

History

Michael Cathcart

INTRUDERS

In April 1770, Aborigines standing on a beach in southeastern Australia saw an astonishing spectacle out at sea. It was an English ship, the *Endeavour*, under the command of Lieutenant James Cook. His gentleman-passengers were English scientists visiting the Pacific to make astronomical observations and to investigate 'new worlds'. As they sailed north along the edge of this new-found land, Cook began drawing the first British chart of Australia's east coast. This map heralded the end of Aboriginal supremacy.

A few days after that first sighting, Cook led a party of men ashore at a place known to the Aborigines as Kurnell. Though the Kurnell Aborigines were far from welcoming, the *Endeavour's* botanists were delighted to discover that the woods were teeming with unfamiliar plants. To celebrate this profusion, Cook renamed the place Botany Bay.

As his voyage northwards continued, Cook strewed English names the entire length of the coastline. In Queensland, these included Hervey Bay (after an English admiral), Dunk Island (after an English duke), Cape Upstart, the Glass House Mountains and Wide Bay.

One night, off the great rainforests of the Kuku Yalanji Aborigines in what is now known as Far North Queensland, the *Endeavour* was inching gingerly through the Great Barrier Reef when the crew heard the sickening sound of ripping timbers. They had run aground near a cape which today is a tourist paradise. Cook was in a glowering mood: he named it Cape Tribulation, 'because here began all our troubles'. Seven days later Cook managed to beach the wounded ship in an Aboriginal harbour named Charco (Cook renamed it Endeavour), where his carpenters patched the hull.

Back at sea, the *Endeavour* finally reached the northern tip of Cape York. On a small, hilly island (Possession Island), Cook raised the Union Jack and claimed the eastern half of the continent for King George III. His intention was not to dispossess the Aborigines, but to warn off other European powers – notably the Dutch, who had already charted much of the coastline.

SETTLEMENT

In 1788, the English were back. On 26 January, 11 ships sailed into a harbour just north of Botany Bay. The First Fleet was under the command of a humane and diligent officer named Arthur Phillip. Under his leadership, the intruders cut down trees, built shelters and laid out roadways. They were building a prison settlement in the idyllic lands of the Eora people. Phillip called the place Sydney.

TIMELINE

60,000 BC

Although the exact start of human habitation in Australia is still uncertain, according to most experts this is when Aborigines settled in the continent.

1770

English captain James Cook maps Australia's east coast in the scientific ship *Endeavour*. He then runs aground on the Great Barrier Reef.

1823

Government explorer John Oxley surveys Moreton Bay (Brisbane) for a convict settlement. It is established the following year and becomes known as a place of blood, sweat and tears.

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A brilliant, classic biography is *The Life of Captain James Cook* (1974) by JC Beaglehole. There are also several Cook biographies online.

In the early years of the settlement, both the convicts and the free people of Sydney struggled to survive. Their early attempts to grow crops failed and the settlement relied on supplies brought in by ship. Fortunate or canny prisoners were soon issued with 'tickets of leave', which gave them the right to live and work as free men and women on the condition that they did not attempt to return home before their sentences expired.

The convict system could also be savage, however. Women (who were outnumbered five to one) lived under constant threat of sexual exploitation. Female convicts who offended their jailers languished in the depressing 'female factories'. Male offenders were cruelly flogged and could be hanged even for such crimes as stealing. In 1803, English officers established a settlement to punish reoffenders at Port Arthur on the wild southeast coast of Tasmania.

The impact of these settlements on the Aborigines was devastating. Multitudes were killed by unfamiliar diseases such as smallpox, and in the years that followed many others succumbed to alcoholism and despair as they felt their traditional lands and life being wrenched away.

CONVICTS TO QUEENSLAND

By the 1820s, Sydney was a busy port, teeming with soldiers, merchants, children, schoolmistresses, criminals, preachers and drunks. The farms prospered, and in the streets, children were chatting in a new accent which we would probably recognise today as 'Australian'.

The authorities now looked north to the lands of the Yuggera people, where they established another lonely penal colony at Moreton Bay. Here, men laboured under the command of the merciless Captain Patrick Logan, building their own prison cells and sweating on the farms they had cleared from the bush. These prisoners suffered such tortures that some welcomed death, even by hanging, as a blessed release.

Logan himself met a brutal end when he was bashed and speared while riding in the bush. Shortly after his murder, a group of soldiers reported that they had seen him on the far bank of a river, screaming to be rescued. But as they rowed across to investigate, his tormented ghost melted into the heat...

Logan's miserable prison spawned the town of Brisbane, which soon became the administrative and supply centre for the farmers, graziers, loggers and miners who occupied the region. But the great hinterland of Queensland remained remote and mysterious – in the firm control of its Aboriginal owners.

EXPLORERS & SETTLERS

The hinterland frontier was crossed in 1844, when an eccentric Prussian explorer named Ludwig Leichhardt led a gruelling 15-month trek from Brisbane to Port Essington (near today's Darwin). His journal – the first

European travel guide to Australia's top end – would have secured his place in Australian history, but today he is remembered more for the manner of his death. In 1848, his entire party vanished in the desert during an attempt to cross the continent. Journalists and poets wrote as if Leichhardt had been received into a Silent Mystery that lay at the heart of Australia. It might seem strange that Australians should sanctify a failed explorer, but Leichhardt – like two other dead explorers, Burke and Wills – satisfied a Victorian belief that a nation did not come of age until it was baptised in blood.

As Queensland formally separated from New South Wales in 1859, graziers, miners and small farmers were pushing further west and north. Some whites established cooperative relations with local tribes, sharing the land and using Aborigines as stockmen or domestics. Conversely, others saw settlement as a tough Darwinian struggle between the British race and a primitive Stone Age people – a battle the whites were destined to win. Indeed, squatters who ran sheep on the vast grasslands of the Darling Downs sometimes spoke as if they had taken possession of a great park where no other humans had ever lived. Today, Aborigines across the country tell stories of how white settlers shot whole groups of their people or killed them with poisoned food. Some Aboriginal tribes fought back, but the weapons of the white man were formidable – including the notorious Native Police, a government-backed death squad made up of Aborigines recruited from distant tribes.

Meanwhile, on the tropical coast, growers were developing a prosperous sugar cane industry which relied on the sweat of thousands of labourers from the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and other Pacific islands. Known as the Kanakas, these workers endured harsh and sometimes cruel conditions that were considered intolerable for white workers (see boxed text, p308).

GOLD & REVOLUTION

In 1871 an Aboriginal stockman named Jupiter spotted gold glinting in a waterhole near Charters Towers. His find triggered a gold rush which attracted thousands of prospectors, publicans, traders, prostitutes and quacks to the diggings. For a few exhilarating years, any determined miner, regardless of his class, had a real chance of striking it rich. By the 1880s, Brisbane itself had grown prosperous on wool and gold, but by then, life on the goldfields was changing radically. The easy gold was gone. The free-for-all had given way to an industry in which the company boss called the shots.

As displaced prospectors searched for work, the overheated economy of eastern Australia collapsed, throwing thousands of labouring families into the miseries of unemployment and hunger. The depression of the 1890s exposed stark inequalities as barefoot children scavenged in the streets. But this was Australia, 'the working man's paradise' – the land where the principle of 'a fair day's pay for a fair day's work' was sacred. As employers tried to drive down wages, a tough Queensland working class began to assert itself. Seamen,

Leichhardt's story inspired Patrick White's *Voss* (1957), revered by many as the great Australian novel.

Tom Petrie's *Reminiscences of Early Queensland* (1904) is a bushman's story of life with Aborigines. A Queensland classic.

River of Gold (1994) by Hector Holthouse is a high-spirited novel set in the wild days of Queensland's Palmer River gold rush.

Robert Hughes' bestseller *The Fatal Shore* (1987) is a provocative interpretation of Australian convict history.

The Commissariat Stores Building in Brisbane (p77) was built in 1829 by convicts; the original section of the building is the second-oldest structure in Queensland.

1840

Squatters from New South Wales establish sheep runs on the Darling Downs, which had first been explored 13 years earlier; it's some of the most fertile agricultural land in the country.

1872

The gold rush sweeps into Charters Towers, funding the construction of magnificent homes and public buildings. Queensland is connected to Europe by telegraph.

1884

In a tragic last stand, the defiant Kalkadoon indigenous nation is defeated in a massacre at Battle Mountain, near Mt Isa.

1891

A violent shearers' strike around Barcaldine, where 1000 men camp around the town, establishes a labour legend; the confrontation leads to the birth of the Australian Labor Party.

1901

The new federal government removes Kanakas from Queensland, in line with the White Australia policy. Mortality figures for these Pacific Islanders were almost five times those of whites.

1902

The first trans-Pacific cable between Australia and Canada is completed, terminating on the Gold Coast. The cable also allows Australia to join the England cablelink.

A LAST STAND *Alan Murphy*

The Kalkadoon (also known as Kalkatungu) people of the Mt Isa region in western Queensland were known for their fierce resistance to colonial expansion. As pastoralism and mining concerns pushed into their country in the 1860s, some of the Kalkadoon initially worked for the settlers as labourers and guides. However, competition for land and resources eventually led to conflict and the Kalkadoon waged guerrilla-style warfare against settlers and their stock. They soon gained a reputation as ferocious warriors who seemingly melted away into the bush. In 1883 they killed five Native Police and a prominent pastoralist – an incident that turned the tide of the conflict against them.

In September 1884, some 600 Kalkadoon retreated to a defensive site known as Battle Mountain, where they fought one last battle against the Native Police and armed settlers. Despite heroic resistance, which included a charge against cavalry positions, the Kalkadoon warriors were mercilessly slain, their spears and clubs no match for guns. In all, an estimated 900 Kalkadoon were killed between 1878 and 1884.

factory workers, miners, loggers and shearers organised themselves into trade unions to take on Queensland's equally tough bosses and shareholders.

The result was a series of violent strikes. The most famous of these erupted in 1891 after angry shearers proclaimed their socialist credo under a great gum tree, known as the 'Tree of Knowledge', at Barcaldine in central Queensland. As the strike spread, troopers, right-wing vigilantes and union militants clashed in bitter class warfare. The great radical poet Henry Lawson expected revolution: 'We'll make the tyrants feel the sting/O' those that they would throttle;/They needn't say the fault is ours/If blood should stain the wattle!'

The striking shearers were defeated, and their leaders jailed, by a government determined to suppress the unrest. Despite this loss, trade unions remained a powerful force in Australia for the next hundred years, and the Barcaldine strike contributed to the formation of a potent new force in Australian politics – the Australian Labor Party.

NATIONALISM

Whatever their politics, many Queenslanders still embody the gritty, independent but solidly white outlook that was so potent in colonial thinking. At the end of the 19th century, Australian nationalist writers and artists idealised the people of 'the bush' and their code of 'mateship'. The most popular forum for this 'bush nationalism' was the *Bulletin* magazine, whose pages were filled with humour and sentiment about daily life, written by a swag of writers, most notably Henry Lawson and AB 'Banjo' Paterson.

While these writers were creating national legends, the politicians of Australia were forging a national constitution.

For more on the Kalkadoon indigenous nation visit www.kalkadoon.org.

AB 'Banjo' Paterson's famous song 'Waltzing Matilda' was inspired by the Barcaldine strike.

FEDERATION & WWI

On 1 January 1901, Australia became a federation. When the bewildered members of the new national parliament met in Melbourne, their first aim was to protect the identity and values of a European Australia from an influx of Asians and Pacific Islanders. Their solution was the infamous White Australia policy. Its opposition to nonwhite immigrants would remain a core Australian value for the next 70 years.

For whites, this was to be a model society, nestled in the skirts of the British Empire. Just one year later, in 1902, white women won the right to vote in federal elections. In a series of radical innovations, the government introduced a broad social-welfare scheme and protected Australian wage levels with import tariffs. This mixture of capitalist dynamism and socialist compassion became known as the 'Australian Settlement'.

When war broke out in Europe in 1914, thousands of Australian men rallied to the Empire's call. They had their first taste of death on 25 April 1915, when the Anzacs (the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) joined an Allied assault on the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey. Eight months later, the British commanders acknowledged that the tactic had failed. By then, 8141 young Australians were dead. Soon, Australians were fighting in the killing fields of Europe. When the war ended, 60,000 Australian men had been slaughtered. Ever since, on 25 April, Australians have gathered at the country's many war memorials for the sad and solemn services of Anzac Day.

TURBULENT TWENTIES

Australia careered wildly into the 1920s, continuing to invest in immigration and growth. In Queensland, breathtakingly rich copper, lead, silver and zinc deposits were discovered at Mt Isa, setting in motion a prosperous new chapter in the history of Queensland mining.

This was also the decade in which intrepid aviators became international celebrities. For a state that felt its isolation so profoundly, the aeroplane was a revolutionary invention. The famous airline Qantas (an acronym for Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services) was founded at Longreach in the centre of the state in 1920. Eight years later, veteran Queensland aviator Bert Hinkler flew solo from England to Darwin in just 16 days.

It was not just aeroplanes that linked Australia to the rest of the world. Economics, too, was a global force. In 1929, the Wall St crash and high foreign debt caused the Australian economy to collapse into the abyss of the Great Depression. Once again, unemployment brought shame and misery to one in three households, but for those who were wealthy or employed, the Depression made less of a dent in day-to-day life.

In the midst of this hardship, sport diverted a nation in love with games and gambling. Down south, the champion racehorse Phar Lap won an effortless and graceful victory in the 1930 Melbourne Cup ('the race that

The Stockman's Hall of Fame at Longreach shamelessly celebrates the bush legend. See www.outbackheritage.com.au or p437.

The cast of Peter Weir's epic film *Gallipoli* (1981) includes a young Mel Gibson.

Avian Cirrus, Bert Hinkler's tiny plane that made the first Australia-to-England solo flight, is on display at the Queensland Museum in Brisbane (p79).

1908

Queensland's first national park is established on the western slope of Tamborine Mountain. Today, Tamborine Mountain National Park stretches onto the Tamborine Plateau and into surrounding foothills.

1915

In line with Australia's close ties to Britain, Australian and New Zealand troops (the Anzacs) join the Allied invasion of Turkey at Gallipoli.

1928

Reverend John Flynn starts the Royal Flying Doctor Service in Cloncurry – an invaluable service that now has networks around the country.

1929

The Great Depression: thousands go hungry and one in three households experiences unemployment. Irene Longman becomes the first woman elected to Queensland's parliament.

1941

The Japanese bomb Townsville – a strategic centre for defence, with a major base for US and Australian military forces.

1942

The Battle of the Coral Sea is fought off northern Queensland between Japan and US-Australian forces. Although there is no clear winner, the US loses the carrier USS *Lexington*.

stops a nation'). In 1932, the great horse travelled to the racetracks of America where he mysteriously died. Back in Australia, the gossips insisted that the horse had been poisoned by envious Americans: thus grew the legend of Phar Lap – a hero cut down in his prime.

WWII & GROWTH

As the economy began to recover, the whirl of daily life was hardly dampened when Australian servicemen sailed off to Europe for a new war in 1939. Though Japan was menacing, Australians took it for granted that the British navy would keep them safe. In December 1941, Japan bombed the US Fleet at Pearl Harbor. Weeks later, the 'impregnable' British naval base in Singapore crumbled, and soon thousands of Australians and other Allied troops were enduring the savagery of Japan's prisoner-of-war camps.

As the Japanese swept through Southeast Asia and into Papua New Guinea, the British announced that they could not spare any resources to defend Australia. But the legendary US general, Douglas MacArthur, saw that Australia was the perfect base for American operations in the Pacific, and established his headquarters in Brisbane. As the fighting intensified, thousands of US troops were garrisoned in bases the length of Queensland: Australians and Americans got to know each other as never before. In a series of savage battles on sea and land, Australian and American forces gradually turned back the Japanese advance. The days of the British alliance were numbered.

As the war ended, a new slogan rang through the land: 'Populate or Perish!' The Australian government embarked on an ambitious scheme to attract thousands of immigrants. With government assistance, people flocked from Britain and from non-English speaking countries. They included Greeks, Italians, Slavs, Serbs, Croatians, Dutch and Poles, followed by Turks, Lebanese and others.

This was the era when Australian families basked in the prosperity of a 'long boom' created by skilful government management of the economy. Manufacturing companies such as General Motors and Ford operated with generous tariff support. The social welfare system became more extensive, and now included generous unemployment benefits. The government owned many key services, including Qantas, which it bought in 1947. This, essentially, was the high point of the 'Australian Settlement' – a partnership of government and private enterprise designed to share prosperity as widely as possible.

At the same time, there was growing world demand for the type of primary products produced in Queensland: metals, coal, wool, meat and wheat. By the 1960s mining dominated the state's economy and coal was the major export. That same decade, the world's largest bauxite mine roared into life at Weipa on Cape York.

This era of postwar growth and prosperity was dominated by Robert Menzies, the founder of the modern Liberal Party and Australia's longest-

The Royal Historical Society of Queensland often has free events and lectures open to the public; have a look at www.queenslandhistory.org.au.

David Malouf's wonderful novel *Jahanno* (1975) recalls his childhood in wartime Brisbane.

serving prime minister. Menzies had an avuncular charm, but he was also a vigilant opponent of communism. As the Cold War intensified, Australia and New Zealand entered a formal military alliance with the USA – the 1951 ANZUS security pact. It followed that when the USA hurled itself into a civil war in Vietnam more than a decade later, Menzies committed Australian forces to the conflict. In 1966, Menzies retired, leaving his successors a bitter legacy: an antiwar movement that divided Australia.

A QUESTION OF TOLERANCE

In the 1960s, increasing numbers of white Australians saw that Aborigines had endured a great wrong which needed to be put right. From 1976 until 1992 Aborigines won major victories in their struggle for land rights. As Australia's imports from China and Japan increased, the White Australia policy became an embarrassment. It was officially abolished in the early 1970s, and soon Australia was a little astonished to find itself leading the campaign against the racist apartheid policies of white South Africa.

By the 1970s, more than one million migrants had arrived from non-English-speaking countries, filling Australia with new languages, cultures, foods and ideas. At the same time, China and Japan far outstripped Europe as Australia's major trading partners. As Asian immigration increased, Vietnamese communities became prominent in Sydney and Melbourne. In both those cities a new spirit of tolerance known as multiculturalism became a particular source of pride.

The impact of postwar immigration was never as great in Queensland, and the values of multiculturalism made few inroads into the state's robustly old-time sense of what it meant to be Australian. This Aussie insularity was cannily exploited by the rough-hewn and irascible Joh Bjelke-Petersen, premier of Queensland for 21 years from 1968. Kept in office by a blatant gerrymander (he never won more than 39% of the vote), he was able to impose his policy of development at any price on the state. Forests were felled. Heritage buildings were demolished. Aborigines were cast aside. Protesters were bashed and jailed. But in the late 1980s, a series of investigations revealed that Bjelke-Petersen presided over a system that was rotten. His police commissioner was jailed for graft and it became clear that many police officers, whom the premier had used as a political hit squad, were racist, violent and corrupt.

QUEENSLAND TODAY

Today Australia faces new challenges. Since the 1970s, Australia has been dismantling the protectionist scaffolding that allowed its economy to develop. Wages and working conditions, which used to be fixed by an independent authority, are now much more uncertain. Two centuries of development have also placed great strains on the environment – on water supplies, forests, soil, air quality and the oceans. Australia is linked more closely than ever to

Read all about Queensland corruption in Hugh Lunn's *The Life and Political Adventures of Johannes Bjelke-Petersen* (from secondhand bookshops).

1962

Indigenous Australians gain the right to vote in federal elections – but they have to wait until 1967 to receive full citizenship.

1969

Setting the political scene in Queensland for the next 21 years, Joh Bjelke-Petersen becomes premier. His policy is development at any price.

1974

The audacious Beerburrum mail robbery is pulled off – the most lucrative mail robbery in Australian history at the time.

1979

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is proclaimed, protecting 2000km of reef – the most extensive reef system in the world.

1982

Brisbane hosts the Commonwealth Games. Australia tops the medal tally, winning 107 medals overall. Matilda, a 13m-high winking kangaroo, was the mascot for the Games.

1988

Over a six-month period between April and October, Brisbane hosts a World Fair called Expo '88. The theme is 'Leisure in the Age of Technology'.

TERRA NULLIUS TURNED ON ITS HEAD *Alan Murphy*

In May 1982 Eddie Mabo led a group of Torres Strait Islanders in a court action to have traditional title to their land on Mer (Murray Island) recognised. Their argument challenged the legal principle of *terra nullius* (literally, 'land belonging to no-one') and demonstrated their unbroken relationship with the land over a period of thousands of years. In June 1992 the High Court found in favour of Eddie Mabo and the Islanders, rejecting the principle of *terra nullius* – this became known as the Mabo decision. The result has had far reaching implications in Queensland and the rest of Australia ever since, including the introduction of the Native Title Act in 1993.

Eddie Mabo accumulated more than 20 years' experience as an indigenous leader and human-rights activist. He had 10 children and was often unemployed, and he established a Black Community School, the first institution of its kind in Australia, and was involved in indigenous health and housing. In the late 1960s he worked as a gardener at James Cook University, returning there in 1981 to a conference on land rights, where he delivered a historic speech which culminated in the landmark court case.

Unfortunately Eddie Mabo died of cancer six months before the decision was announced. After a customary period of mourning he was given a king's burial ceremony on Mer, reflecting his status among his people – such a ritual had not been performed on the island for some 80 years.

the USA (exemplified by its involvement in the 2003 Iraq war). Some say this alliance protects Australia's independence; others insist that it reduces Australia to a fawning 'client state'.

In Queensland, old fears and prejudices continue to struggle with tolerance and an acceptance of Asia, and indigenous issues seem as intractable as ever. Aboriginal leaders acknowledge that poverty, violence and welfare dependency continue to blight the lives of too many Aboriginal communities. In Cape York, Aboriginal leaders, white land-owners and mining companies displayed a new willingness to work with each other when they signed the Cape York Agreement in 2001, but in late 2007, worrying reports of child sexual abuse in the Cape York Aboriginal community highlighted the enormous social problems within indigenous communities in Queensland and across the country. In 2008, an official apology to the stolen generation (Aboriginal children taken from their parents and placed with white families during the 19th and 20th centuries) delivered by the Australian government brings new hope – an important symbolic gesture that must be followed up with real change.

The degradation of the Great Barrier Reef has slowed, and parts of the Reef are even recovering from earlier abuse. However, environmentalists warn that global warming may yet kill the fragile coral, reducing the Reef to an ocean desert (see the boxed text, p56).

In summary, the struggle for life, prosperity and social justice goes on, but in a state where the sun shines all year round, the locals believe they live in the best damn place on earth.

Find out more about Cape York Aborigines at www.balkanu.com.au.

1992

Kieren Perkins (from Brisbane), one of the world's best-ever distance swimmers, breaks three world records and wins the 1500m freestyle gold medal at the Barcelona Olympics.

1992

After 10 years in the courts, the landmark Mabo decision is delivered by the High Court. Effectively, this gives recognition to indigenous land rights across the country.

2007

Peter Beattie, the longest-serving Labor premier in Queensland history, retires. His deputy Anna Bligh becomes the state's first female premier.

The Culture

REGIONAL IDENTITY

Queenslanders are perceived as a laid-back, outdoorsy, heavy-drinking, weather-beaten lot, and as with most stereotypes, there are grains of truth strewn amongst the myth. Certainly it's not uncommon to detect a note of pity or bewilderment in a Queenslander's tone when visitors talk of winter days buffeted by rain or snow – with an alleged 300 days of sunshine a year, who can blame them? However, most of the population live in urban areas, are likely to spend far too many hours a week watching TV and think corks attached to hats are just silly. Once you head north from the populated southeast of the state, however, the laconic Australian drawl grows thicker and glimmers of these stereotypes are palpable.

Queenslanders, as with many Australians, feel they've earned their place in the sun through generations of effort. The seminal times of the colony were characterised by extreme hardship, resentment at being sent so far with so little, and an incalculable sense of loss of loved ones and homes left behind. To cope with this struggle against nature and tyranny, Australians forged a culture based on the principles of a 'fair go' and back-slaps for challenges to authority. Stories of the 'Aussie battler' were passed down from generation to generation. The only time the association with the past is not held on a pedestal is when the subject turns to the treatment meted out to indigenous Australians during these times; Queenslanders, as with other Australians, are good at distancing themselves from these past events and such topics are rarely discussed.

Extreme stereotypes of tamings of the bush are rife; the film *Crocodile Dundee* for example depicts dinky-di Aussies mud-wrestling crocodiles in the wilds of the Queensland bush. The late Steve Irwin also embodied this lovable, croc-wrestling, larrikin character. Such stereotypes celebrate a nostalgia and romanticism for the 'heroism' of the early white settlers.

But times have changed. Immigration has had a huge effect on Australian culture, as migrants have brought their own stories, cultures and myths to meld with those of the colonial struggler. Many migrants have arrived in Australia with a huge sense of hope and expectancy, to start life afresh. The iconic, white 'Aussie battler' is becoming less relevant.

The immense bounty of the Australian landscape helped forge its reputation as the 'Lucky Country' – the land of opportunity – and for most Queenslanders this rings true. As part of the wider Australian community, they enjoy a sophisticated, modern society with immense variety, a global focus, if not a regional one, and a relentless sense of optimism tempered by world events.

LIFESTYLE

Despite the state's vast and diverse expanse, most Queenslanders inhabit the suburban smear occupying the fertile coastal strip between Coolangatta and Cairns. It's no surprise that Brisbane is the fastest-growing capital city in Australia. The 'Great Australian Dream' of owning a house on a chunk of suburban land with a car, a mutt and some kids is a high priority for many, informing the state's psyche. Southerners (particularly Victorians) flock to the Sunshine State for the outdoor lifestyle it provides, many permanently, especially retirees.

Inside the average middle-class home it's likely that you'll find a married, heterosexual couple, though it's becoming increasingly common that they will be in a de facto relationship or in their second marriage. They'll pack

To test your knowledge of Australian stereotypes, complete this quick online quiz: www.funtrivia.com/trivia-quiz/Geography/Aussie-Stereotypes-99842.html. Just don't take it too seriously!

the whole family into the car, probably with a caravan attached, and head off to the beach every summer, and on weekends they'll barrack for the Lions, Cowboys or Broncos (see opposite for a translation).

The outback is a different story. The characters here are tough and resilient, qualities born of isolation and the hardships of life on the land. The elements dominate existence out here: rain can bring life to the land, but floods can cut people off for months at a time. There's a strong sense of community in outback towns, where station workers come in from miles around to get supplies, hit the pub and catch up on gossip. Locals are welcoming and friendly to visitors and keen to talk about their lifestyle, but can occasionally be a bit suspicious and even patronising towards 'blow-ins'. In places like Mt Isa, where there's an ongoing mining boom, much of the population is young and transient.

Queensland toes a very conservative line and gender roles and stereotypes lag behind much of the country. This said, attitudes have changed substantially. Artistic communities speckle the Gold and Sunshine Coast hinterlands, and several of Brisbane's inner suburbs have a distinctly alternative flavour.

POPULATION

Australia has been strongly influenced by immigration – its ethnic mix is among the most diverse in the world. At one time Queensland was the most multicultural place in Australia, with huge numbers of Indian and Chinese coolies, Pacific Islanders (known as Kanakas) and German contractors working here, but the White Australia policy brought in at Federation (see p31) marked the end of this comparatively enlightened period.

Queensland's current population is estimated at around 4.2 million, making up almost 20% of the total Australian population. Of this figure approximately 127,600 people are of indigenous origin: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, most of whom live in the north of the state or on the islands of Torres Strait, between Cape York and Papua New Guinea.

Queensland is notable for being the Australian mainland state with the largest proportion of its people living outside its capital city. Still, the south-eastern corner of the state is Queensland's most crowded region, with more than 60% of the total population living within 150km of Brisbane. The majority of the population's remainder inhabits the fertile coastal strip between Brisbane and Cairns. The other parts of the state are sparsely populated.

INDIGENOUS QUEENSLAND

Indigenous people of many tribes inhabited the area encompassing Queensland for tens of thousands of years before European settlement. Like many precolonial countries, the cultural and geographic boundaries of indigenous Australia bore little resemblance to the state's borders as they are today. By the turn of the 19th century, the Aborigines who had survived the bloody settlement of Queensland, which saw some of the most brutal massacres in Australia (see the boxed text, p30), had been comprehensively run off their lands, and the white authorities had set up ever-shrinking reserves to contain the survivors. A few of these were run according to well-meaning (if misguided) missionary ideals, but the majority of them were strife-ridden places where people from different areas and cultures were thrown unhappily together and treated as virtual prisoners.

Today, 'Murri' is the generic term used to refer to the indigenous peoples of Queensland. Indigenous Torres Strait Islanders come from the islands of the Torres Strait, located off the coast of Cape York. They are culturally distinct from the Aboriginal tribes that originated on Australia's mainland, having been influenced by indigenous Papua New Guineans and Pacific Islanders. Traditionally they were seafaring people, engaging in trade with people

'Banjo' Paterson wrote the lyrics to 'Waltzing Matilda', Australia's unofficial national anthem, in 1895 while visiting his fiancée near Winton in central Queensland.

At last count almost one million Aussies were setting up home abroad.

The autobiography *Cathy Freeman* gives great insight into the national and Aboriginal icon who was a gold-medal-winning 400m runner at the Sydney Olympics. She was born in Mackay on Queensland's Whitsunday Coast.

from the surrounding islands and Papua New Guinea, and with mainland Aborigines. Some 6800 Torres Strait Islanders remain on the islands in the Strait; an estimated 42,000 live in northern Queensland.

SPORT

If you're an armchair – or wooden bench – sports fan, Queensland has plenty to offer. Rugby is the main game in Queensland and attracts the biggest crowds – that's rugby league, the 13-a-side working-class version of the game. Queensland has three teams in the **National Rugby League** (NRL; www.nrl.com.au): the Brisbane Broncos, who you can catch in Brisbane (see p105); the North Queensland Cowboys, whose home ground is in Townsville; and the Gold Coast Titans, who play at a new stadium called Skilled Park at Robina.

Rugby Union is also popular, and the Queensland Reds represent the state in the **Super 14** (www.super14.com) competition. It's the largest rugby union club championship in the southern hemisphere, comprising teams from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

Australian Rules Football (AFL, or Aussie Rules; www.afl.com.au) has made inroads into Queensland. The Brisbane Lions are Queensland's only side in the national league (although a new AFL team based on the Gold Coast is expected to start in 2010) and have proved themselves a force to be reckoned with, winning three consecutive premierships from 2001 to 2003. You can watch the Lions play a home game at the Gabba (p104). Both the NRL and AFL seasons run from March to September.

During the other (nonfootball) half of the year you'll be able to watch plenty of **cricket** (www.cricket.com.au). International Test and One Day International (ODI) matches are played at the Gabba every summer. There is also an interstate competition (the Pura Cup) and numerous local grades. The Australian cricket team (which currently has three to four Queenslanders) has dominated the sport for over a decade.

Rodeos are held at dozens of places throughout the state, and are often large community events. Some of the biggest rodeos are held at Mareeba in the far north, Warwick in the Darling Downs, and Mt Isa and Longreach in the outback.

ARTS

Fortunately for the arts, the fall of the National Party in the 1990s marked the beginning of a cultural renaissance in Queensland. The new Labor government restored the civil liberties that were taken away by the Bjelke-Petersen government (such as the right to assembly) and did much to stimulate and encourage artistic and cultural development. Brisbane in particular has a healthy level of creative endeavour, with theatre, opera, alternative cinema, poetry, music and other artistic activities going on every night of the week.

This said, the artistic spirit fades pretty quickly once you leave the capital and travel up the coast or into the outback. For the most part the arts in rural Queensland are restricted to pub bands and Aboriginal souvenirs.

Cinema

Although Australia's film industry has been firmly lodged in Victoria and New South Wales, Queensland has spent more than a decade making significant inroads, which in turn has fostered new growth in the artistic wing of the industry.

The commercial industry is based around the Warner Roadshow studios at Movie World on the Gold Coast (see p148), which has made a number of successful films targeted at the family market, including *Scooby Doo* (2002) and *Peter Pan* (2003). Other commercial films produced here include the

Australia's state funding of professional sports is among the highest proportionally in the world.

One of Australia's most acclaimed thespians, Geoffrey Rush, is a Toowoomba native. His performance as David Helfgott in *Shine* earned him an Oscar.

horror/thriller *Ghost Ship* (2002) and *The Great Raid* (2002), which tells the story of a WWII rescue mission of American prisoners in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp in the Philippines. If you're a fan of horror, don't miss *Undead* (2002), shot in southeast Queensland, about a town that becomes infected with a zombie virus.

Other international titles filmed in the state include: *The Thin Red Line* (1998), Terrence Malick's critically acclaimed tale of WWII soldiers in the Pacific, and, of course, *Crocodile Dundee in LA* (2001), the last instalment of the record-breaking Aussie series (parts one and two were also partly filmed in Queensland).

Baz Luhrmann's greatly anticipated *Australia* (2008) will be released in late 2008 and was partly filmed in Bowen. It traces the life of an English aristocrat in the 1930s who ventures to northern Australia to sell an enormous cattle property.

Queensland has also been either the setting or location for some excellent local productions. One of the most successful was the hit independent movie *Muriel's Wedding* (1994), which strips the lino off the suburban dream and chases Muriel's misadventurous efforts to escape the boredom and monotony of her life.

Gettin' Square (2003), directed by Jonathan Teplitzky, is an exquisitely funny and dark story of two low-grade criminals trying to extricate themselves from their illegal past and former employers. Every performance in this film is superb, but Gary Sweet's formidably foul Gold Coast gangster and David Wenham's tragically hapless junkie are stand-outs. Wenham won an Australian Film Industry (AFI) award for his efforts.

Swimming Upstream (2002) is the autobiographical story of Anthony Fingleton, a Queensland state swimmer in the 1960s. His success was embittered by the tragic impact his damaged and alcoholic father (played by Geoffrey Rush) had on him and his family. Utterly gritty and raw, you can almost taste the hardship faced by families on the breadline in 1960s Queensland.

Praise (1998), adapted from the novel by Andrew McGahan (opposite), is a toothy, honest tale of mismatched love in down-and-out Brisbane.

Keep an eye out for *Shadows of the Past*, by local director Warren Ryan. It's set for release in late 2008 or early 2009, and features an Australian rodeo scene.

Cunnamulla (2000) is a controversial film by Dennis O'Rourke about the eponymous town in western Queensland. It portrays the lives of indigenous and white Australians, revealing the harsh realities of life in the outback.

Ocean's Deadliest (2007) is the last documentary Steve Irwin made before his untimely death, and features Philippe Cousteau, grandson of renowned oceanographer Jacques Cousteau.

Literature

Two of the most widely acclaimed early Australian writers were AB 'Banjo' Paterson (1864–1941) and Henry Lawson (1867–1922). Paterson's classic works include the much-recited poems *Clancy of the Overflow* (1889) and *The Man from Snowy River* (1890). Henry Lawson's greatest contributions were his short stories of life in the bush, published in collections such as *While the Billy Boils* (1896) and *Joe Wilson and His Mates* (1901).

Steele Rudd (1868–1935), a contemporary of Paterson and Lawson, was born in Toowoomba. With his classic sketches of the hardships of early Queensland life and the enduring characters he created such as 'Dad and Dave' and 'Mother and Sal', Rudd became one of the country's best-loved comic writers. His work *On Our Selection* (1899) is a humorous insight into the Australian bush myth of life on a plot of land in the Darling Downs.

Rolf Boldrewood's classic *Robbery Under Arms* (1889) tells the adventurous tale of Captain Starlight, Queensland's most notorious bushranger and cattle thief. Neville Shute's famous novel *A Town Like Alice* (1950) is set partly in Burketown, in the Gulf Savannah. Many of Ion Idriess' outback romps were set in Queensland, including *Flynn of the Inland* (1932), the story of the man who created the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

In 1938 Xavier Herbert produced his classic *Capricornia*, an epic tale of the settler existence near the Gulf of Carpentaria. In a similar vein, Kerry McGinnis' *Heart Country* (2001) is an evocative autobiography about her life as a cattle drover in the Gulf – McGinnis still raises cattle at Bowthorn Station near Burketown. An interesting play (now also a film) set in Queensland is *Radiance* (1993), by esteemed Aussie playwright Louis Nowra.

Queensland has produced plenty of outstanding writers of its own. In particular, Brisbane's University of Queensland has for many years been one of Australia's richest literary breeding grounds.

Lebanese-Australian author David Malouf (b 1934) is one of Queensland's most internationally recognised writers, having been nominated for the Booker Prize. He is well known for his evocative tales of an Australian boyhood in Brisbane – *Johnno* (1975) and *12 Edmondstone Street* (1985) – and for *The Great World* (1993), among other titles. Set on the Gold Coast, his 1982 novel *Fly Away Peter* tells the poignant story of a returned soldier struggling to come to terms with ordinary life and the unjust nature of social hierarchy. His latest work is a collection of short stories titled *Every Move You Make* (2006), which dissects Australian life across the continent including Far North Queensland. *Typewriter Music* (2007), the first collection of Malouf's poems to be published in 26 years, begins and ends with poems about love.

Australia's best-known Aboriginal poet and writer, Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker), was born on North Stradbroke Island in 1920, and buried there in September 1993. See the boxed text on p132 for a closer look at her life and work. Herb Wharton (b 1936), an Aboriginal author from Cunnamulla, has written a series of novels and short stories about the lives of Murri stockmen, including *Unbranded* (1992) and *Cattle Camp* (1994).

Thea Astley (1925–2004) published 11 novels, including *Hunting the Wild Pineapple* (1979), set in the rainforests of northern Queensland, and *The Multiple Effects of Rainshadow* (1996). *It's Raining in Mango* (1987) is a historical saga that traces the fortunes and failures of one pioneer family from the 1860s to the 1980s.

Expatriate writer Janette Turner Hospital (b 1942) was educated in Melbourne and has used the Queensland rainforests as a setting for many of her books, including the wonderful *The Last Magician* (1992).

Ipswich-born Thomas Shapcott (b 1935) is an editor and one of Australia's most prolific writers. His books include *The White Stag of Exile* (1984), set in Brisbane and Budapest around the end of the 19th century.

Brisbane-born journalist Hugh Lunn (b 1941) has written a number of popular books on and about Queensland. They include his humorous two-part autobiography *Over the Top with Jim* (1995) and *Head Over Heels* (1992).

In recent years Brisbane has produced a wave of promising young writers. Andrew McGahan (b 1956), a university dropout, used the seedy underbelly of the Fortitude Valley scene as the setting for his controversial first novel *Praise* (1992), which was later made into a film. His crime novel, *Last Drinks* (2005), is set in the aftermath of the landmark Fitzgerald Inquiry into corruption in Queensland.

Another prominent young writer is Matthew Condon (b 1962), whose novels include *The Motorcycle Cafe* (1988) and *Usher* (1991); his latest, *The Trout Opera*, came out in 2007. Helen Darville (b 1971) gained notoriety for her

The Pacific Film and Television Commission (PFTC) website, www.pftc.com.au, provides a good insight into Queensland's burgeoning film industry.

Fool's Gold, a big Hollywood movie set in Queensland, was released in early 2008. It stars Kate Hudson and Matthew McConaughey in a rollicking adventure-love story about a couple of treasure hunters.

The annual Queensland Premier's Literary Awards celebrate the state's professional and budding authors. There are 14 awards in total with recipients sharing in a \$225,000 prize pool.

The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature (1994), edited by William H Wilde, Joy Hooton and Barry Andrews, is a comprehensive guide to Australian authors and writing from European settlement to the 1990s.

novel *The Hand That Signed the Paper* (1995), which won the Miles Franklin Award in 1995 amid controversy over plagiarism and the author's (false) claim that she had a Ukrainian background. Another prominent Brisbane talent is children's author James Moloney (b 1954), who has picked up many awards for his books *Swashbuckler* (1995) and *A Bridge to Wiseman's Cove* (1996).

Painting

Charles Archer (1813–62), the founder of Rockhampton, produced some interesting settler paintings in the 1850s. Lloyd Rees (1895–1998) is probably the best-known artist to have come out of Queensland and has an international reputation. Others include abstract impressionist John Coburn (1925–2006), Ian Fairweather (1891–1974), Godfrey Rivers (1859–1925) and Davida Allen (b 1951), famous for her obsessive portraits of actor Sam Neill.

Queensland is a rich centre of traditional and contemporary Aboriginal art. Judy Watson (b 1959) and Gordon Bennett (b 1955) have both won the Moët & Chandon Prize for contemporary artists.

A number of outback artists have come to prominence, including figurative painter Matthew McCord from Mundubbera in the Darling Downs.

The work of Tracey Moffatt, who is now based in Sydney, is also worth looking out for. See p81 for details of galleries featuring Australian art.

Aboriginal Rock Art

Rock art is a diary of human activity by Australia's indigenous peoples stretching over tens of thousands of years. Queensland has plenty of sites, especially splashed round the far north. Try to see some while you're here – the experience of viewing rock art in the surroundings in which it was painted is far more profound than seeing it in a gallery.

Quinkan rock art is a very distinct style from northern Australia (see the boxed text, p408). There are hundreds of ancient rock-art sites displaying this style around Laura in Cape York. The most accessible is the Split Rock site; tours are given by Aboriginal guides from Laura (see p408).

There are also rock art sites around Cooktown, near Hopevale Aboriginal Community, but they can really only be visited with the locally guided Guurrbi Tours (p398) as they are difficult to find. There are also Aboriginal guided tours to the Kuku Yalanji rock-art sites around Mossman Gorge (see p382). Well worth visiting is the gallery at the Kuku Yalanji Dreamtime visitors centre at the entrance to Mossman Gorge (p382), which features locally produced Aboriginal art.

Further south, Carnarvon Gorge has amazing rock and stencil art dating back 19,000 years (see the boxed text, p258).

Music

Indigenous music is one of the Australian music industry's great success stories of recent years, and Queensland has produced some outstanding indigenous musicians of its own. Christine Anu is a Torres Strait Islander who was born in Cairns. Her debut album *Stylin' Up* (1995) blends Creole-style rap, Islander chants and traditional languages with English, and was followed by the interesting *Come My Way* (2000) and *45 Degrees* (2003) – highly recommended listening. Ever evolving, she has recently taken to the blues: look out for her next album. Other regional artists include Torres Strait Islander Rita Mills and Maroochy Barambah of the Sunshine Coast.

Brisbane's pub rock scene has produced a couple of Australia's all-time greatest bands. The Saints, considered by many to be one of the seminal punk bands, started out performing in Brisbane in the mid-1970s

ABORIGINAL SPIRITUALITY

Traditional Aboriginal religious beliefs centre on the continuing existence of spirit beings that lived on Earth during creation time (also called Dreamtime, or the Dreaming), which occurred before the arrival of humans. These beings created all the features of the natural world and are the ancestors of all living things. They took different forms but behaved as people do, and as they travelled about they left signs to show where they had passed.

Despite being supernatural, the ancestors were subject to ageing and eventually returned to the sleep from which they'd awoken at the dawn of time. Here their spirits remain as eternal forces that breathe life into the newborn and influence natural events. Each ancestor's spiritual energy flows along the path it travelled during the Dreamtime and is strongest at the points where it left physical evidence of its activities, such as a tree, hill or claypan. These features are called 'sacred sites'. These days the importance of sacred sites is increasingly recognised in non-Aboriginal communities, and most state governments have legislated to give these sites a measure of protection.

Every person, animal and plant is believed to have two souls – one mortal and one immortal. The latter is part of a particular ancestral spirit and returns to the sacred sites of that ancestor after death, while the mortal soul simply fades into oblivion. Each person is spiritually bound to the sacred sites that mark the land associated with his or her spirit ancestor. It is the individual's obligation to help care for these sites by performing the necessary rituals and singing the songs that tell of the ancestor's deeds. By doing this, the order created by that ancestor is maintained.

The links between Aboriginal people and their spirit ancestors are totems; each person has his or her own totem. These totems can take many forms, including trees, caterpillars, snakes, fish and magpies. Songs explain how the landscape contains these powerful creator ancestors, who can exert either a benign or a malevolent influence. They also have a practical meaning: they tell of the best places and the best times to hunt, and where to find water in drought years. They can also specify kinship relations and identify correct marriage partners.

before moving on to bigger things in Sydney and, later, London. The band recently reunited for a 30 year reunion and have released a one-hour documentary.

Queensland's musicians have given their counterparts elsewhere a run for their money in recent years. Powderfinger has played a dominant role in the music industry for more than a decade and continues its pursuit of the perfect harmonic rock tune. Powderfinger's albums make excellent driving soundtracks – get your hands on *Vulture Street* (2003), *Odyssey Number Five* (2000), *Fingerprints* (2004), their best-of album, or their latest offering, *Dream Days at the Hotel Existence* (2007). Lead singer Bernard Fanning released his debut solo album *Tea and Sympathy* in 2005.

The Australian Record Industry Association (ARIA) Award-winning debut album *Polyserena* (2002) of Queensland band George is deliciously haunting and well worth a listen. If you like George check out Katie Noonan's (George's lead singer) solo album *Skin*, released in 2007. Another rising star hailing from the Sunshine State is Pete Murray. His acoustic licks and chocolate-smooth voice have earned him national and international acclaim. Give his debut *Feeler* (2003) a listen, or his latest offerings *See the Sun* (2005) and *Summer at Eureka* (2008).

One of the latest Queensland success stories is The Veronicas – twins of Sicilian descent who have a stranglehold on teenage pop. More interesting is Kate Miller-Heidke, who sounds like a hybrid of Bjork, Kate Bush and Cyndi Lauper all put together – to hear her operatic tunes chase down a copy of *Little Eve* (2007).

For the latest on Queensland's artists, gigs and gossip click onto www.brispop.com.au.

Queensland artist Bill Robinson won the 1995 Archibald Prize for portraiture with his quirky *Portrait of the Artist with Stunned Mullet*.

Check out the Quinkan & Regional Cultural Centre site (www.quinkancc.com.au) for more information about Cape York Peninsula rock art and how to access it.

For a dose of 100% Australian music talent, tune in to the national radio station Triple J (www.triplej.net.au/listen) for 'Home and Hosed', 9pm to 10pm Monday to Thursday.

Finely tuned to the backpacker market, *Great Southern Land* (2003) selects Oz classics from Cold Chisel's 'The Santh' and The Angels' 'Am I Ever Gonna See Your Face Again' (mandatory crowd response: 'No way, get fucked, fuck off!'), to Men at Work's 'Down Under' – it's the perfect accompaniment to full-volume sing-alongs.

Food & Drink

Matthew Evans & Justine Vaisutis

Queensland's culinary beginnings relied heavily on a diet influenced by Britain. The legacy of steak-and-three-veg spanned many lifetimes and was only interspersed with seafood. Invention was reserved for the potato, which was the only thing that was cut, boiled, mashed, fried, roasted and cooked in every way imaginable. But Queensland is now home to some of the most dynamic places in the world to have a feed, thanks to immigration and a dining public willing to give anything new, and better, a go. Anything another country does, Queensland does too. Vietnamese, Indian, Thai, Italian – it doesn't matter where it's from, there's an expatriate community and interested locals desperate to cook and eat it.

Noosa on the Sunshine Coast is renowned for its fine cuisine, and has been the subject of cookbooks and food guides. Brisbane is fast becoming a culinary hero, rivalling the feats of Sydney and Melbourne, and can claim to be a destination worthy of touring gourmands. Tourist numbers on the Gold and Sunshine Coasts have demanded a higher calibre of eatery, and the regions have responded by coming up with the goods. Cairns too has a global palate, satiated by eclectic offerings to suit all budgets. Outside of these foodies' wonderlands you should expect simpler fare. But whereas 'pub grub' once meant a lamb roast, bangers and mash or chicken parmigiana, it now encompasses everything from salt-and-pepper squid to a butter chicken curry. The bangers and mash are still on the menu, but the snags are likely to be of the red wine, basil and beef variety.

We've coined our own phrase, Modern Australian, or 'Mod Oz', to describe our cuisine. If it's a melange of East and West, it's Modern Australian. If it's not authentically French or Italian, it's Modern Australian – our attempt to classify the unclassifiable. Dishes aren't usually too fussy and the flavours are often bold and interesting.

STAPLES & SPECIALITIES

Australia's best food comes from the sea. Nothing compares to this continent's seafood, harnessed from some of the purest waters you'll find. Right

A TASTE OF THE SUNSHINE STATE

After being ignored for about 200 years, Australia's native produce has been 'discovered' and bush food is starting to feature on menus. Kangaroo meat is even carried by major supermarkets. It's a deep purpley-red meat, very lean and best served rare. It's a standard on many pub menus. Crocodile is also appearing on menus (and on pizzas!), and has a chicken-like consistency and a fishy taste. Much native flora has chemicals not conducive to human consumption, but notable exceptions include fiery bush pepper; sweet, aromatic lemon myrtle; wattle seed; acidic bush tomato; and macadamia nuts.

If you're in the outback and after something a bit more challenging, give witchetty grubs a go. Although they look like giant maggots, they have a nutty flavour and squishy texture. Green ants are another bush tucker – to eat them pick 'em up and bite off their lightly acidic bottoms. Now you know you're in Australia...

Brisbane, Cairns and Noosa all have restaurants featuring bush food. In Brisbane, **Tukka** (p100) offers a gourmet menu based entirely around native produce: sink your fangs into some paper-bark-roasted Cairns crocodile, seared emu fillets, homemade damper, native berries, Moreton Bay bugs, and even watermelon gazpacho flavoured with peppermint gum leaf.

The cuisine in Noosa is so good it prompted its own cookbook – *Noosa the Cookbook* by Madonna Duffy.

along the Queensland coast, even a simple dish of fish and chips (and that includes the takeaway variety) is superfresh and cooked with care.

Connoisseurs prize Queensland's sea scallops and blue-swimmer crabs. One of the state's iconic delicacies is the Moreton Bay bug – like a shovel-nosed lobster without a lobster's price tag. The prawns and calamari here are also delicious. Add to that countless wild fish species and Queensland has one of the greatest bounties on earth.

Queenslanders love their seafood, but they've not lost their yen for a hefty chunk of steak. As the rest of the country increasingly draws away from that meat-and-three-veg legacy, Queensland has kept a firm grip on it, but fancied it up with a fat dose of creativity. Rockhampton is the beef capital of Australia and visiting carnivores would be crazy not to cut into a sizzling steak. Elsewhere beef and lamb remain staples, but they are now done with tandoori, Greek or provincial flavourings...as well as just chops or steak.

Queensland's size and diverse climate – from the humid, tropical north to the mild, balmy south – mean there's an enormous variety of produce on offer. If you're embarking on a road trip throughout the state, you're bound to encounter rolling banana, sugar or mango plantations or quilted orchards. In summer, mangoes are so plentiful that Queenslanders actually get sick of them. But this is not the case with macadamias. This native nut with its smooth, buttery flavour grows throughout southeastern Queensland and fetches hefty prices. Queenslanders use it in everything – you'll find it tossed in salads, crushed and frozen in ice cream and stickily petrified in gooey cakes and sweets.

There's a small but brilliant farmhouse-cheese movement, hampered by the fact that all the milk must be pasteurised (unlike in Italy and France, the home of the world's best cheeses). Despite that, the results can be great. Keep an eye out for goat's cheese from Gympie and anything from the boutique Kenilworth Country Foods company (p204).

Australians' taste for the unusual generally kicks in only at dinner time. Most people eat cereal for breakfast, or perhaps eggs and bacon on weekends. They devour sandwiches for lunch and then eat anything and everything in the evening. Clean Asian flavours are very popular, especially Thai, Indian, Chinese and Vietnamese, and there's a healthy diversity of restaurants reflecting this in major urban centres.

DRINKS

You're in the right country if you're after a drink. Once a nation of tea and beer swillers, Oz is now turning its attention to coffee and wine.

Queensland's climate is generally too warm to produce good wines, but the Granite Belt in the Darling Downs is a blossoming and excellent wine-growing district (see the boxed text, p173). Other small wine areas include the Atherton Tableland, the Sunshine and Gold Coast hinterlands and around Kingaroy.

TALKING STRINE

The opening dish in a three-course meal is called the entrée, the second course (what North Americans call an entrée) is called the main course, and the sweet bit at the end is called dessert, sweets, afters or pud.

When an Australian invites you over for a baked dinner, it might mean a roast lunch. Use the time as a guide – dinner is normally served after 6pm. By 'tea' they could be talking dinner, or they could be talking a cup of tea. Coffee definitely means coffee, unless it's after a hot date when you're invited up to a prospect's flat.

The online *Good Food Guide* has reviews for many of Brisbane's top restaurants and uses a ratings system to give them a score out of 20. Check it out at www.brisbanetimes.com.au/goodfoodguide.

A Good Plain Cook: an Edible History of Queensland by S Addison & J McKay is a collection of recipes spanning Queensland's history, with newspaper snippets and photos from different eras.

Australian wine is mostly a product of the southern states. If you're buying a bottle or scrutinising a wine list, you can't go wrong with a Cabernet Sauvignon from Coonawarra, Riesling from Tassie or the Clare Valley, Chardonnay from Margaret River or Shiraz from the Barossa Valley.

Other notable regions to keep an eye out for include the Hunter Valley in New South Wales, McLaren Vale and the Adelaide Hills in South Australia, and the Yarra Valley in Victoria.

There's a bewildering array of beer available in bottle shops, pubs, bars and restaurants. The Queensland staple is XXXX (pronounced 'Four X'). It's much maligned elsewhere in the country, but the locals swear by it. On tap in every pub and bar in the state you'll find domestic lagers, but the appearance of imported lagers, ales and Pilseners in city pubs and bars is increasing.

Most beers have an alcohol content between 3.5% and 5%. That's less than many European beers, but stronger than most of the stuff in North America. Light beers come in under 3% alcohol and are finding favour with people observing the superstringent drink-driving laws.

A local speciality in Queensland, which has found its way to the rest of the country in varying degrees of popularity, is 'Bundy and Coke'. The self-explanatory mix of Bundaberg Rum (distilled in...Bundaberg), and Coke can be found on tap in most parts of the state. It's pretty sweet and obviously alcoholic, but if spirits are your poison you'll be accommodated well.

In terms of coffee, Australia is leaping ahead, with Italian-style espresso machines in virtually every café, boutique roasters all the rage, and, in urban areas, the qualified *barista* (coffee maker) is just about the norm.

Fresh fruit juice is a popular and healthy way to beat the heat. Juice bars that specialise in all sorts of yummy concoctions are common, but you can also get good versions at cafés and ice-cream stores.

CELEBRATIONS

Celebrating in the Australian manner often includes equal amounts of food and alcohol. A birthday could well be a barbie (barbecue) of steak and snags (sausages), fish or prawns, washed down with a beverage or two. Weddings usually involve a big slap-up dinner, though the food is often far from memorable. Christenings are more sober, mostly offering home-baked biscuits and a cup of tea.

For many an event, especially in summer, Australians fill the car with an Esky (an ice chest or cooler), tables, chairs and a cricket set or a footy, and head for a barbie by the lake/river/beach. If there's a total fire ban (which occurs increasingly each summer), the food is precooked and the barbie becomes more of a picnic, but the essence remains the same.

Christmas in Australia often finds the more traditional (in a European sense) baked dinner being replaced by a barbecue, full of seafood and quality steak. Prawn prices skyrocket, chocolate may be eaten with champagne at breakfast, and the main meal is usually in the afternoon, after a swim and before a really good, long siesta.

Various ethnic minorities have their own celebrations. The Tongans love an *umu* or *hangi*, where fish and vegetables are buried in an earthen pit and covered with coals; Greeks may hold a spit barbecue; and the Chinese go off during Chinese New Year every January or February.

WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

Typically, a restaurant meal in Australia is a relaxed affair. It may take 15 minutes to order, another 15 before the food arrives, and 30 minutes between courses. The upside is that your table is yours for the night, unless you're told otherwise. So sit, linger and live life in the slow lane.

'Shouting' is a revered custom where people rotate paying for a round of drinks. Just don't leave before it's your turn to buy!

In Queensland, when ordering a beer you can order a five or small (140mL), a pot, 10 or middy (all 285mL), a schooner (425mL), a pint (568mL) or a jug (1125mL).

Competitively priced places to eat are clubs or pubs that offers counter meals. Returned & Services League (RSL) clubs are prolific in Queensland, and while the décor can be outdated – plastic palm trees and portraits of Queen Elizabeth II are still all the rage – the tucker is normally excellent. Generally you order staples such as a fisherman's basket, steak or chicken cordon bleu at the kitchen, take a number and wait until it's called out. You collect the meal yourself, saving on staff and on your total bill, which usually comes in at around \$12 to \$16 for a hefty meal.

The other type of club you're bound to come across is the Surf Life Saving Club (SLSC). Most coastal towns have at least one, sometimes up to three. They're similar to RSL clubs, but many now compete with finer restaurants and their bistros stock inventive fare. Additionally, they're almost always perched on the beachfront so the views alone tend to be worth the visit.

At any clubs, you'll have to sign in as a temporary member, and you may be asked to prove you're a bona fide visitor.

One of the most interesting features of the Australian dining scene is the Bring Your Own (BYO) policy: restaurants that allows you to bring your own alcohol. If the restaurant sells alcohol, the BYO bit is usually limited to bottled wine, and a corkage charge is added to your bill. The charge is either per person or per bottle, and ranges from nothing to \$15 per bottle. BYO is a dying custom, however, and most licensed restaurants don't like you bringing your own wine, so ask when you book.

Most restaurants open around 11am for lunch, and from 5.30pm or 6pm for dinner. Australians usually eat lunch shortly after noon, and dinner bookings are usually made for 7.30pm or 8pm, though in Brisbane and other major cities some restaurants keep serving past 10pm.

Quick Eats

There's not a huge culture of street vending in Australia, though you may find a pie or a coffee cart in some places. Most quick eats traditionally come from takeaways, which serve burgers (with bacon, egg, pineapple and beetroot if you want) and other takeaway foods. The humble sandwich is perennially popular, but gone are the days when you were served two pieces of bread with a slice of cheese and meat in the middle. Instead, *paninis*, focaccias and toasted Turkish rolls with a smorgasbord of ingredients offer a healthy, filling lunch. Fish and chips is still popular, with the fish most usually being shark (often called flake) dipped in batter, and eaten at the beach on Friday night. Sushi is another popular quick eat and a healthy alternative. Virtually every regional centre has a small sushi shack, and they seem to appear on every corner in Brisbane and Cairns.

American-style fast food is all the rage, though many Aussies still love a meat pie or dinky-di sausage roll, often from a milk bar, but also from bakeries, kiosks and some cafés. If you're at an Aussie Rules football or rugby league match, a beer, a meat pie and a bag of hot chips are as compulsory as wearing your team's colours to the game.

Pizza is one of the most popular fast foods; most pizzas that are home-delivered are American style (thick with lots of toppings) rather than Italian style. That said, more and more wood-fired, thin Neapolitan-style pizzas can be found, even in country towns. In the city, Roman-style pizza (buy it by the slice) is becoming more popular.

Middle Eastern kebabs are another staple in Australia's multicultural takeaway scene. Served with chicken, lamb, beef or felafel, they are the standard after-pub feed.

The *Courier Mail* publishes restaurant reviews in its Tuesday edition, which cover Brisbane restaurants.

Safe Food Queensland works to ensure the health and quality of Queensland produce. For information on its accreditation system and monitoring programme, see www.safefood.qld.gov.au.

AUTHORS' RECOMMENDATIONS

Need a quick reference of Queensland's best eateries? The team of authors who put this book together reckon the following options are worth skipping breakfast for:

- **Oskars** (p152), Burleigh Heads, has sweeping views and sassy seafood.
- **Watt** (p99), Brisbane, is riverside dining at its best.
- **Berardo's** (p197), Noosa, is a highly acclaimed restaurant with heavenly ambience and inventive cuisine.
- **Simon's Wok Inn** (p266), Mackay, is a wonderful Singaporean-style restaurant, known mainly to locals. The banquet is recommended.
- **Deja Vu** (p284), Airlie Beach, is an unpretentious restaurant with multicultural creations and decadent deserts.
- **Harold's Seafood** (p306), Townsville, has excellent takeaway fish and chips and a glass cabinet full of prawns.
- **On the Inlet** (p380), Port Douglas, has awesome fresh seafood, great service and a resident grouper (a fish).
- **Whet Restaurant** (p393), Cape Tribulation, has tropical tapas and a funky vibe in the far-flung north.
- **Nu Nu** (p358), Palm Cove, has one of the most innovative menus in Far North Queensland and a great location on Palm Cove's esplanade.
- **Hotel Corones** (p442), Charleville, is a classic 19th-century outback pub where you can dine with the ghosts of the past.

There are some really dodgy mass-produced takeaway foods, bought mostly by famished teenage boys, including the dim sim (a kind of deep-fried Chinese dumpling) and Chiko Roll (for translations, see opposite).

VEGETARIANS & VEGANS

In Queensland's regional centres and big cities, vegetarians are catered for along with carnivores. Most restaurants and pubs put as much effort into their vegetarian dishes as they do their meat ones. In the cities you're likely to find excellent vegetarian restaurants, while other places may have vegetarian menus. Cafés also have vegetarian options. Take care with risotto and soups, though, as meat stock is often used. The more remote the region, the fewer vegetarian options you're likely to find on the menu.

Vegans will find the going much tougher, but local Hare Krishna restaurants or Buddhist temples often provide relief, and there are usually dishes that are vegan-adaptable at restaurants.

EATING WITH KIDS

Queensland is an incredibly family-friendly state, and dining with kids is relatively easy. Children are usually more than welcome at midrange restaurants, cafés and bistros, and clubs often see families dining early. Many fine-dining restaurants don't welcome small children (they just assume that *all* children are ill-behaved).

Most places that welcome children don't have separate kids' menus, and those that do usually offer food straight from the deep-fryer, such as crumbed chicken and chips. You may be better advised to find something on the main menu and have the kitchen adapt the dish to suit your child's needs.

The Australian Vegetarian Society has a useful website (www.veg-soc.org) that lists a number of vegetarian and vegetarian-friendly places to eat.

BILLS & TIPPING

The total at the bottom of a restaurant bill is all you really need to pay. It should include 10% GST (as should menu prices), and there is no 'optional' service charge added. Waiters are paid a reasonable salary, so they don't rely on tips to survive. Often, though, especially in urban Australia, people tip a few coins in a café, while the tip for excellent service can go as high as 15% in whiz-bang establishments. The incidence of add-ons (bread, water, surcharges on weekends etc) is increasing.

The best news for travelling families is that there are plenty of free or coin-operated barbecues in parks. Beware of weekends and public holidays when fierce battles can erupt over who is next in line for the barbecue.

HABITS & CUSTOMS

It's good manners to use British knife and fork skills, with the fork in the left hand and the knife in the right, though Americans may be forgiven for using a fork like a shovel. Talking with your mouth full is considered rude, and fingers should only be used for food such as sandwiches.

If you're invited to dinner at someone's house, always take a gift. You may offer to bring something for the meal, but even if the host refuses – insisting you just bring your scintillating conversation – you should still take a bottle of wine. Flowers or a box of chocolates are also acceptable.

Australians like to linger a while over coffee. They like to linger a really long time while drinking beer, and they tend to take quite a bit of time if they're out to dinner (as opposed to having takeaways).

Smoking is banned in eateries (including pubs) in Queensland – venture outside if you need to puff, and never smoke in someone's house unless you ask first. Even then it's usual to smoke outside.

COOKING COURSES

The food store **Black Pearl Epicure** (☎ 07-3257 2144; www.blackpearl.com.au; 36 Baxter St, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane), and **Mondo Organics** (☎ 07-3844 1132; www.mondo-organics.com.au; 166 Hardgrave Rd, West End, Brisbane), a food store and restaurant, both offer excellent and highly regarded cooking classes.

Also in Brisbane is the **James St Cooking School** (☎ 07-3252 8850; www.jamesstcookingschool.com.au; Level 1, 22 James St, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane), which uses produce from the popular James St Market (p101) in its classes.

EAT YOUR WORDS

Australians love to shorten everything, including peoples' names, so expect many food-related words to be abbreviated.

Food Glossary

barbie/BBQ – a barbecue, where (traditionally) smoke and overcooked meat are matched with lashings of coleslaw, potato salad and beer.

bugs – not the earthy sort, but an abbreviation for Moreton Bay bugs, a Queensland shellfish speciality.

Chiko Roll – a fascinating, large, spring-roll-like pastry for sale in takeaway shops. Best used as an item of self-defence rather than eaten.

dim sim – a Chinese dumpling served either steamed or fried as fast food.

Esky – an insulated ice chest to hold your tinnies, before you hold them in your tinny holder. May be carried onto your tinny, too.

pav – pavlova, a meringue dessert topped with cream, passionfruit and kiwi fruit or other fresh fruit.

Tim Tam bombs, exploding Tim Tams or Tim Tam slams are a delicious Aussie ritual. Take a Tim Tam biscuit, nibble off two diagonally opposite corners, dunk one nibbled corner into a hot drink (tea, coffee or hot chocolate) and suck through the fast-melting biscuit like a straw. Ugly but good.

Serious foodies should pick up a copy of *The Food & Wine Guide Queensland*, which also covers northern NSW and the Northern Territory, produced by the *Courier Mail*.

pot – a medium glass of beer (285mL).

reef 'n' beef – a main course, usually of gargantuan proportions, consisting of a steak and seafood combination.

sanger/sarni/sambo – a sandwich.

schooner – a big glass of beer (425mL) but not as big as a pint (568mL).

snags – sausages (aka surprise bags).

stubby holder/tinny holder – insulating material that you use to keep the tinny ice-cold, and nothing to do with a boat.

Tim Tam – a commercial chocolate biscuit that lies close to the heart of most Australians.

tinny – usually refers to a can of beer, but could also be the small boat you go fishing for mud crabs in (and, in that case, you'd take a few tinnies in your tinny).

Vegemite – salty, dark-brown breakfast spread, popular on toast. Adored by Aussie masses, much maligned by visitors.

Environment Tim Flannery

Australia's plants and animals are just about the closest things to alien life you are likely to encounter on Earth. That's because Australia has been isolated from the other continents for a very long time – estimated to be at least 45 million years. The other habitable continents have been able to exchange various species at different times because they've been linked by land bridges. Just 15,000 years ago it was possible to walk from the southern tip of Africa right through Asia and the Americas to Tierra del Fuego. Not Australia, however. Australia's birds, mammals, reptiles and plants have taken their own separate and very different evolutionary journey, and the result today is the world's most distinct – and one of its most diverse – natural realms.

The first naturalists to investigate Australia were astonished by what they found. Here the swans were black – to Europeans this was a metaphor for the impossible – while certain mammals (called monotremes) such as the platypus and the echidna were discovered to lay eggs. To the eyes of the European naturalists, Australia really was an upside-down world, where many of the larger animals hopped, and each year the trees shed their bark rather than their leaves.

You might need to go out of your way to experience some of the richness of Australia's natural environment. If you are planning to visit Queensland for only a short time and cannot escape the city environs, it's worthwhile visiting some of the zoos and wildlife parks found throughout the state. This is because Australia is a subtle place, and some of the natural environment – especially around the cities – has been damaged or replaced by trees and creatures from Europe.

THE LAND

There are two really big factors that go a long way towards explaining nature in Australia: its soils and its climate. Each is unique. Australian soils are the more subtle and difficult to notice of the two, but they have been fundamental in shaping life here. On the other continents, in recent geological times, processes including volcanism, mountain building and glacial activity have been busy creating new, fertile soil. Just think of the glacial-derived soils of North America, north Asia and Europe. Those soils feed the world today, and were made by glaciers grinding up rock of differing chemical composition over the last two million years. The rich soils of India and parts of South America were made by rivers eroding mountains, while the soils of Java in Indonesia owe their extraordinary richness to volcanic activity.

All of these soil-forming processes have been almost absent from Australia in recent times. Only volcanoes have made a contribution, and they cover less than 2% of the continent's land area. In fact, for the last 90 million years, beginning deep in the age of dinosaurs, Australia has been geologically comatose. The continent was too flat, warm and dry to attract glaciers, its crust too ancient and thick to be punctured by volcanoes or folded into mountains.

Under such conditions, no new soil is created and the old soil is leached of all its goodness, and is blown and washed away. The leaching, or washing away of nutrients, is done by rain. Even if just 30cm of rain falls each year, that adds up to a column of water 30 million kilometres high passing through the soil over 100 million years – that can do a great deal of leaching! Almost all of Australia's mountain ranges are more than 90 million years old, so you will see a lot of sand here, and a lot of country where the rocky 'bones' of the land are sticking up through the thin topsoil. It is an old, infertile

Tim Flannery is a naturalist, explorer, writer and climate-change activist. He was named Australian of the Year in 2007, and is currently an adjunct professor at Macquarie University in NSW. His most recent book is *The Weather Makers* (2006).

Tim Flannery's *The Future Eaters* (1994) is a 'big picture' overview of evolution in Australasia, covering the last 120 million years of history, with thoughts on how the environment has shaped Australasia's human cultures.

landscape, and plant and animal life in Australia has been adapting to these conditions for aeons.

Australia's misfortune in respect to soils is echoed in its climate. In most parts of the world outside the wet tropics, life responds to the rhythm of the seasons – summer to winter, or wet to dry. Most of Australia experiences seasons – sometimes very severe ones – yet life does not respond solely to them. This can clearly be seen by the fact that although there's plenty of snow and cold country in Australia, there are almost no trees that shed their leaves in winter, nor do any Australian animals hibernate. Instead there is a far more potent climatic force that Australian life must obey: El Niño.

El Niño is a disruption in ocean currents and temperatures in the tropical Pacific that effects weather around the globe. The cycle of flood and drought that El Niño brings to Australia is profound. Our rivers – even the mighty Murray River, the nation's largest, which runs through the continent's southeast – can have plentiful water and be miles wide one year, while you can literally step over its flow the next. This is the power of El Niño, and its effect, when combined with Australia's poor soils, manifests itself compellingly. As you might expect from this, relatively few of Australia's birds are seasonal breeders, and few migrate. Instead, they breed whenever the rain comes, and a large percentage are nomads, following the rain across the breadth of the continent.

WILDLIFE

For those intrigued by the diversity of tropical rainforests, Queensland's Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is well worth visiting. Birds of paradise, casowaries and a huge variety of other birds can be seen by day, while at night you can search for tree kangaroos (yes, some kinds of kangaroos do live in the tree tops). In your nocturnal wanderings you are highly likely to see curious possums, some of which look similar to skunks, and other marsupials that today are restricted to a small area of northeast Queensland.

Australia's deserts are a real hit-and-miss affair as far as wildlife is concerned. If you are visiting in a drought year, all you might see are red, dusty plains, the odd mob of kangaroos and emus and a few struggling, forlorn-looking trees. Return after big rains, however, and you're likely to encounter something resembling the Garden of Eden. Fields of wildflowers, such as white and gold daisies, stretch endlessly into the distance, perfuming the air with their fragrance. The salt lakes fill with fresh water, and millions of water birds – pelicans, stilts, shags and gulls – can be seen feeding on the superabundant fish and insect life of the waters. It all seems like a mirage, and like a mirage it will quickly vanish as the land dries out, only to spring to life again in a few years or a decade's time.

The fantastic diversity of Queensland's Great Barrier Reef is legendary, and a boat trip out to the Reef from Cairns or Port Douglas is unforgettable. See p109 for more information.

Animals

Australia is, of course, famous for being the home of the kangaroo and other marsupials only found on this continent. Unless you visit a wildlife park, such creatures are not easy to see because most of them are nocturnal. Their lifestyles, however, are exquisitely attuned to Australia's harsh environmental conditions. Have you ever wondered why kangaroos, alone among the world's larger mammals, hop? It turns out that hopping is the most efficient way of getting about at medium speeds. This is because the energy of the kangaroo's bounce is stored in the tendons of its legs – much like in a pogo stick – while the intestines bounce up and down like a piston,

Queensland has the greatest diversity of wildlife in Australia. Lonely Planet's *Watching Wildlife Australia* is a great companion to any wildlife-watching expedition.

Tolga Bat Hospital (www.tolgabathospital.org) cares for injured and sick bats, as well as having permanent populations of flying foxes and irresistible micro bats.

QUEENSLAND'S NATIONAL PARKS *Justine Vaisutis*

Queensland has 506 areas of environmental or natural importance, making up just over 4% of the state's 1,727,200 sq km. Of these areas, 219 are national parks, some of which comprise only a single hill or lake, while others are vast expanses of wilderness. The remainder are a mix of state parks, resources reserves and nature refuges.

Queensland is also home to five of Australia's 16 Unesco World Heritage sites. The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, which spans 450km of Queensland's northern coast, and the Great Barrier Reef, are acknowledged as two of the world's most diverse ecosystems. In Queensland's northwest, the Riversleigh Australian Fossil Mammal Site is among the world's 10 best fossil sites. Spanning sections of southern Queensland and northern New South Wales, the Central Eastern Rainforests Reserves shelter temperate and unique rainforests. Then there's Fraser Island, the world's largest sand island and home to a diversity of fragile and complex ecosystems, including lush rainforests and crystal-clear lakes.

You can get information about these areas directly from park rangers, or from the **Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service** (QPWS; ☎ 1300 130 372; www.epa.qld.gov.au), a wing of the Environmental Protection Agency. There are QPWS offices in most major towns, or you can use the website to access and download a wealth of information and make camping bookings for many of the parks.

OUR FAVOURITE NATIONAL PARKS

Park	Features	Activities	Best time	Page
Carnarvon	ancient Aboriginal paintings, rich bird life, gaping Ward's Canyon, spectacular views	overnight bushwalks, bird-watching	cooler months, Apr-Oct	p257
Eungella	unique wildlife including platypuses, tumbling Araluen Falls	wildlife-watching, bushwalking, swimming, scenic drives	Apr-Nov, Aug for platypuses	p271
Great Sandy	vast tracts of beach, freshwater lakes, rainforests, mangrove forests	bushwalking, swimming, 4WD driving, fishing	drier months, Apr-Dec	p200
Hinchinbrook Island	unspoiled wilderness, towering mountains, dense rainforest, idyllic beaches, the Thorsborne Trail	bushwalking, bird-watching, swimming, bush camping	cooler months, Apr-Sep	p323
Lakefield	mighty rivers, wetlands, freshwater crocodiles, immense grasslands	barramundi fishing, wildlife-watching, bush camping	dry months, Apr-Oct	p410
Lamington	rugged mountains, cascading waterfalls, gorges, subtropical rainforest, wildlife	bushwalking, wildlife-watching, bush camping, abseiling	year-round; Nov-Mar are the hottest months	p158
Lizard Island	stark, sandy terrain, sublime and remote beaches, diverse wildlife	swimming, snorkelling, scuba diving, bushwalking, wildlife-watching	cooler, dry months, May-Oct	p400

emptying and filling the lungs without the animal needing to activate the chest muscles. When kangaroos travel long distances in search of meagre feed, such efficiency is essential.

Marsupials are so efficient that they need to eat one-fifth less food than placental mammals of equivalent size (everything from bats to rats, whales and ourselves). But some marsupials have taken energy efficiency much further. If you get to visit a wildlife park or zoo to see koalas, you might notice that far-away look in their sleepy eyes. It seems as if nobody is home – and this in fact is near to the truth. Several years ago, biologists announced that koalas are the only living creatures that have brains that don't fit their skulls. Inside their large heads they have a shrivelled walnut of a brain that rattles around in a fluid-filled cranium. Other researchers have contested

Despite anything an Australian tells you about koalas (or dropbears), there is no risk of one falling onto your head as you walk beneath the trees.

QUEENSLAND'S FURRED & FEATHERED *Justine Vaisutis*

Many of Australia's animal species are represented in Queensland – in all there are 210 species of native mammals, 594 native birds, 114 native frogs and 429 native reptiles. Remember that many are nocturnal and/or extremely shy, so a torch comes in handy if you're staying in a national park. You have a relatively good chance of spotting iconic Aussie animals like kangaroos, koalas, various parrots and kookaburras, even the odd platypus. Species like the northern hairy-nosed wombat, bilby, loggerhead turtle, rock wallaby and cassowary, on the other hand, are on the brink of extinction, and you'd be very lucky to have a sighting.

Birds

Queensland is positively teeming with birds, with more species found here than in any other Australian state or territory. Two huge flightless birds found in Queensland are unusual, because only the males incubate the eggs and care for the young: the emu, found in woodlands and grasslands west of the Great Dividing Range; and the endangered and elusive cassowary, found in the dense rainforests of Far North Queensland. A great variety of waterbirds, such as ducks, geese, herons, egrets and smaller species, can be seen in the tropical lagoons of the far north, especially as the dry season wears on and wildlife starts to congregate near permanent water.

Other birds that can be found in Queensland include the jabiru, a striking iridescent black-and-white bird that grows up to 1.2m tall, and plenty of noisy, garrulous, colourful parrot species. The gorgeous rainbow lorikeet is particularly common along the east coast, and the pink-and-grey galah can be seen in any rural area.

The kookaburra's raucous laughter is one of the most distinctive sounds of the bush, and it can be heard in many places throughout the state. Smaller but more colourful kingfishers include the sacred and forest kingfishers and the blue-and-orange azure kingfisher, which is always found near water.

Dingoes

Dingoes can appear quite tame around camp grounds, but they *are* wild animals and their interest in people and the places they inhabit lies solely in scavenging food, a practice that can be harmful to both campers and the dingoes themselves. In April 2001, Fraser Island was the setting for a controversial dingo cull, following the killing of a nine-year-old boy (p208). This tragedy was twofold: dingoes are highly sensitive and intelligent creatures, and had they

this finding, however, pointing out that the brains of the koalas examined for the study may have shrunk because these organs are so soft. Whether soft-brained or empty-headed, there is no doubt that the koala is not the Einstein of the animal world, and we now believe that it has sacrificed its brain for energy efficiency. Brains cost a lot to run – in humans, our brains typically weigh 2% of our body weight, but use 20% of the energy we consume. Koalas eat eucalypt (gum) leaves, which are so toxic that koalas use about 20% of their energy simply detoxifying this food. This leaves little energy for their brains, and living in the tree tops where there are so few predators means that koalas can get by with few wits at all.

The peculiar constraints of the Australian environment have not made every creature dumb. The koala's nearest relative, the wombat (of which there are three species), has a comparatively large brain for a marsupial. Wombats live in complex burrows and can weigh up to 35kg, making them the largest herbivorous burrowers on Earth. Because the creatures' burrows are effectively air-conditioned, wombats have the neat trick of turning down their metabolic activity when they are in residence. One physiologist who studied wombats' thyroid hormones found that biological activity ceased to such an extent in sleeping wombats that, from a hormonal point of view, they appeared to be dead! Wombats can remain underground for a week at a time,

Pizzey and Knight's *Field Guide to Birds of Australia* is an indispensable guide for bird-watchers and anyone else even peripherally interested in Australia's feathered tribes. Knight's illustrations are both beautiful and helpful in identification.

not been fed and encouraged to visit camp grounds by tourists, neither event would have occurred.

Kangaroos

Kangaroos are perhaps the most famous inhabitants of the bush, and the eastern grey kangaroo is commonly encountered in Queensland woodlands. The family of about 50 species also includes many smaller species such as wallabies and the adorable pademelon – smaller than a wallaby again.

Koalas

Common along Australia's entire eastern seaboard, this endearing creature is adapted to life in trees, where it feeds exclusively on eucalyptus leaves. The female carries her baby in her pouch until it is old enough to cling to her back. Their cuddly appearance belies an irritable nature, and koalas will scratch and bite if provoked.

The best places to spot these animals in the wild are Magnetic Island (p308) and the Daisy Hill Koala Sanctuary (p83) in Brisbane.

Platypuses & Echidnas

The platypus and the echidna are monotremes, a group containing only three species (the third lives in New Guinea). Both animals lay eggs, as reptiles do, but suckle their young on milk secreted directly through the skin from mammary glands. The shy and elusive platypus lives in freshwater streams and is rarely seen by the casual observer. One of the best places to look for it is in Eungella National Park (p271).

The echidna, or spiny anteater, eats only ants and protects itself by digging into the ground or by rolling itself into a bristling ball.

Possums & Gliders

Brush-tailed and ring-tailed possums are commonly found in big cities scavenging for household scraps. Much rarer, the striped possum is unique to the wet tropics and has an elongated finger for digging into rotten wood for grubs.

Gliders have a membrane stretching between their front and hind legs that acts as a parachute as they jump between trees. Several species are common in woodlands and forests.

and can get by on just one-third of the food required by a sheep of equivalent size. One day, perhaps, efficiency-minded farmers will keep wombats instead of sheep. At the moment, however, that isn't possible, because the largest of the wombat species, the endangered northern hairy-nose wombat, is one of the world's rarest creatures, with only around 100 of the animals surviving on a remote nature reserve in central Queensland.

One of the more common marsupials you might catch a glimpse of in Queensland is the species of *Antechinus*. These nocturnal, rat-sized creatures lead quite an extraordinary life. The males live for just 11 months, the first 10 of which are taken up with a concentrated burst of eating and growing. Like human teenage males, the day comes when the *Antechinuses'* minds turn to sex, and in the male *Antechinus* this becomes an absolute obsession. As the males embark on their quest for females, they forget to eat and sleep. Instead, they gather in logs and woo passing females by serenading them with squeaks. By the end of August – just two weeks after the male *Antechinuses* reach 'puberty' – every single male is dead, exhausted by sex and burdened with carrying around swollen testes. Like many aspects of animal behaviour in Australia, this extraordinary life history may have evolved in response to the continent's trying environmental conditions. It seems likely that if the males survived mating, they would

Six of the world's seven species of sea turtle nest in Queensland. To learn more about these remarkable creatures and efforts to protect their habitat, check out www.mackayturtles.org.au.

CLIMATE CHANGE & THE GREAT BARRIER REEF *Ove Hoegh-Guldberg*

Expert groups, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, have concluded that the earth's natural ecosystems are changing in response to rapid changes in global climate, which are due to the burning of fossil carbon sources such as coal and oil. This climate change is altering the environmental conditions under which organisms and ecosystems are trying to survive. Glaciers are melting, deserts expanding and the world's oceans heating and acidifying. Despite what you might hear from the few climate-change sceptics that are left, thousands of scientists have concluded that human-driven climate change is the reality, and that we are in for some interesting, if not difficult, times ahead.

Coral reefs, including the Great Barrier Reef, have been at the fore in discussions about climate change. Reefs have responded strongly to small changes in sea temperature, often with devastating outcomes such as mass coral bleaching. To understand coral bleaching, you need to understand that coral (the simple animal that builds coral reefs) forms a close association, or symbiosis, with a tiny plantlike organism called a dinoflagellate (sometimes referred to as zooxanthellae) which lives inside the gastric cells of the coral. Like plants, dinoflagellates trap sunlight. They then pass much of this energy on to the coral. As a result, corals have abundant energy and are able to produce the huge calcium-carbonate structures that we know of as coral reefs. These structures are incredibly important to life on Earth as they house over 25% of all species that live in the ocean.

Mass coral bleaching occurs when the symbiotic relationship between corals and dinoflagellates breaks down. When this happens, corals go from a healthy brown colour (due to the brown dinoflagellates) and turn a stark white colour (hence 'bleaching'). Sometimes corals will recover from bleaching, but if the stress is intense enough for long enough, they will not recover.

Mass coral bleaching occurs in response to a wide range of stresses including rises in temperature and in levels of solar radiation and toxic compounds. The mass-bleaching events that have been affecting the world's coral reefs since 1979 are driven by small increases in sea temperature, and may affect thousands of square kilometres of coral reef in a single event. The small increases in sea temperature are probably a result of natural variability, but now exceed the tolerance of coral reefs due to the increase in the background sea temperature, which in tropical regions is at least 1°C warmer than it was 100 years ago.

In 1998, the world's coral reefs experienced exceptional sea temperatures which drove them beyond their thresholds for temperature. The net effect was that over 80% of the world's reefs bleached within a 12-month period, with over 16% of the world's corals being lost. The scale of these changes has caused major concern among scientists and park managers about the

then have to compete with the females as they tried to find enough food to feed their growing young. Essentially, *Antechinus* dads are disposable. They do better for the survival of *Antechinuses* as a species if they go down in a testosterone-fuelled blaze of glory.

One thing you will see lots of in Australia are reptiles. Snakes are abundant, and they include some of the most venomous species on the planet. Of Australia's 155 species of land snakes, 93 are venomous, and Australia is home to something like 10 of the world's 15 most venomous snakes. Where the opportunities to feed are few and far between, it's best not to give prey a second chance, hence their potent venom. However, you are far more likely to encounter a harmless python than a dangerously venomous species. Snakes will usually leave you alone if you don't fool with them. If you see a snake, observe, back quietly away and don't panic, and most of the time you'll be OK. For information about snake bites, see p482.

Another reptile you may see, either in a wildlife park or, if travelling in northern Queensland, in the wild, is the crocodiles. Both of Australia's crocodile species are found in Queensland: saltwater or estuarine crocs (called 'salties'), which can grow up to 7m in length and are the more dangerous of the two; and smaller, freshwater crocs (or 'freshies'). There

H Cogger's *Reptiles and Amphibians of Australia* is a bible to those interested in Australia's reptiles. You can use it to identify the species (and wield it as a defensive weapon if necessary).

future of coral reefs. Some suggest that coral reefs such as the Great Barrier Reef may not exist beyond the middle of this century unless we take immediate action on reducing carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere.

Fortunately for the Reef, the extent to which water temperatures have exceeded the threshold of corals has not been as high as elsewhere. During the six bleaching events that affected the Reef since 1979, the loss of coral has been around 5% in each event, which is small compared to losses elsewhere. Coral reefs in the Western Indian Ocean, for example, lost almost 50% of their corals during exceptionally warm periods that occurred in 1998. Much of this coral has not returned. Why the Reef has been less affected most probably relates to natural variability in the patterns associated with warming. That is, the Reef may just have been lucky so far.

Unfortunately for coral reefs, other environmental factors (eg sea-level rise, increased storm intensity) are also changing as the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere increases. One of the most worrying changes is ocean acidification. This is often referred to as the 'silent killer' of coral reefs and is a consequence of the increasing amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Much of this carbon dioxide enters the ocean, where it combines with water to create a weak acid (carbonic acid). This acid drives down the concentration of a critical chemical species, carbonate, which is one of the two critical building blocks used to make the calcium-carbonate skeletons of corals. The net effect of ocean acidification is that the rate of calcification in places like coral reefs is slowing down. There is the potential, scientists think, that if we put too much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, reefs will become unable to maintain themselves and will start to erode away.

One of the questions that is often asked is whether people should still come to the Reef. After all, if climate change is having such an impact, is it still worth coming to see it? The answer to this question is a resounding 'yes'. The Reef is still one of the most beautiful and intact coral-reef ecosystems in the world. While climate change is a severe future threat, the manifestation of its impacts today is almost undetectable to any but the most expert of visitors. The Reef has also had the benefit of one of the world's best marine-park management systems, and while bleaching events have removed coral from the Reef, in most places it has come back and is still spectacular to behold. So while climate change represents a severe threat to the future of coral reefs everywhere, it will still be decades before the real trouble begins. Hopefully, this trouble will be avoided as the world takes firm steps to deal with the huge problem of global climate change.

Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, Professor and Director, Centre for Marine Studies, University of Queensland

are several crocodile farms in Queensland where you can see crocs being fed, or you can take a tour, such as those on the Daintree River (see p384).

Queensland has more than 600 species of birds, boasting a greater variety than any other Australian state. Most can be seen in the rainforests within 100km of Cairns, including the endangered cassowary.

Plants

Australia's plants can be irresistibly fascinating to observers. The diversity of prolific flowering plants found on the continent has long puzzled botanists. Again, Australia's poor soils seem to be the cause of the confusion. Sandy desert plains are about the poorest soils in Australia, made up of almost pure quartz with few nutrients. This prevents any single fast-growing species from dominating this environment. Instead, thousands of specialist plant species have learned to find narrow niches of their own, and so many species coexist. Some live at the foot of metre-high sand dunes, some on top, some on east-facing slopes, some on the west, and so on. The plant's flowers need to be strikingly coloured in order to attract pollinators, because nutrients are so lacking in this sandy world that even insects such as bees are rare.

The stately broilga – a member of the crane family – performs graceful courtship displays that have been absorbed into Aboriginal legends and ceremonies.

BATTLE FOR THE BILBIES *Justine Vaisutis & Alan Murphy*

Does helping to save an endangered species come any easier? If you want to assist in saving one of Australia's cutest marsupials – so cute in fact that a baby looks like a baked bean on legs – all you have to do is seek out chocolate... That's right, chocolate! In the lead up to Easter and in September (around National Bilby Day – the second Sunday of September), chocolate manufacturer Darrell Lea produces chocolate bilbies (instead of rabbits) to promote a little Aussie fearfully close to extinction. All sales see a contribution towards the 'Save the Bilby Fund'. So no delay, please – bite into a chocolate bilby and feel good about yourself!

On a more serious note, the bilbies' survival has become increasingly precarious and is now dependent on a group of dedicated and tireless conservationists and volunteers. Once inhabiting more than 70% of mainland Australia, bilbies (which have the appearance of a mouse-like kangaroo) once had no natural predators. However, European settlement and the ensuing introduction of rabbits (who compete for food), feral cats and foxes have had a devastating effect on their population. In southwestern Queensland, an area of some 100,000 sq km between Birdsville and Boulia is their only surviving natural habitat. Their numbers Australia-wide are estimated to have dropped to less than 1000.

If you're anywhere near Charleville, swing by the educational Bilby Centre (currently being constructed and likely to open in 2009). The centre's main attraction will be the opportunity to observe bilbies in their underground burrows.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) has also reintroduced a colony of bilbies, bred in captivity, to Currawinya National Park, which lies on the Queensland–New South Wales border.

To find more information on the bilbies' progress and ways in which you can help, contact the **Save the Bilby Appeal** (☎ 07-4654 1255; <http://savethebilby.icemedia.com.au>).

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The European colonisation of Australia, commencing in 1788, heralded a period of catastrophic upheaval, leaving Australians today with some of the most severe environmental problems to be found anywhere on Earth. It may seem strange that a population of just 21 million people, living on a continent the size of the USA minus Alaska, could inflict such damage on its environment, but Australia's long isolation, fragile soils and difficult climate have made it particularly vulnerable to human-induced change.

Damage to Australia's environment has been inflicted in several ways, the most important of which being the introduction of pest species, the destruction of forests, overstocking rangelands, inappropriate agriculture and interference with natural waterflows. Beginning with the escape of feral cats into the Australian bush shortly after 1788, a plethora of vermin – from foxes to camels and cane toads – have run wild in Australia, causing the extinction of native fauna. One out of every 10 native mammals living in Australia prior to European colonisation is now extinct, and many more are highly endangered. Extinctions have also affected native plants, birds and amphibians.

The destruction of forests has also had a profound effect. Most of Australia's rainforests have been subject to clearing, while conservationists fight with loggers over the fate of the last unprotected stands of 'old growth'. Much of Australia's grazing land has been chronically overstocked for more than a century, the result of this being the extreme vulnerability of both scarce soils and rural economies to Australia's drought and flood cycle, as well as the extinction of many native species. The development of agriculture has involved land clearance and the provision of irrigation, and here again the effect has been profound, with land becoming severely degraded by salination of the soils.

The Great Barrier Reef is the most extensive reef system in the world.

Almost all of the remnants of the tropical rainforest that once covered the Australian continent are found in north Queensland.

In terms of financial value, just 1.5% of Australia's land surface provides more than 95% of agricultural yield, and much of this land lies in the irrigated regions of the Murray-Darling Basin. This is Australia's agricultural heartland, yet it too is under severe threat from salting of soils and rivers. Irrigation water penetrates into the sediments laid down under an ancient sea, carrying salt into the catchment fields. If nothing is done, the lower Murray River will become too salty to drink in a decade or two, threatening the water supply of Adelaide, a city of more than a million people.

Despite the enormity of the biological crisis engulfing Australia, governments and the community have been slow to respond. It was in the 1980s that coordinated action began to take place, but not until the '90s that major steps were taken. The establishment of **Landcare** (www.landcareaustralia.com.au),

The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF; www.acfonline.org.au) is the largest nongovernment organisation involved in protecting the environment.

THREATS TO A FRAGILE ENVIRONMENT *Alan Murphy*

Although Queensland is Australia's most naturally diverse state, its local biodiversity remains under threat, primarily due to the clearing of native vegetation, changed fire regimes and the impacts of invasive species. The state's harsh climatic conditions, including severe drought (which has seriously affected southeast Queensland), floods (such as those experienced in 2008 in many coastal and inland communities, particularly around Rockhampton, Mackay, Port Douglas and Cairns), and damaging winds, often exacerbate pressures brought about by human settlement, disrupting ecosystems and threatening biodiversity. Shockingly, almost half of Queensland's woodland ecosystems have been cleared since settlement, and clearing continues today. This remains a major cause of biodiversity loss, contributing to soil erosion and degradation. The land around waterways is particularly vulnerable to clearing and overgrazing, and it is estimated that around 80% of wetlands close to urbanised development and farming have been destroyed or seriously degraded.

You Just Don't Belong

The impact of invasive species on Queensland's natural environment since European settlement has been huge. And there's no better example of the lack of foresight by our ancestors than the cane toad.

This notorious amphibian (*Bufo marinus*) was introduced in 1935 to wipe out the sugar-cane beetles that were devastating Australia's sugar-cane plantations. Unfortunately, the Aussie beetle lived up the top of the cane plant, far beyond the toads' reach, and ironically was one of the few creatures unaffected by the introduction of the slimy invader. Now Public Enemy No 1, cane toads have spread across Queensland and into other states and territories like a plague. The toads devastate fragile local ecosystems: predators that try to eat the toads are killed by the poison glands on the toads' backs, and the amphibians breed prolifically, devastating populations of native insects. There are even reports of saltwater crocodiles being found dead with stomachs full of toads.

Other prominent invasive critters damaging Queensland's environment include fire ants, which are found around the Greater Brisbane area – they give a fiery sting and are very aggressive, damaging local flora and fauna that they predate; the exotic red-eared slider turtle, which can out-compete native turtles for food; the chital deer, which is now established around Charters Towers; and feral pigs, which are widespread and cause a lot of damage to ecosystems.

Plant species that just don't belong include bitou bush, which threatens fragile coastal dune areas; cat's claw creeper, which is a widespread weed in southeast Queensland and very difficult to control; and water hyacinth, a pesky aquatic weed.

Sustainable development within the rainforests of Far North Queensland and the protection of the Great Barrier Reef are also recognised as major environmental issues. See p387 to learn about coordinated conservation efforts in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, and p123 for information about environmental threats to the Great Barrier Reef caused by tourism, fishing, global warming and natural predators.

an organisation enabling people to effectively address local environmental issues, and the expenditure of \$2.5 billion through the **National Heritage Trust Fund** (www.nht.gov.au) have been important national initiatives. Yet so difficult are some of the issues the nation faces that, as yet, little has been achieved in terms of halting the destructive processes.

Individuals are also banding together to help in conservation efforts. Groups such as the **Australian Bush Heritage Fund** (www.bushheritage.asn.au) and the **Australian Wildlife Conservancy** (AWC; www.australianwildlife.org) allow people to donate funds and time to the conservation of native species. Some of these groups have been spectacularly successful; the AWC, for example, already manages endangered species over its 1.3-million-acre holdings.

So severe are Australia's environmental problems that it will take a revolution before they can be overcome. This is because sustainable practices need to be implemented in every arena of the life of every Australian – from farms to suburbs and city centres. Renewable energy, sustainable agriculture and sustainable water use lie at the heart of these changes, and Australians are only now developing the road map to sustainability that they so desperately need if they are to have a long-term future on the continent.

For tips and advice on how to travel responsibly, see p19.

If you want to do your bit for the environment, Queensland's Environmental Protection Agency has many excellent volunteer programs (www.epa.qld.gov.au/about_the_epa/volunteers) including caring for injured and sick animals.

Queensland Outdoors

Queensland is Australia's natural adventure playground, and the sheer size of the state's coastline alone means there is an incredible range of activities available to visitors. Scuba diving and snorkelling are extremely popular in the vivid waters of the Great Barrier Reef, and surfing is almost in the genes for locals from Coolangatta up to the Whitsunday Coast. There are water-sports hire places in all the coastal resorts and on most of the islands, where you can hire catamarans, sailboards, jet skis, canoes, paddle boats and snorkelling gear by the day or hour. Throughout the state you can also go bushwalking in rainforests, camping on isolated tropical islands, horse riding along coastal beaches, and wildlife-spotting in the plethora of national parks and reserves.

BUNGEE JUMPING & SKYDIVING

There are plenty of opportunities for adrenaline junkies to get a hit in Queensland. Surfers Paradise (p144) is something of a bungee mecca, offering brave participants a host of creative spins on the original bungee concept. Another hot spot is Cairns (p342). A jump generally costs around \$100.

Tandem skydiving is also a popular activity and is one of the most spectacular ways to get an eyeful of Queensland's palette. Prices depend on the height of your jump. Most folk start with a jump of 8000ft, which provides 12 to 15 seconds of freefall and costs around \$250. You can go up to 14,000ft, which affords considerably more freefall and costs around \$350. Caloundra (see p184) is one of the most popular spots in Queensland to skydive, and the setup there allows you to land right on the golden sands of the beach. Readers regularly write in singing accolades about the experience. Other popular locations include Surfers Paradise (p144), Brisbane (p84), Airlie Beach (p281), Mission Beach (p328) and Cairns (p342). Operators at all of these places offer tandem jumps that are suitable for beginners.

BUSHWALKING

Bushwalking is a popular activity in Queensland year-round. Lonely Planet's *Walking in Australia* describes 23 walks of different lengths and difficulty in various parts of the country, including three in Queensland.

Look for Tyrone Thomas' *50 Walks in North Queensland* (for walks on the beach or through the rainforest areas of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, from Cape Hillsborough near Mackay up to Cape Tribulation and inland as far as Chillagoe) and his *50 Walks: Coffs Harbour & Gold Coast Hinterland* (covering Tamborine Mountain, Springbrook and Lamington National Parks). *The Bushpeople's Guide to Bushwalking in South-East Queensland* has colour photos and comprehensive walking-track notes.

The Sunshine State's sultry climate ensures an average water temperature of around 22°C in winter and 26°C to 29°C in summer...yum!

The Queensland Federation of Bushwalking Clubs website is useful for tracking down local bushwalking clubs throughout the state. Click onto www.geocities.com/qfbwc.

RESPONSIBLE BUSHWALKING

- Don't urinate or defecate within 100m of any water sources. Doing so pollutes precious water supplies and can lead to the transmission of serious diseases.
- Use biodegradable detergents and wash at least 50m away from any water sources.
- Avoid cutting wood for fires in popular bushwalking areas as this can cause rapid deforestation. Use a stove that runs on kerosene, methylated spirits or some other liquid fuel, rather than stoves powered by disposable butane gas canisters.
- Hillsides and mountain slopes are prone to erosion; it's important to stick to existing tracks.

One of the best ways to find out about bushwalking areas is to contact a local bushwalking club, such as the **Brisbane Bushwalkers Club** (☎ 07-3856 4050; www.bbww.org.au).

National parks and state forests are some of the best places for walking. See p51 for contact details and more information. National parks on the mainland favoured by bushwalkers include Lamington (p158), Mt Barney (p159) and Springbrook (p156) in the Gold Coast hinterland, and D'Aguiar Range National Park (p82), which is a popular escape for urban critters. More good parks for bushwalking include Girraween (p173) on the Darling Downs, the Cooloola Section of Great Sandy National Park (p200) just north of the Sunshine Coast, Carnarvon Gorge (p257) in central Queensland, and Wooroonooran National Park (p355) south of Cairns, which contains Queensland's highest peak, Mt Bartle Frere (1657m).

An initiative of the state government is the creation of the Great Walks of Queensland. The six walking tracks are in the Whitsundays, Sunshine Coast hinterland, Mackay highlands, Fraser Island, Gold Coast hinterland and the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (in tropical north Queensland). The walks are designed to allow bushwalkers to experience rainforests and bushlands without disturbing the ecosystems.

There are some celebrated tracks for experienced walkers in Queensland. Bear in mind that these can be difficult grades and the conditions for some require substantial bushwalking smarts. In northern Queensland the 32km ungraded Thorsborne Trail (p323) on Hinchinbrook Island is a spectacular bushwalking retreat. Walker numbers are limited for this trail at any one time and it traverses a gamut of environments, including remote beaches, rainforests and creeks amid spectacular mountain scenery.

Less experience is needed for the myriad trails throughout Magnetic Island (p310), where koalas and bird life are prolific.

Walking in the southern half of the state is feasible and pleasant all year round due to the accommodating climate. Regardless of the time of year, however, you should always take plenty of drinking water with you. From the Capricorn Coast north, things can get pretty hot and sticky over summer, particularly in the wet season between December and February. If you're planning to walk at these times you must take into account the harsher conditions. Summer is also the most prolific period for bushfires, which are a constant threat throughout Queensland. **Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service** (QPWS; ☎ 1300 130 372; www.epa.qld.gov.au) can advise you on current alerts; also see p452 for more information.

CYCLING

There are possibilities for some great rides in Queensland. For information on long-distance cycling, see p467. Available from most bookshops, *Pedalling Around Southern Queensland* by Julia Thorn has tour notes and mud maps for numerous bike rides in the south of the state. For longer trips, Lonely Planet's authoritative *Cycling Australia* covers the epic east-coast trip and other rides in Queensland.

There are companies that offer cycling tours in various places, including Cairns (see p345). You can also do some excellent mountain biking in and around Noosa; see p194 for more information.

As with bushwalking, the best time for lengthy bike rides is outside Queensland's hottest months. Most experienced riders will have had practice in similar hot conditions and will be able to cope, but it's perhaps not a great idea to embark on your first 40km ride in the middle of a January heatwave! Likewise, basic safety precautions, including taking plenty of water with you, apply to cycling in the same way they do to bushwalking.

The Queensland Environmental Protection Agency has published *National Parks Bushwalks of the Great South East* (\$25), which details more than 160 walks in 25 of southeast Queensland's national parks.

Take a Walk in Queensland's National Parks Southern Zone by John and Lyn Daly provides a comprehensive guide to walks across the southern stretch of the state.

Click onto *Bicycling Queensland's website* (www.bq.org.au) for information about bike shops and rentals, cycling events and more.

STINGER WARNING

There are some critters you just don't want to mess with in Queensland. Crocodiles are a high-profile species that should always be observed only from a safe distance. Stingers (box jellyfish), however, can sometimes slip under the radar of visitors to northern Australia. In Queensland, they are found year-round off the coast and in river mouths, from Agnes Water north. Look for the stinger-resistant enclosures at beaches during the peak stinger season, which runs from November to June. Never enter the water at beaches closed due to the presence of stingers, and consider the use of a full-body lycra suit if you must go in the water during stinger season. For more information see the boxed text, p251.

It might also be worth contacting one of the local cycling clubs such as the **Brisbane Bicycle Touring Association** (www.bbta.org/index.php). The **Bicycling Federation of Australia** (www.bfa.asn.au) is an excellent online resource, with links to cycling clubs and organisations throughout Queensland.

DIVING & SNORKELLING

The Queensland coast is littered with enough spectacular dive sites to make you giddy. The Great Barrier Reef provides some of the world's best diving and snorkelling, and there are dozens of operators vying to teach you to scuba dive or provide you with the ultimate dive safari. There are also some 1600 shipwrecks along the Queensland coast, providing vivid and densely populated marine metropolises for you to explore.

Learning to dive here is fairly inexpensive by world standards, and a four- or five-day **Professional Association of Diving Instructors** (PADI; www.padi.com) course leading to a recognised open-water certificate costs anything from \$200 to \$550 – and you can usually choose to do a good part of your learning in the warm waters of the Great Barrier Reef.

Every major town along the coast has one or more diving schools, but standards can vary, so it's worthwhile doing some research before you sign up. Diving professionals are notoriously fickle and good instructors move around from company to company – ask around to see which one is currently well regarded.

When choosing a course, look carefully at how much of your open-water experience will be out on the Reef. Many of the budget courses only offer shore dives, which are often less interesting than open-water dives. At the other end of the price scale, the most expensive courses tend to let you live aboard a boat or yacht for several days, with all your meals included in the price. Normally you have to show that you can tread water for 10 minutes and swim 200m before you can start a course. Most schools also require a medical, which will usually cost extra (around \$50).

For certified divers, trips and equipment hire are available just about everywhere. You'll need evidence of your qualifications, and some places may also ask to see your logbook. Renting gear or going for a day dive generally costs \$60 to \$120.

Popular diving locations are utterly prolific. Cairns (see the boxed text, p343) and Port Douglas (p377) have plenty of dive companies that operate in the waters of the Great Barrier Reef. Further south, the SS *Yongala* shipwreck (p303), just off Townsville's coast, has been sitting beneath the water for more than 90 years and is now home to teeming marine communities. From Airlie Beach (see p276) you can organise dives in the azure waters of the Whitsundays. Possibly the cheapest spot in all of Australia, if not the southern hemisphere, is the hamlet of Bargara, near Bundaberg. See p231 for more information.

'Extreme Underwater Ironing' is a wacky fad whereby you literally iron a shirt (minus the electricity) underwater and take photos to prove you did it. Fair dinkum! Click onto www.diveoz.com.au/aeui to take a look.

If you're in Queensland for a while and you're really serious about scuba diving you can join other addicts at a club, such as **AllWays Diving** (☎ 07-3848 9100; www.allwaysdiving.com.au; 148 Beaudesert Rd, Moorooka) in Brisbane, or the **North Queensland Underwater Explorers Club** (www.nquec.org.au).

You can snorkel just about everywhere in Queensland; it requires minimum effort and anyone can do it. All the locations mentioned preceding are relevant and popular snorkelling sites. There are also coral reefs off some of the mainland beaches and around several of the islands, and not far from Brisbane the brilliant Tangalooma Wrecks lie off the west coast of Moreton Island (p133). Most cruises to the Great Barrier Reef and through the Whitsunday Islands include use of snorkel gear for free (although you may have to pay extra to hire a wetsuit if you want one) and these are some of the loveliest waters to float atop. Backpacker hostels along the coast also provide the use of snorkel gear for free.

During the wet season, usually January to March, floods can wash a lot of mud into the ocean and visibility for divers and snorkellers is sometimes affected.

All water activities, including diving and snorkelling, are affected by sting-ers (box jellyfish), which are found on the Queensland coast from Agnes Water north. See the boxed text, p251 for more information.

Whether you're snorkelling or diving on the Great Barrier Reef it's important to remember the vulnerability of the ecology. Ensuring you leave no indelible impact is quite easy. Most coral damage occurs when divers accidentally cut or break it with their fins. Be aware of where your feet are (this can be surprisingly hard when they're attached to odd flippers and you're carrying a hefty tank on your back!). Never stand on the coral – if you need to rest, find sand to stand on or use a rest station.

FISHING

As you'll soon realise, fishing in all its forms is incredibly popular in Queensland, especially in coastal areas. You will see people surf fishing all the way up the coast, and more than a few Queensland families spend entire summers living out of the back of their 4WDs while trying their luck in the surf breaks. There are also plenty of dams and freshwater bodies that provide good fishing haunts.

The barramundi (or 'barra') is Australia's premier native sport fish, partly because of its tremendous fighting qualities and partly because it's delicious! Note that the minimum size for barramundi is 58cm to 60cm in Queensland depending on where you're fishing – there are also bag limits, and the barra season is closed in most places from 1 November to 31 January. There are quite a few commercial operators in the far north offering sports-fishing trips focusing on barra.

The Great Barrier Reef has traditionally been a popular fishing ground, but zoning laws introduced in July 2004 have tightened the area of reef that can be fished in response to concerns about environmental damage and overfishing. See p123 for more information. There are also limitations on the number of fish you catch and their size, and restrictions on the type of gear you can use. You also need to be aware of which fish are protected entirely from fishing. While this may sound like bad news for fisherfolk, it's great news for the Reef and there are still plenty of sites where you can cast a line in search of the elusive coral trout and other tasty reef fish. The easiest way to find out what you can catch, where and how is to contact the nearest QPWS office wherever you are on the mainland. The QPWS rangers will be able to provide you with a zoning map and let you know of any restrictions. For QPWS offices in Cairns and Airlie Beach, see p339 and p280 respectively. Alternatively, contact the **Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority** (☎ 07-4750 0700; www.gbrmpa.gov.au).

SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR DIVING

Before embarking on a scuba-diving, skin-diving or snorkelling trip, carefully consider the following points to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience:

- Possess a current diving certification card from a recognised scuba-diving instructional agency (if scuba diving).
- Be sure you are healthy and feel comfortable diving.
- Obtain reliable information about the physical and environmental conditions at the dive site (from a reputable local dive operation), such as water temperature, visibility and tidal movements.
- Be aware of local laws, regulations and etiquette about marine life and the environment.
- Dive only at sites within your realm of experience; if available, engage the services of a competent, professionally trained dive instructor or dive master.
- Be aware that underwater conditions vary significantly from one region, or even site, to another. Seasonal changes can significantly alter any site and dive conditions. These differences influence the way divers dress for a dive and what diving techniques they use.
- Ask about the environmental characteristics that can affect your diving and how local divers deal with these considerations.

On the two sand islands of North Stradbroke (p129) and Fraser (p207), surf fishing is extremely popular and at times the 4WD traffic on the eastern surf beaches resembles peak hour. Not far from Fraser Island, Rainbow Beach (p214) is another popular spot and is easily accessed. On the Gold Coast, fishing tours operate out of Main Beach (p139) and on the Sunshine Coast, Caloundra (p183) and Maroochy (p186) are inundated with holidaymakers catching their own dinner. In these areas plenty of fishing shops provide good advice, bait and equipment.

If you want a unique fishing experience away from the maddening crowds, the Wellesley Islands (p424) offer beautiful fishing spots with abundant fish in the waters of the gulf.

Barramundi fishing is excellent in the coastal and estuarine waters of Far North Queensland. One of the best places to throw in a line is Lake Tinaroo (p371), and the season there is open year-round. On Cape York Peninsula, Lakefield National Park (see the boxed text, p410) is one of the few national parks in which you can fish, and it's renowned for its barramundi haul. Note that the season in Lakefield is closed between 1 November and 31 January and you should check with park rangers to be certain of bag limits outside this period. A number of reef-, river- and land-based fishing charters operate out of Port Douglas (p377). Hamilton Island (p289) in the Whitsundays and Dingo Beach (p292) are also good for big game.

The heavy-tackle season runs from September to December, and the annual Black Marlin Classic on Halloween night (31 October) is a major attraction. Hamilton Island also hosts the Billfish Bonanza each December.

To find information on weather and tide conditions and what's biting, tune in to local radio stations. To find weekly fishing reports for popular fishing spots along the Queensland coast, www.fishingmonthly.com.au has up-to-the-minute information on conditions.

FOSSICKING

There are lots of good fossicking areas in Queensland – see the *Gem Fields* brochure, published by Tourism Queensland, for information about this

An excellent resource for diving schools and locations in the state is *Dive Queensland* (www.dive-queensland.com.au).

An excellent resource is the *Queensland Fishing Monthly* magazine (\$4.95), which you can pick up at any newsagency.

Click onto www.gemfields.com, a virtual meeting place for avid fossickers, with loads of information and advice on fossicking in the Capricorn hinterland.

novel pastime. You'll need a miner's right or 'fossicker's licence' before you hit the gemfields; most caravan parks in the fossicking areas can sort you out with a licence or you can visit any office of the **Department of Natural Resources and Mines** (☎ 07-3896 3111; www.nrm.qld.gov.au; 1-month licence adult/family \$5.95/8.45). Note that fossicking is strictly a no-go in national parks.

Most of Queensland's gemfields are in relatively remote areas. Visits to these areas can be adventurous, great fun and possibly even profitable. Even if you don't strike it lucky with rubies, opals or sapphires you're bound to meet some fascinating characters while you're trying your luck in the gemfields. Queensland's main fossicking areas are the gemfields around Sapphire and Rubyvale (about 300km inland from Rockhampton; p255), the Yowah Opal Fields (deep in the southern outback, 150km west of Cunnamulla; p447) and the topaz fields around Mt Surprise and Georgetown (about 300km southwest of Cairns; p418 and p419).

HORSE RIDING & TREKKING

Horse riding is another activity available all along the Queensland coast and in the outback, and it's always a hit with kids. You can choose from one-hour strolls to gallops along the beach and overnight (or longer) treks, and find treks suited to your level of experience. Some of the most pleasant spots to ride include the Gold Coast hinterland (see p144) and the Cooloola Section of Great Sandy National Park (see p199), where you can do a four-day pub trek on horseback, which should solve all issues of drink-driving. Two- or three-hour treks generally cost \$60 to \$70 per adult and \$40 to \$50 per child.

Homesteads and farm-stays are another great way to experience horse riding, and Queensland has a few gems up its sleeve. You can spend several days getting to know your steeds near Hervey Bay (see p222) on the temperate Fraser Coast and also en route between Mackay and Eungella National Park (see p271).

PARAGLIDING & PARASAILING

Paragliding is a popular activity at many locations along the Queensland coast, but the best place of all is above the Carlo Sandblow at Rainbow Beach (p214), where championship competitions are held every January. Other good spots for paragliding include the Gold Coast hinterland (see p158) and Eungella National Park (p271), near Mackay. Tandem flights generally cost around \$220 and two-day lessons cost approximately \$550.

Parasailing is another exhilarating way to view the coast from above. Outfits operate out of the Gold Coast (see p140) and many other beach resorts along the coast.

TOP FIVE OUTDOOR FUN SPOTS FOR KIDS

- Australia Zoo (p182) Feed the critters, see the crocs and be a Wildlife Warrior.
- Billabong Sanctuary (p314) Meet all kinds of scaly, furry and feathery friends at this brilliant interactive wildlife park.
- Streets Beach, Brisbane (p80) Cool off in a safe artificial lagoon in the heart of the city.
- Kuranda (p361) Take the cable car or scenic railway from Cairns, where the kids can choose from the Koala Gardens, Birdworld, Rainforestation or the Cairns Wildlife Safari Reserve.
- Nardoo Station (p443) Kids can do a station tour and (depending on timing) see station activities such as mustering and shearing.

In 1979, 13-year-old Sarli Nelson found a 2019.5-carat sapphire in Queensland's gemfields. Her father sold it for less than \$60,000; in 1991 it went for \$5 million.

If you prefer admiring some lovely country from the back of a fine steed, contact www.horsereiding.qld.com, which runs a horse-riding outfit in the Tamborine Mountains in the Gold Coast hinterland.

SAILING

Queensland's waters are pure Utopia for seafarers of all skill, with some of the most spectacular sailing locations in the world. The hands-down winner of all of the state's picture-postcard possies is the Whitsunday Islands. Around these 74 idyllic gems is a massive smear of translucent blue sea that, at times, has a seamless and uninterrupted horizon. There are countless charters and boat operators based at Airlie Beach, the gateway to the islands.

There are plenty of day tours which hop between two or three islands, but the three-day/two-night all-inclusive cruises are much better value and provide a greater appreciation of just how beautiful the area is. You can also choose between tours that sleep their passengers onboard or ones that dock at an island resort for the night. The greatest benefit of a tour is that you don't require any sailing experience – some outfits will get you to join in under guidance, but you can have no skills and still enjoy a true sailing experience. The range is huge and as with most activities, the smaller the number of passengers the greater the price. As a general guide, day tours cost upwards of \$120 for adults and \$50 to \$60 for children.

It's also fairly easy to charter your own boat at Airlie Beach, but be warned: that glassy sea has the potential to turn nasty, and regardless of what operators say, this should only be attempted by sailors with some experience. If you're lacking the skills but still want a far more intimate experience than a tour, consider chartering your own boat and hiring a skipper to do all the hard work for you. The cost of a 'bareboat' (unskipped) charter will set you back somewhere between \$550 and \$850 per day, depending on the size of the boat.

There's also a sizable local sailing scene around Manly (p128), just south of Brisbane, or you can explore some of the islands off the Far North Queensland coast on board a chartered boat or cruise from Port Douglas (p376).

SURFING

From a surfer's point of view, Queensland's Great Barrier Reef is one of nature's most tragic mistakes – it's effectively a 2000km-long breakwater! Mercifully, there are some great surf beaches along the coast in southern Queensland. Starting right at the state's border with New South Wales, Coolangatta (p153), particularly at Kirra Beach, is a popular surfing haunt for Gold Coast locals. Nearby Burleigh Heads (p150) has some serious waves, which require some experience, but if you've got it you'll be in seventh heaven.

Virtually the entire shoreline of the Sunshine Coast is surfer stomping ground. The area from Caloundra (see p183) to Mooloolaba (see p186) is a good strip with popular breaks. Further north, the swanky resort of Noosa (see p192) started life as a humble surfer hangout before it became trendy. It's still a popular hangout for longboarders, with good wave action at Sunshine Beach and the point breaks around the national park, especially during the cyclone swells of summer (December to February). Caloundra and Noosa are also increasingly popular venues for kite-surfing.

Near Brisbane, North Stradbroke Island (p129) also has good surf beaches, as does Moreton Island (p133). Because they take a little effort to get to, these areas tend to be less crowded than the Gold and Sunshine Coast beaches. Despite its exposed coast, Fraser Island has a few too many rips and sharks to appeal to surfers.

Queensland's most northerly surf beaches are at Agnes Water and the Town of 1770 (see p250), just south of Gladstone. Here you can actually surf off the Great Barrier Reef, which at this point of its stretch does create some excellent breaks. This spot is strictly for old hands, though; the walls

An excellent online charter guide for those wanting to do the Robinson Crusoe thing is www.charterguide.com.au. It's nationwide, but you can just select 'Queensland' as a region and Rob's your uncle.

Mark Warren's definitive *Atlas of Australian Surfing* is available in a portable size, as well as the previously published large coffee-table book.

can get pretty hairy, you have to swim well out from shore and you may be sharing your personal space with the odd reef shark.

You can hire secondhand boards from almost any surf shop along the coast, and op-shops in surf resorts are usually full of used boards. Unless you're taking lessons, it's probably best to start off with boogie boarding and work your way up, as surfing isn't as easy as it looks. Always ask locals and life-savers about the severity of breaks – broken boards and limbs are not uncommon, particularly among inexperienced surfers with high ambitions.

If you're new to the sport, the best way to find your feet (literally!) is with a few lessons, and there are dozens of surf schools in southeast Queensland. Two of the best spots to learn, mostly because the waves are kind to beginners, are Surfers Paradise (p144) and Noosa (p192). Two-hour lessons cost between \$40 and \$60 and five-day courses for the really keen go for around \$200.

Look out for copies of the slim surf guide *Surfing Australia's East Coast* by Aussie surf star Nat Young.

Surfing competitions are held at several locations in Queensland, including North Stradbroke Island and Burleigh Heads on the Gold Coast; there are also numerous surf life-saving carnivals that take place on the beaches of southern Queensland from December, culminating in the championships in March/April. While these carnivals don't usually involve surfing, they are a good way to see other surf skills such as surf-skiing, board paddling and swimming demonstrated. Agnes Water, at the southern tip of the Great Barrier Reef, plays host to a longboard classic competition in March.

SWIMMING

The very word 'Queensland' conjures up visions of endless stretches of sun-bleached sand with tepid, turquoise-blue waters lapping at the shore, backed by palm trees swaying gently in the breeze. Swimming in Queensland is one of life's great pleasures – and it's free and accessible to everyone.

You certainly won't be disappointed in the south of the state. Some of the most pleasant beaches with gentle surf conditions are at Coolool and Peregian (p190; p191) on the Sunshine Coast, where smaller crowds give you plenty of room to splash about.

For a completely different swimming experience, head out to Queensland's islands, which range from sand bars to mountainous continental groups. They should provide all the white sand, blue skies and azure ocean you can take. The exquisite lakes on Fraser Island (see p208) and North Stradbroke Island (p129) are some of the most beautiful swimming holes in the state, and the lack of surf generally means they're safe for everyone. Some of them reach significant depths though, so general safety, particularly with little takers, is essential, and the waters can be quite cold.

Once you get north of Gladstone, the allure of many of the mainland beaches is spoiled by mud flats and mangroves. Further damaging the illusion of tropical paradise are the lethal box jellyfish that swarm along the north coast of Queensland every summer (see the boxed text, p251 for more information on stingers). You can protect yourself by wearing a stinger suit and swimming within the stinger enclosures found on many beaches, but many coastal towns have produced their own solution to the problem in the way of artificial lagoons. Generally built close to the water's edge to provide as authentic an experience (once you've disregarded the concrete) as possible, these are lovely antidotes to the heat. Two of the best are at Airlie Beach (p280) and in Cairns (p339). In a similar vein, Streets Beach (p80) in Brisbane is a sizable artificial beach set in parklands by the Brisbane River, which services the city's population, especially its kids, when the mercury rises.

For definitive surfing information, events and tuition in Queensland, click onto www.surfingaustralia.com, go to 'state websites' and click on 'Queensland'.

The Tully River has 44 rapids with names such as Double D Cup, Jabba the Hut, Doors of Deception, and Wet and Moisty.

COOL KAYAKING

There are some fundamental considerations when kayaking to ensure you minimise your impact on the environment. Keep in mind the following sustainable practices:

- Check with the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency for information (such as total fire bans) and special considerations such as restricted areas.
- Take all your food waste and scraps with you – if you packed it into your kayak, the waste should also fit back in.
- When loading and unloading your kayak, ensure you do so on a suitable surface, such as a jetty, boat ramp, rock, gravel or sand. Be careful around shorelines and avoid trampling on native flora and fragile habitats around rivers, lakes and the ocean.
- Be careful when anchoring or tying up a sea kayak – ensure you do not damage the shoreline, sea bottom, fragile reef areas or vegetation.
- Carry boats over dune areas; do not drag them.

Great Sandy National Park

The base of the Cooloola Section of the Great Sandy National Park is dominated by the vast (but surprisingly shallow) Lake Cootharaba, which interrupts the Noosa River as it heads from Tewantin north into the depths of the park. Following the river's banks are 15 camping grounds, many accessible only to paddlers and bushwalkers. The protected conditions of the waterways and the surrounding landscape of high-backed dunes, vivid wildflowers, mangroves and thick rainforests make it an ideal kayaking destination. Best of all there are few roads through it and the only way to really explore the park is with a paddle.

- Nearest town: Elanda Point (p200)
- Tours: three-hour tours per adult/child \$70/60, kayak hire per person \$30 to \$50
- Information: ☎ 07-5449 7792
- Website: www.epa.qld.gov.au

North Stradbroke Island

One of the world's largest sand islands, 'Straddie' is circumnavigated by long stretches of stunning white beach that skirt the Moreton Bay Marine Park on the island's west coast. The abundance of coastline and the opportunity to see wildlife including dolphins make it an excellent and popular kayaking destination. At the north of the island, Cylinder Beach, near Point Lookout, generally has quiet conditions suitable for paddlers. There's a good distance of shallow water close to the point itself, so you can head east around the point to North Gorge – a popular stomping ground for turtles and dolphins.

- Nearest town: Point Lookout (p129)
- Tours: three-hour tours per person \$60, kayak hire per hour/day around \$30/80
- Information: ☎ 07-3409 9555
- Website: www.stradbroketourism.com

Once you start climbing to the very top of the state or heading inland you need to be wary of a different hazard altogether. You'll find a smorgasbord of magnificent lakes and rivers where you can cool off, but they tend to be inhabited by crocodiles. Take notice of warning signs around water holes and beaches, ask the locals for advice, and never swim at night in areas frequented by crocodiles.

Lastly, if the beaches, lakes and rivers are all a tad too far away, almost every country town has its own Olympic-sized swimming pool where you can cool off.

WHITE-WATER RAFTING, KAYAKING & CANOEING

The mighty Tully, North Johnstone and Russell Rivers between Townsville and Cairns are renowned white-water-rafting locations, benefiting from the very high rainfall in the area. The Tully is the most popular of the three and has grade three to four rapids. This means the rapids are moderate, but require continuous manipulation of the raft to stay upright. Most of the guides operating tours here have internationally recognised qualifications and safety is fairly high on their list of priorities. This said, you don't need any experience, just a desire for a rush. You also need to be older than 13 (sorry, kids).

You can do rafting day trips for about \$160, including transfers, or longer expeditions. See the Cairns (p342) and Tully (p325) sections for more details.

Sea kayaking is also popular in Queensland, and there are numerous operations along the coast that offer paddling expeditions through the calm Barrier Reef waters, often from the mainland out to offshore islands. There are also plenty of companies that operate guided tours off the waters of the Gold and Sunshine Coasts. For more information see the boxed text on p69.

Coastal Queensland is full of waterways and lakes, so there's no shortage of territory suitable for canoeing. You can rent canoes or join canoe tours in several places – among them Noosa (p194), Magnetic Island (p311), Mission Beach (p328) and around the Whitsunday Islands (p276).

The bestselling *Complete Book of Sea Kayaking* by Derek Hutchinson is a treasure trove of information for the serious kayaker. It covers everything from basic strokes and techniques to advanced rescue manoeuvres.