

River & Estuary Fishing

Cooktown

1. endeavour river

The Endeavour River is steeped in history, and a great example of how a tropical estuarine system should be - deep holes, submerged timber, sand flats, smaller inlets and tributaries, weed beds and all your mangrove species in one river. Brilliant family fishing can be had on the local wharf and immediate vicinity, so bring your own boat, hire a tinny or take advantage of a local guided charter to get the most out of your



Mangrove Jack

experience. Many big barra, Spanish mackerel, queenfish and trevally are landed here throughout the year, as well as jacks, fingermark, bream, cod, flathead and the occasional black jewfish. A boat ramp is available at Cooktown Wharf.

2. annan river

Situated 5 minutes south of Cooktown, the Annan is a shorter estuarine system than the Endeavour and subtly different. Barra fishing can be had up and down the river and out into the mouth at Walker Bay where some big saltwater barra can be had both on lures, fly and liveys. Big jacks and fingermark are a common catch plus all your usual queenfish, trevallies etc. Good mud crabbing can be had especially after the first rains.

There is a good boat ramp on the down side of the bridge.

3. archer point

Following the road south out of Cooktown for 12 kms will bring you to the Archer Point turn off. Throwing poppers around the reef areas especially on a good making tide can see you into some world class sportfishing opponents and the odds are considerably stacked against the angler. More info can be sought from the traditional owners Yuku Baja Muliku.

Wet Tropics Rainforest

4. bloomfield river

A beautiful little river set in the northern end of the wet tropics with a magnificent back drop of spectacular mountains and rainforest. Good land based fishing can be had at the mouth, the local wharf or Weary Bay. Barra, jacks, fingermark, trevally, queenfish and salmon are caught regularly throughout the system but like most fishing timing is everything. Plenty of deep holes, weed beds and snags to explore with lures, fly and live-baits.

Camping / accommodation and boat ramp are available in Bloomfield and Ayton. Cooktown is 1½ hours drive away making it a great day out.



Endeavour River



Barramundi

Lakeland / Laura

5. lakefield national park

The beginning of Queensland's second largest National Park lies approx 2 hours 4WD north of Cooktown and is where some of the best barra fishing in the country can be found. There are 4 major river systems - the Normanby, the Kennedy, the Bizant and the Marret flowing through the park out into Princess Charlotte Bay. There are kilometers and kilometers of waterways to explore as well as the countless lagoons and billabongs.

If you're looking for that truly Australian camping / fishing experience then this is the place to go. Many metre plus "wild" barra are landed here every year with casting or trolling lures being the most successful method.

To really get amongst it a small tinnie / punt is necessary. No hire boats are available but self drive or guided options will provide you with a truly unique range of habitats and fishing opportunities.

Access is during the dry season only, usually by May campsites are opening up. Pick your moon phase and water temperatures to get the best from the area because on its day it will compete with any fishery in the world!



REMEMBER!

Salt water crocodiles inhabit our waterways. Please seek local advice for up to date information on crocodiles, jellyfish and travelling safely in tropical destinations.

Cape York Peninsula

6. cape bedford

About 12 nautical miles north from Cooktown is South Cape Bedford, offering a good culmination of contours, inshore reef, wrecks and current lines. Trolling lures for Spanish mackerel, tuna, queenfish and big trevally can result in fast and furious action in this highly dynamic area; getting a feed shouldn't be a problem.

A few miles further north is Cape Bedford, with its stunning perspective of the coloured sands and a view of the McIvor river mouth. Plenty of inshore reef and a few wrecks to fish. Big barra and coral trout inhabit the rocks and are caught regularly on a variety of methods.

7. mcivor river

The river mouth is 1 hour by boat or 2 hour 4WD to Morgan's Landing where there is a bush boat ramp where small vessels can be launched. The McIvor is a truly unique fishery with a real jungle feel. Coral reefs lie just offshore; flats fishing possibilities abound at the mouth in the right weather. Big sand dunes come down to the river inside the mouth, where lots of fun can be had with queenies and trevally on poppers. The river then twists its way up through the mangroves passing deep holes and snags, junctions and rock bars providing ideal habitat for barras and jacks.



Normanby River

8. starcke river

Lying about a 2 hour 4WD from Cooktown is the Starcke River and its tidal tributaries to the south. Some scintillating sport fishing can be had fishing for big barra and mangrove jack on fly and lure inside the mouths of some amazing tidal inlets. Plenty of good sized tarpon, trevally and queenies can be found to fill in the quieter times. Superb mud crabbing can be had in the tidal inlets.

An all weather boat ramp lies at the mouth with camping spots in close proximity. Picking your weather and tides to enhance your chances is recommended.

- 9. Princess Charlotte Bay
- 10. Bathurst Head
- 11. Bathurst Bay
- 12. Cape Melville National Park

Princess Charlotte Bay, Bathurst Bay, Bathurst Heads and, Cape Melville National Park are in close proximity and add up to being one of the best fishing / camping destination experiences - it has been described as the best fishing hole in Australia. The Flinders group of islands can be explored on a good day in a tinnie but travel in pairs and make sure safety gear is together as you are in a truly remote spot.

Big coastal barra well over that magical metre are caught every year. Mud crabbing in these areas is second to none so catching a feed is fairly straightforward. Best times for fishing are early on in the season when the rivers are running well or when it's stinking hot, although fishing in the middle of winter can also be outstanding.



Threadfin Salmon

Going in by Chopper to that secret billabong, inaccessible headland or hard to access river mouth has to be one of the ultimate ways to travel and fish. Getting there is usually very quick and spectacular, flying over dramatic escarpments, stunning rainforest and the Great Barrier Reef. Flooded bridges and corrugated roads are no longer a problem and multiple fishing locations are possible in one day. Half day charters through to extended holidays are available with several local companies offering packages for that once in a lifetime trip.

Helicopter Fishing

Smaller boats can target sailfish, wahoo, yellow fin tuna, Spanish mackerel, mahi mahi, GT's and queenfish all year round with the right conditions giving anglers an abundance of opportunities on a variety of budgets.

From September to December the marlin fleet from across the globe, converge on far north Queensland. Many choose Cooktown as their base, chasing the elusive 1000lb (Grand) black marlin and to fish the Annual Lizard Island Classic. This provides the angler an opportunity to fish for these leviathans from the deep.

Whether you choose light or heavy tackle Cooktown with its close proximity to the reef and the continental shelf offers the angler a world class destination. The variety of species on offer is outstanding especially when you consider how far you don't have to travel to catch them.

Game Fishing



Black Marlin

World Class Fishing

Cooktown and Cape York Peninsula is famous as a world class fishing destination. Unique in its close proximity to a myriad of angling environments, you can experience many different types of fishing regardless of age, ability and budget.

A number of local operators offer guided river or reef charters from Cooktown, so make the most of their local experience and pick up some tips and tricks if you're on your way up Cape York. Alternately hire a 'tinny' or bring your own boat up from Cairns on the Mulligan Highway which is sealed all the way to Cooktown.

Whether you take a guided trip with one of several fishing companies in town, hire a boat for the day, or bring your own boat the fishing is a great experience for the whole family!



Longtail Tuna

Key Species

river & estuarine

Fish for barramundi, mangrove jack, fingermark, tarpon, queenfish, trevally, salmon, cod, bream, grunter, flathead, jungle perch, sooty grunter. Don't forget barramundi season closes 1st November, midday – to 1st February, midday.

inshore / offshore

Target species include marlin, sailfish, wahoo, mackerel, bluefin tuna, yellowfin tuna, coral trout, cod, red emperor, spangled emperor, sweetlip, fingermark, nannygai, queenfish, trevally, cobia.



Red Emperor

Year	Start Date	End Date
2011	24 - 28 October	22 - 26 November
2012	12 - 16 October	11 - 15 November
2013	2 - 6 October	31 Oct - 4 November

reef closure dates (coral fin fish only)

Fishing the reef is fairly straightforward usually it's a matter of working out which way the current is running onto the face of the reef, (pressure point) where the majority of predators and baitfish will be and dropping the anchor so that you hang close to these marks. Bait such as pilchards and squid work very well but those anglers wishing to experiment with soft plastics and jigs can also be rewarded with a multitude of species. If however you want to chase red emperor and nannygai then a different approach is needed. These fish tend to school up in deeper water usually over rubble patches, raised areas or around old wrecks so whilst you're trolling around for Spanish mackerel keep your eyes on the sonar and when you see some life mark it on the GPS and return later.

reef fishing

Cooktown is the closest town along the eastern seaboard to the iconic Great Barrier Reef, ensuring your fishing time is maximised and not spent travelling. Inshore reefs lie just a couple of miles out and even though they are close shouldn't be overlooked. However, travelling 10-15 miles out will certainly open up a lot more possibilities.

Best Times To Visit

There are basically 2 seasons; the Wet, from November to March and the Dry, from May to September. No matter the weather conditions Cooktown can provide you with so many choices, at any time of the year, but like anywhere in the tropics mother nature can often play a part in your experience...but what an experience it will be!

dry season

During the winter months rain is rare and the temperatures are very comfortable, however some years south-easterly trade winds can limit fishing to the right vessel. If you time your holiday with favourable conditions the results of 'winter fishing' can be amazing so check with local operators on the current conditions.

wet season

In the dry tropics we get far less rain than the wet tropics and Cairns. This time of the year is the most dynamic time of the year to visit. Even though the humidity increases winds decrease and the weather is at its tropical best. It does rain, but not all the time and days can roll into weeks of perfect conditions for the avid angler seeking to explore an array of piscatorial adventures!



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Fishing in and around these islands with a local base will present you with a multitude of choices right on your doorstep. Troll for Spanish mackerel; drop a bait for coral trout; sight cast on the flats for a big GT or go for a snorkel and get yourself a fresh crayfish. Walking the shallow reef flats with the sun coming up out of the ocean first in the morning with a fly rod in hand has to be about as good as it gets. Monster GTs, giant queenfish and the elusive bonefish patrol these areas but, like anywhere in the far north always beware of crocs they're not always confined to the estuaries.

Local charter operators will do transfers with camping gear.

Tropical Islands scatter the Great Barrier Reef and many are accessible by small boats when the weather allows. Some like Lizard Island are big enough to house luxury resorts, airstrips, camp grounds whilst others are relatively small. Camping is allowed on quite a few but booking in advance is necessary with QPWS. Strict regulations are in place to protect these stunning locations and for further info contact GBRRM/PA/QPWS for zoning maps and camping restrictions.

tropical islands

Reef Fishing & Tropical Islands



Lizard Island

Inshore & Offshore Fishing

fishing trails



Cooktown
and CAPE YORK PENINSULA



The history is just the beginning...