

TOP FIVE UNFORGETTABLE THINGS INTERNATIONAL TRAVELLERS LOVE TO DO IN QUEENSLAND

Queensland's the sort of place where you can snorkel with turtles in the morning, sip cocktails under palm trees by lunch, and still have time to explore a rainforest or cuddle a koala before sunset. It's wild, sunny, and full of surprises — no wonder international travellers keep coming back for more. Whether it's gap-year backpackers, honeymooners, or grey nomads from Europe ticking off the trip of a lifetime, Queensland delivers something properly memorable.

I've been lucky enough to cover this sun-soaked stretch of Australia from top to bottom — and if there's one thing I've learned, it's that the state's best experiences come from getting out of the city and into the elements. Here are the top five things international visitors (and honestly, most Aussies too) rate as absolute must-dos in Queensland.

1. Snorkelling the Great Barrier Reef is still a must

Over the years I've done it more than once, and I'd do it again in a heartbeat.

The Great Barrier Reef is Queensland's undisputed crown jewel — and international travellers are right to put it at the top of the list. Whether you head out from Cairns, Port Douglas, or Airlie Beach, the moment your head goes under that aquamarine surface and you see a kaleidoscope of coral, it's something you never forget.



Some folks go all out with scuba diving, others opt for a glass-bottom boat or helmet dive, but even basic snorkelling delivers the goods.

Turtles, reef sharks, and more Nemo sightings than you can poke a selfie stick at. Make sure your reef trip includes a marine biologist — it adds context, and you'll learn how eco tours in Queensland are helping protect this fragile environment.

2. Exploring the Daintree: Rainforest meets reef

One minute you're weaving through vines and strangler figs in the world's oldest tropical rainforest, the next you're dipping your toes in Cape Tribulation, where the rainforest literally crashes into the sea. It's surreal.



International travellers are obsessed with the Daintree Rainforest — and fair enough. It's a Jurassic park of sorts, complete with ancient trees, giant cassowaries (which I did spot, from a very respectful distance), and croc-infested rivers you explore by boat. The guided night walks are something else too — that's when the jungle really starts talking.

There's a raw, untouched beauty about the Daintree that lingers in your bones. It's not all roughing it either — eco-lodges and Aboriginal-guided walks make this experience both meaningful and comfortable.

3. Gold Coast thrills: from surfing to skyline views

Ah, the Goldie. Flashy? Sometimes. Overrated? Not a chance. There's a reason this place stays on the international radar — it's fun, it's fast-paced, and it's got a bit of everything.

I stayed in Burleigh for a more laid-back vibe, but still dipped into Surfers Paradise for the skyline and nightlife. International visitors love the surfing culture here, and I gave it a shot (with mixed results). You've got kilometres of Queensland beaches to explore, and the hinterland's only a short drive inland if you want waterfalls and rainforest tracks.

Hot tip: climb the SkyPoint Observation Deck around sunset. Watching the sun dip over the Gold Coast skyline with the beach stretching endlessly south? Magic.

4. Sailing the Whitsundays: paradise found on turquoise water

The Whitsundays might just be Queensland's postcard moment. Think white silica sand so pure it squeaks under your feet, translucent turquoise



water, and yachts bobbing in coves straight out of a perfume commercial.

International travellers rate this hard. Often they will join a 2-day catamaran sail around the islands — snorkelled coral gardens, kayaked with reef

sharks, and camped on Hook Island under a blanket of stars. Whitehaven Beach lives up to the hype, but don't skip lesser-known spots like Langford Island or Blue Pearl Bay.

There's no wrong way to do the Whitsundays — just pick your budget and boat size. And yes, you will absolutely get sunburnt if you forget the SPF 50+.

5. Immersing in Aboriginal culture and Queensland's wild heart

One of the most powerful experiences I had in Queensland was joining an Aboriginal cultural tour



just outside Cairns. We walked through mangroves with a Kuku Yalanji guide who taught us how to find bush tucker, read tidal patterns, and see country through a different lens.

These sorts of experiences are growing in popularity with international travellers — and it's about time. Whether you're learning ancient song lines near Mossman Gorge, watching a traditional dance at Tjapukai, or stargazing with an Indigenous guide in the Outback, you come away with something deeper than just a travel snap.

If you're in Brisbane, the Queensland Museum has a brilliant First Nations exhibition that's free and well worth your time.