☎ 4152 0222; adult/child \$5/2; 🕒 10am-4pm) is set inside the house of Bundaberg's most famous son, aviator Bert Hinkler, who made the first solo flight between England and Australia in 1928. The house was painstakingly relocated from Southampton in 1983.

The **Bundaberg & District Historical Museum** (☎ 4152 0101; adult/child \$4/2; 🕒 10am-4pm) has plenty of colonial-era antiques such as quaint 1920s handmade quilts. Look for the wedding albums showcasing every Bundy bride since 1974.

At the southern end of the park, the **Fairymead House Sugar Museum** (☎ 4153 6786; adult/child \$4/2; 🕒 10am-4pm), set in an old



TURTLE TOTS

Mon Repos, 15km northeast of Bundaberg, is one of Australia's most accessible turtle rookeries. From November to late March, female loggerheads lumber laboriously up the beach to lay eggs in the sand. About eight weeks later the hatchlings dig their way to the surface, and under cover of darkness emerge en masse to scurry as quickly as their little flippers allow down to the water. The **QPWS visitors centre** (☎ 4159 1652; ☎ 7.30am-4pm Mon-Fri) has nightly tours (adult/child \$8.70/4.60) from 7pm during the season. Bookings are mandatory and can be made through the Bundaberg visitors centre (p370) or online at www.bookbundabergregion.com.au. Alternatively, you can take a turtle-watching tour with **Foot Prints Adventures** (☎ 4152 3659; www.footprintsadventures.com.au; adult/child incl transfers \$44/22).

Savour your turtle experience with a few laid-back days at **Turtle Sands Tourist Park** (☎ 4159 2340; www.turtlesands.com.au; Mon Repos; unpowered/powerd sites \$20/22, cabins from \$70; ♿), a pretty caravan park with good facilities, daily parrot feeding, and a superb beachfront location.

Queenslander, documents the development of the sugar industry.

The **Alexandra Park & Zoo** (Quay St) is tucked into a green corner on the banks of the Burnett River. It's a pretty spot and the large, grassy park begs for a picnic.

In town, the **Bundaberg Arts Centre** (☎ 4152 3700; www.bundaberg.qld.gov.au/arts; cnr Barolin & Quay Sts; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 11am-3pm Sat & Sun) has displays of local and travelling exhibitions. Interesting old buildings in town include the ornate **Union Bank building** (Targo St), the **post office** (cnr Bourbong & Barolin Sts), and the **School of Arts Building** (Bourbong St). Pick up a copy of *A Walking Tour of the Bundaberg City Centre* from the visitors centres.

Activities

Bundaberg Ferry Company (☎ 4152 9188; 3 Quay St; 2½-hr tours per adult/child/family \$25/13/70; ☎ 9.30am & 1.30pm Tue, Wed, Fri & Sun, 1.30pm Sat) operates the *Bundy Belle*, an old-fashioned ferry that chugs at a pleasant pace to the mouth of the Burnett River. The tour includes a commentary and morning or afternoon tea.

About 16km east of Bundaberg, the small beach hamlet of **Bargara** (p374) has good diving and snorkelling at Barolin Rocks and in the Woongarra Marine Park. Both **Bundaberg Aqua Scuba** (☎ 4153 5761; www.aquascuba.com.au; Shop 1, 66 Targo St) and **3D Adventures** (☎ 4152 4064; 66 Targo St) offer four-day, PADI open-water diving courses for \$219, but this only includes shore dives. Advanced open-water dive courses cost from \$265. **Dive Musgrave** (☎ 4154 3800; www.divemusgrave.com.au; 239 Bourbong St; per person \$678) offers three-day trips for experienced divers to Lady Musgrave and the Bunker group of islands.

Tours

You can fly to Lady Elliot Island with **Lady Elliot Island Resort** (☎ 1800 072 200, 5536 3644; www.ladyelliott.com.au; adult/child \$275/146). The day trip includes at least five hours on the Great Barrier Reef, a glass-bottomed boat or snorkel tour, lunch and use of the resort's facilities. See p385 for information about longer stays on the islands.

Sleeping BUDGET

Bundaberg's hostels cater to working backpackers; most hostels arrange harvest work and stays of one week or longer are the norm.

Finemore Tourist Caravan Park (☎ 4151 3663; www.bundaberg.qld.gov.au/tourism; 33 Quay St; unpowered/powerd sites from \$16/18, cabins from \$55; ♿) This small, attractive park sits on the banks of the Burnett River. Quite a few long-termers pitch their digs here and it's close to the zoo and walking distance to the town centre. Rates are for two people.

Feeding Grounds Backpacker (☎ 4152 3659; www.footprintsadventures.com.au; 4 Hinkler Ave; dm \$23) Sleeping only 18, the smallest hostel in Bundaberg is a friendly, family-run affair in a converted and extended house. The country style kitchen and lounge, four-bed dorms and two bathrooms makes for a very cosy time. The environmentally-conscious owner of the hostel runs Footprints Adventures turtle tours (see above).

Cellblock Backpackers (☎ 1800 837 773; www.cellblock.com.au; cnr Quay & Maryborough Sts; dm per night/week from \$25/145, d \$66; ♿) This arresting hostel in Bundy's heritage-listed former lock-up is a swish resort with plasma screen TVs, a trendy pool bar and clean, modern facilities.

The seven restored jail cells (grab the padded cell!) lack windows (of course) but are great for couples. The hostel arranges harvest work and the bathrooms are remarkably clean considering most backpackers drag farm soil home from a day in the fields.

Bundaberg Backpackers & Travellers Lodge (☎ 4152 2080; bundybackpackers@inet.com.au; cnr Targo & Crofton Sts; dm per night/week \$25/150; ♿) The first place you see when you get off the bus. The friendly and genuine owners of this hostel also run Bus Stop Backpackers (at the bus stop, of course!). The rooms are clean, it's fully air-conditioned and has cable TV.

MIDRANGE

Bundaberg Spanish Motor Inn (☎ 4152 5444; www.bundabergspanishmotorinn.com; 134 Woongarra St; s/d \$80/90; ♿) In a quiet side street off the main drag, this Spanish hacienda-style motel is great value. All units are self-contained and all rooms overlook the central pool.

Oscar Motel (☎ 4152 3666; reception@oscarmotel.com.au; 252 Bourbong St; s/d \$83/94; ♿) The Oscar offers a range of rooms; smaller digs are functional and warm and the larger rooms are huge. There's a guest laundry and a tour desk, and the proud owners keep the whole place spotless.

Alexandra Park Motor Inn (☎ 1800 803 419, 4152 7255; www.alexandrapark.com.au; 66 Quay St; s/d \$85-95; ♿) A gracious timber exterior, complete with sweeping balcony, greets visitors to this quiet motel off the main road into town. The more expensive rooms upstairs are large and contain kitchenettes. The restaurant and bar is open for dinner and serves up New Orleans and hearty Australian cuisine.

Inglebrae (☎ 4154 4003; www.inglebrae.com; 17 Branyan St; r incl breakfast \$100-130; ♿) For old-world English charm in a glorious Queenslander, this delightful B&B is just the ticket. Polished timber and stained glass seep from the entrance into the rooms, which come with high beds and small antiques. Breakfasts are big and hot, and are served on the lovely veranda.

Villa Mirasol (☎ 4154 4311; www.villa.net.au; 225 Bourbong St; s/d/ste \$105/120/175; ♿) The Mexican theme is evident in this ochre-coloured, central motel. Aztec motifs decorate the rooms and the executive suites come with a spa.

Quality Hotel (☎ 4155 8777; www.flagchoice.com.au; 7 Quay St; r \$135-150; ♿) This modern pit stop is popular with conferences and travelling business folk, but the good facilities and

décor from the new millennium set it apart from just about every other option in town. The rooms are quite stylish and there's a gym, a sauna, and a licensed restaurant and cocktail bar overlooking the Burnett River.

Eating

Teaspoon (☎ 4154 4456; 10 Targo St; mains \$5-8; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Sat) This funky little café with green velvet sofas has the best coffee in town. The cosy vibe is matched with yummy cakes, panini and light meals.

Indulge (☎ 4154 2344; 80 Bourbong St; dishes \$9-16; ☎ breakfast & lunch) With its sophisticated ambience and intoxicating pastries, this narrow café brings a European flavour to country Bundaberg. Has fancy brekkies and sweet indulgences.

Spicy Tonight (☎ 4154 3320; 1 Targo St; dishes \$10-19; ☎ dinner) Bundaberg's spicy little secret combines Thai and Indian cuisine with hot curries, vindaloo, tandoori and a host of vegetarian dishes.

Les Chefs (☎ 4153 1770; 238 Bourbong St; mains \$24; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat) One for the carnivores, this upmarket, intimate restaurant goes global, treating diners to duck, veal, seafood, chicken and beef dishes à la Nepal, Mexico, France, India and more.

Restaurant (☎ 4154 4589; cnr Quay & Toonburra St; mains \$25-35; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat) Once used as a rowing shed, this riverside bar and restaurant serves up simple mod Oz cuisine. The interior can be a bit dim but the outdoor tables on the timber deck make a lovely spot for a quiet drink.

Spinnaker Restaurant & Bar (☎ 4152 8033; 1a Quay St; dishes \$26-38; ☎ lunch Tue-Fri, dinner Tue-Sat) Bundaberg's classiest restaurant wows diners with a picturesque perch above the Burnett River where you can nibble on gourmet tapas such as herb-crusted bocconcini, or savour full-flavoured dishes of pasta, seafood and pizza.

Drinking & Entertainment

Central Hotel (☎ 4151 3159; 18 Targo St) is Bundy's hottest nightclub, while **Club Hotel** (☎ 4151 3262; cnr Tantitha & Bourbong Sts) has laid-back lounges and chill-out music. **Queenslander** (☎ 4152 4691; 61 Targo St) hosts live gigs and DJs on weekends and only has red wine by the cask (cold!).

Moncrieff Theatre (☎ 4153 1985; 177 Bourbong St) Bundaberg's lovely old cinema has plays, shows and mainstream movies.

Getting There & Around

AIR

Bundaberg's **Hinkler Airport** (Takalvan St) is about 4km southwest of the centre. There are several daily flights to Brisbane (\$150, one hour) with **Qantaslink** (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au).

BUS

The coach terminal is in Targo St where you'll find **Stewart & Sons Travel** (☎ 4152 9700; 66 Targo St; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat). Both **Greyhound Australia** (☎ 1300 473 946; www.greyhound.com.au) and **Premier Motor Service** (☎ 13 34 10; www.premierms.com.au) have daily services connecting Bundaberg with Brisbane (\$81, seven hours), Hervey Bay (\$18, 1½ hours), Rockhampton (\$62, four hours) and Gladstone (\$45, 2½ hours).

Duffy's Coaches (☎ 4151 4226) has numerous services every weekday to Bargara (\$4.40, 35 minutes), leaving from the back of Target on Woongarra St and stopping around town.

TRAIN

Queensland Rail's (www.traveltrain.com.au) **Sunlander** (\$64.90, seven hours, three weekly) and **Tilt Train** (\$64.90, five hours, Sunday to Friday) services travel from Brisbane to Bundaberg on their respective routes to Cairns and Rockhampton.

AROUND BUNDABERG

In many people's eyes, the beach hamlets around Bundaberg are more attractive than the town itself. Some 25km north of the centre is **Moore Park**, with wide, flat beaches. To the south is the very popular **Elliot Heads** with a nice beach, rocky foreshore and good fishing. Locals and visitors also flock to **Mon Repos** to see baby turtles hatching from November to March (see boxed text, p372).

Bargara

☎ 07 / pop 5525

Some 16km east of Bundaberg lies the cruisy beach village of **Bargara**, a picturesque little spot with a good surf beach, a lovely esplanade and a few snazzy cafés. Recent years have seen a few high-rises sprout up along the foreshore but the effect is relatively low-key. Families find Bargara attractive for its clean beaches and safe swimming, particularly at the 'basin', a sheltered artificial rock pool.

Bargara Beach Dive (☎ 4159 2663; www.bargaradive.com; Shop 4, 16 See St) hires out equipment and runs PADI open-water dive courses (\$495),

as well as local dives (\$130) and snorkelling safaris (four-hour snorkel \$99).

The large sprawling grounds of the **Bargara Beach Caravan Park** (☎ 4159 2228; www.bargarabeach.com.au; Nielson Park, Bargara; unpowered/poweredsites \$20/23, cabins \$70) covers 16 acres so you're bound to find room to pitch a tent.

Set on five acres of landscaped gardens, **Kelly's Beach Resort** (☎ 1800 246 141; 4154 7200; www.kellysbeachresort.com.au; 6 Trevors Rd, Bargara; cabin weekday/weekend \$99/110; ☎ ☎) has large self-contained condos with private decks, and is just a short walk to Kelly's beach.

Kacy's Restaurant & Bar (☎ 4130 1100; cnr See & Bauer Sts, Bargara; mains \$12-32; ☎ ☎) breakfast & dinner daily, lunch Fri-Sun) on the foreshore is like a fantastic South Pacific oasis with colourful cocktails, delicious seafood and ocean breezes.

FRASER ISLAND

The local Aborigines call it K'Gari or 'paradise'. Sculpted from wind, sand and surf, the striking blue freshwater lakes, crystalline creeks, giant dunes and lush rainforests of this gigantic sandbar form an enigmatic island paradise unlike any other in the world. Created over hundreds of thousands of years from sand drifting off the east coast of mainland Australia, Fraser Island is the largest sand island in the world (measuring 120km by 15km) and the only place where rainforest grows on sand.

Inland, the vegetation varies from dense tropical rainforest and wild heath to wetlands and wallum scrub, with 'sandblows' (giant dunes over 200m high), mineral streams and freshwater lakes opening on to long sandy beaches fringed with pounding surf. The island is home to a profusion of bird life and wildlife, while off-shore waters teem with dugong, dolphins, sharks and migrating humpback whales.

Once exploited for its natural resources – sand and timber – Fraser Island joined the World Heritage list in 1992. At present the northern half of the island is protected as the Great Sandy National Park while the rest of the island comprises state forest, crown land and private land.

This island Utopia, however, is marred by an ever-increasing volume of 4WD traffic tearing down the beach and along sandy inland tracks. With over 350,000 people visiting



the island each year, Fraser can sometimes feel like a giant sandpit with its own peak hour and congested beach highway.

Information & Orientation

A 4WD is necessary if you're driving on Fraser Island. General supplies and expensive fuel are available from stores at Cathedral Beach, Eurong, Kingfisher Bay, Happy Valley and Orchid Beach. Most stores stock some camping and fishing gear, and those at Kingfisher Bay, Eurong, Happy Valley and Orchid Beach sell alcohol. There are public telephones at these locations and at most camping grounds.

The main ranger station, **Eurong QPWS Information Centre** (☎ 4127 9128; ☎ 10.30am-3.30pm Mon, 8am-3.30pm Tue-Thu, 8am-noon Fri) is at Eurong. Others can be found at **Dundubara** (☎ 4127 9138; ☎ hours vary) and **Waddy Point** (☎ 4127 9190; ☎ hours vary).

The **Fraser Island Taxi Service** (☎ 4127 9188) operates all over the island. A one-way fare from Kingfisher Bay to Eurong costs \$70.

The tow-truck service is based at **Eurong** (☎ 4127 9449, 0428-353 164).

PERMITS

You must purchase permits from **QPWS** (☎ 13 13 04; www.epa.qld.gov.au) for vehicles (per month/year \$35.40/177.30) and camping (per person/family \$4.50/18) before you arrive. Permits aren't required for private camping grounds or resorts. Permit issuing offices:

Bundaberg QPWS Office (☎ 4131 1600; 46 Quay St)
Great Sandy Information Centre (☎ 5449 7792; 240 Moorindil St, Tewantin; ☎ 7am-4pm) Near Noosa.

Maryborough QPWS (☎ 4121 1800; cnr Alice & Lennox St; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri)

Naturally Queensland (Map pp314-5; ☎ 3227 8185; 160 Ann St, Brisbane; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri)

Rainbow Beach QPWS (☎ 5486 3160; Rainbow Beach Rd; ☎ 7am-4pm) Purchase permits from the 24-hour vending machines – credit card only.

River Heads information kiosk (☎ 4125 8485; ☎ 6.15-11.15am & 2-3.30pm) Ferry departure point at River Heads, south of Hervey Bay.

Sights & Activities

Starting at the island's southern tip, where the ferry leaves for Inskip Point on the mainland, a high-tide access track cuts inland, avoiding dangerous Hook Point, and leads to the entrance of the Eastern Beach's main thoroughfare. The first settlement is **Dilli Village**,

FRASER ISLAND GREAT WALK

The Fraser Island Great Walk is a stunning way to experience this enigmatic island. The trail undulates through the island's interior for 90km from Dilli Village to Happy Valley. Broken up into seven sections of around six to 16 kilometres each, plus some side trails off the main sections, it follows the pathways of Fraser Island's original inhabitants, the Butchulla people. En route, the walk passes underneath the rainforest canopies, circles around some of the island's vivid lakes and courses through shifting dunes.

Pick up the *Fraser Island Great Walk* brochure from a QPWS office (or download it from www.epa.qld.gov.au under the Parks and Forests heading) and seek updates on the track's conditions.

the former sand-mining centre; **Eurong**, with shops, fuel and places to eat, is another 9km north. From here, an inland track crosses to Central Station and Wanggoolba Creek (for the ferry to River Heads).

Right in the middle of the island is the ranger centre at **Central Station**, the starting point for numerous walking trails. From here you can walk or drive to the beautiful **McKenzie, Jennings, Birrabeen and Boomanjin Lakes**. Lake McKenzie is spectacularly clear and is ringed by white sand beaches, making it a great place to swim, but Lake Birrabeen sees fewer tour and backpacker groups.

About 4km north of Eurong along the beach is a signposted walking trail, which leads across sandblows (enormous dunes created by wind-blown sand) to the beautiful **Lake Wabby**, the most accessible of Fraser's lakes. An easier route is from the lookout on the inland track. Lake Wabby is surrounded on three sides by eucalypt forest, while the fourth side is a massive sandblow that encroaches on the lake at about 3m a year. The lake is deceptively shallow and diving is very dangerous.

As you drive up the beach you may have to detour inland to avoid Poyungan and Yidney Rocks during high tide before you reach **Happy Valley**, with places to stay, a shop and bistro. About 10km north is **Eli Creek**, a fast-moving, crystal-clear waterway that will carry you effortlessly downstream. About 2km from Eli Creek is the rotting hulk of the **Maheno**,

a former passenger liner blown ashore by a cyclone in 1935 as it was being towed to a Japanese scrap yard.

Roughly 5km north of the *Maheno* you'll find the **Pinnacles** – an eroded section of coloured sand cliffs – and, about 10km beyond, **Dundubara**, with a ranger station and excellent camping ground. Then there's a 20km stretch of beach before you come to the rock outcrop of **Indian Head**. Sharks, manta rays, dolphins and (during the migration season) whales can often be seen from the top of this headland.

Between Indian Head and Waddy Point the trail branches inland, passing **Champagne Pools**, which offer the only safe saltwater swimming on the island. There are good camping areas at **Waddy Point** and **Orchid Beach**, the last settlement on the island.

Many tracks north of this are closed for reasons of environmental protection.

On the island you can take a scenic flight with **MI Helicopters** (☎ 1800 600 345; www.mihelicopters.com.au; 25min flight \$240), based at Kingfisher Bay Resort (opposite), or with **Air Fraser** (☎ 1800 600 345; 10min flights from \$70).

Sleeping & Eating

Fraser Island Backpackers (☎ 4127 9144; www.fraserislandco.com.au; Happy Valley; dm \$39-59; mains \$10-20; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☑) This wilderness-retreat-turned-backpackers has dorms (sleeping up to seven) in nine timber lodges. The cabins cascade down a gentle slope amid plenty of tropical foliage and there's a bistro and bar on site.

Eurong Beach Resort (☎ 1800 111 808, 4127 9122; www.fraser-is.com; Eurong; r \$150, 2-bedroom apt \$270, mains \$15-30; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☑) Bright, cheerful Eurong is the main resort on the east coast and the most accessible for all budgets. At the cheaper end of the market are simple motel rooms and units, while comfortable, fully self-contained apartments are good value for families. On site is a cavernous restaurant, bar, two pools and tennis courts.

Sailfish on Fraser (☎ 4127 9494; www.sailfishonfraser.com.au; Happy Valley; d/f from \$220/240; ☑) Any notions of rugged wilderness and roughing it will be forgotten quick smart at this plush, indulgent retreat. These two-bedroom apartments are cavernous and classy, with wall-to-wall glass doors, spas, mod cons, mod furnishings and an alluring pool.

Kingfisher Bay Resort (☎ 1800 072 555, 4120 3333; www.kingfisherbay.com; Kingfisher Bay; d \$285, 2-bedroom villa \$380; ☑ ☑ ☑) This elegant eco-resort has smart hotel rooms with private balconies, and sophisticated two- and three-bedroom timber villas that are elevated to limit their environmental impact. The villas are utterly gorgeous and some even have spas on their private decks but there's a three-night minimum stay in high season. The resort has restaurants, bars and shops and operates daily tours of the island (adult/child \$149/89).

Fraser Island Beachhouses (☎ 1800 626 230, 4127 9205; www.fraserislandbeachhouses.com.au; Eurong Second Valley; studio per 2 nights \$360, 1-bedroom house per 2 nights from \$700; ☑) Another luxury option, this complex contains sunny, self-contained units kitted out with polished wood, cable TVs and ocean views. Rates start with studios and climb to \$900 for two-bedroom beachfront houses.

CAMPING

Supplies on the island are limited and costly. Before arriving campers should stock up well. Be prepared for mosquitoes and March flies.

Camping permits are required at QPWS camping grounds and any public area (ie along the beach). The most developed **QPWS camping grounds** (per person/family \$4.50/18) with coin-operated hot showers, toilets and BBQs are at Waddy Point, Dundubara and Central Station. Campers with vehicles can also use the smaller camping grounds with fewer facilities at Lake Boomanjin, Ungowa and Wathumba on the western coast. Walkers' camps (for hikers only) are set away from the main campgrounds along the Fraser Island Great Walk trail (opposite). The trail map lists the camp sites and their facilities. Camping is permitted on designated stretches of the eastern beach, but there are no facilities. Fires are prohibited, except in communal fire rings at Waddy Point and Dundubara, and to utilise these you'll need to bring your own firewood in the form of untreated, milled timber.

Dilli Village Fraser Island (☎ 4127 9130; Dilli Village; unpowered sites/bunk rooms \$10/40, cabins \$60-100) Managed by the University of the Sunshine Coast, Dilli Village offers good sites on a softly sloping camping ground. The facilities are neat as a pin and the cabins are ageing but accommodating.

Fraser at Cathedral Beach (☎ 4127 9177; www.fraserislandco.com.au; Cathedral Beach; unpowered/powerd sites

\$27/38, cabins with/without bathroom \$140/170) This spacious, privately run park with its abundant flat, grassy sites is a fave with families. The excellent facilities include large, communal BBQ areas and spotless amenities. The quaint, comfortable cabins come with private picnic tables.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Air Fraser Island (☎ 1800 247 992, 4125 3600; www.airfraserisland.com.au) charges \$70 for a return flight (20 minutes each way) to the island's eastern beach, departing Hervey Bay airport.

BOAT

Several large vehicle ferries connect Fraser Island to the mainland. Most visitors use the two services that leave from River Heads (about 10km south of Hervey Bay) or from Inskip Point near Rainbow Beach.

Fraser Island Barges (☎ 1800 227 437; pedestrian/vehicle & 4 passengers return \$30/150, additional passengers \$10.50) makes the 30-minute crossing from River Heads to Wanggoolba Creek on the western coast of Fraser Island. It departs daily from River Heads at 9am, 10.15am and 3.30pm, and returns from the island at 9.30am, 2.30pm and 4pm. The same company also operates a service from the Urangan Marina in Hervey Bay to Moon Point on Fraser Island, but car-hire companies won't allow you to drive their cars here so it's limited to car owners and hikers. Rates are the same as for the River Heads to Wanggoolba Creek service.

Kingfisher Vehicular Ferry (☎ 1800 072 555, 4120 3333; vehicle & 4 passengers return \$145, additional passengers \$10) operates two boats. Its vehicle ferry makes the 45-minute crossing from River Heads to Kingfisher Bay daily, departing at 7.15am, 11am and 2.30pm, and returning at 8.30am, 1.30pm and 4pm. The Kingfisher Fast Cat Passenger Ferry (adult/child return \$55/28) makes the 30 to 45 minute crossing between Urangan Marina and Kingfisher Bay at 6.45am, 8.45am, noon, 4pm, 7pm and 10pm daily, returning at 7.40am, 10.30am, 2pm, 5pm, 8pm and 11.30pm daily.

Coming from Rainbow Beach, both **Rainbow Venture** (☎ 5486 3227; pedestrian/vehicle return \$10/80) and **Manta Ray** (☎ 5486 8888; vehicle return \$85) make the 15-minute crossing from Inskip Point to Hook Point on Fraser Island continuously from about 7am to 5.30pm daily.

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'