joss house

nuns from cooktown

old rail motor

lighthouse

the old hospital

chinese shrine

mining camp

1. grassy hill

As you drive up to Grassy Hill, note the stone gutters in town. Captain Cook climbed this feature to find a way north, and a radar station was located here during WWII.

2. galvanised iron house

At the end of Green Street is an example of a building from the 1880's. This house was built by Mr. Pascoe, who built the original stone gutters in town.

3. fire station

As now, the original fire station was located on top of this hill. This allowed the hand drawn fire appliance to be pulled to a fire anywhere in town.

4. old school site

Cook Shire Council now occupies the site of the original school, which was established in 1875 and divided into an Infants' & Girls' School and a Boys' School. Across the street was the Catholic Church and convent.

5. old hospital

Cooktown's original hospital was located on the Hope Street site of the current hospital, however the original building was moved to May Street and beautifully restored. It now serves as Kingdom Hall.

6. rail motor

At the end of Hogg Street you will find the remains of the last rail motor to use the Cooktown to Laura rail line, and the remains of a wood/coal tender for a B13 steam locomotive.

7. railway station

The site of the original Railway Station. The rebuilt station was relocated to Charlotte Street in 1962. Note the stone guttering.

8. chinese quarter

The eastern area at the bottom of Walker Street (intersecting Adelaide Street) was the Chinese Quarter of town, containing many small shops, gambling dens and eating houses, as well as accommodation.

9. cemetery & chinese shrine

The oldest grave dates back to 1874 and is a reminder of Cooktown's rich pioneering past, while the striking Chinese Shrine represents the important part played by the Chinese in the early days of settlement.

10. botanic gardens

Established in 1878, Cooktown's Botanic Gardens are among the oldest in Australia. Original features include rock pools and stone-pitched walls. Also the location of Nature's Powerhouse & Accredited Visitor Information Centre.

"This afternoon I went upon one of the highest hills over the harbour from which I had a perfect view of the inlet or river and adjacent country which afforded a very indifferent prospect, the low lands near the river is all over run with mangroves among which the salt water flows every tide, and the high land appeared to be barren and stony."

-- James Cook
(observations from Grassy Hill)

1. wharf

Begin your tour at "Restaurant 1770" or "Cook's Landing Kiosk" and treat yourself to a hot or cold drink, sit back and take in the surroundings. Directly behind where you sit is Grassy Hill, which Cook climbed the first day they landed.

2. the cairn

The place where the Endeavour was careened is today marked by the tall stone cairn at the water's edge.

3. sign boards

Learn more about HMB Endeavour and the dramatic events that brought the ship to "Cook's Town".

4. james cook statue

This sculpture by Stanley Hammond MBE marks the site of the Re-enactment of Cook's Landing, which takes place every year during the Queen's birthday weekend.

5. james cook monument

This monument commemorates Cook's landing on 17 June 1770.

6. reconciliation rocks

It is believed these rocks at the mangroves' edge are the site of a reconciliation that took place after an altercation between the Aboriginals and members of HMB Endeavour.

7. the boathouse

A good display of Cook and Guugu Yimithirr articles, including the costumes and paraphernalia associated with the re-enactment of Cook's landing that takes place in Cooktown in June each year.

8. james cook museum

The magnificent and historic James Cook Museum houses the town's most precious Cook relics. See Endeavour's enormous anchor and one of the ship's original cannons, both rescued from the sea at Endeavour Reef in 1969.

9. nature's powerhouse & solander's garden

Explore "Solander's Garden" - named for HMB Endeavour botanist Daniel Solander, and visit the gallery which houses a collection of original Parkinson botanical prints.

17. pilots' jetty

Little now remains, but see the interpretive signage.

16. the wharf area

Of the four wharves that once serviced Cooktown, only the Railway Wharf remains. While it has changed over the years, it has remained in constant use since its construction in around 1883. The remains of the 'International' wharf can be seen further along the foreshore. Nothing remains of the other two wharves.

14. the 20 pounder cannon

This field piece was sent to Cooktown as training aid for the Garrison Battery, a militia unit of the Queensland Defence Force.

13. the town well

Constructed in around 1890 to supply water to the overseas ships using the harbour.

10. the rsl memorial club

This was built in 1885 originally as the Daintree Divisional Hall. 'Divisions' were forerunners to our present shires. In 1919 the Hann and Daintree Divisions were amalgamated to form the Cook Shire. When the town council in Cooktown ceased to exist in 1934, the Cook Shire office took over that building. In 1949 the Shire Council gifted this building to the Cooktown Sub Branch of the RSSAILA (RSL now) and they have owned the building ever since.

9. the post office

Built in 1889, after the amalgamation of the post and the telegraph departments, it has remained the Cooktown post office ever since.

8. old council chambers

Initially the building was built for the Post & Telegraph Department in 1877. Within 10 years a new post office was required and this building reverted to an accommodation building for the post office staff.

In 1892 the Cooktown Municipal Council hall and office burnt down and that council applied to operate out of the old Post & Telegraph building. The Cook Shire Council moved into this building in 1934 and remained there until 2007.

7. mrs watson's monument

Built in 1886, this drinking fountain was dedicated to the memory of Mary Beatrice Watson and her baby son Ferrier, who died tragically near Lizard Island.

3. the old railway station

This building was built in 1949, from the remains of the original railway station on Adelaide Street, which was demolished by a cyclone that year.

18. powder magazine

This is possibly the oldest structure still standing in Cooktown. It was built in 1874 by Henry Meldrum. It has recently been restored by the National Trust.

15. the courthouse

This is the third courthouse built in Cooktown. This one resembles the first one in many ways. The second, a far larger one was built behind the current building, and the original reverted to accommodation for the gaoler. The current building was constructed in the 1940's.

12. jacky jacky's

Until relatively recently this building was used as a hardware shop, owned by J. Newman and called the London Emporium. Later it was used as a gun shop, operated by Newman's son-in-law.

11. rsl welfare centre

The RSL Welfare Centre is in fact the first story of one of Cooktown's early hotels, showing how small many of the original 50 hotels really were. Decapitated in the 1949 'blow', it was not rebuilt save from putting a roof on what was left.

6. the bank of north queensland

Built in 1891, it operated for only a short time, closing its doors in 1908. Like Seagren's building next door, it has had a variety of uses over the years, including a supermarket, a motel and a real-estate office.

5. seagren's

Built by the Seagren family as a furniture showroom and factory. Piers Seagren was a manufacturer of fine furniture, renowned throughout the north in his time. The building has recently been used as a restaurant and an accommodation facility.

4. queensland national bank

Replacing a single story wooden building, this remained a bank until 2000. In the 1930's the Bank of New South Wales acquired the building, selling it eventually at public auction.

2. west coast hotel

Although this pub also dates from 1874, it has been much changed over the years and does not resemble the original to any great degree, but the basic structure remains.

1. the "top pub"

Officially named the Cooktown Hotel, this was the original site of the White Horse Inn, which commenced trading in 1874.

Cooktown and CAPE YORK PENINSULA
historic trails

Regional History

Based at the Archive and Research Centre near the Post Office on Charlotte Street, award winning historical displays showcase life through the ages in Cooktown and the surrounding region.

For detailed historical information drop in to visit the Cooktown Historical Society...

Rainforest Coast

1. helenvale

Helenvale was the third stop for bullock teams out of Cooktown, and is the location of the historic Lion's Den Hotel, first licenced in 1887 and operated by Jack Ross. This iconic pub is a popular stop for locals and visitors alike, and worth a visit just for the signatures that adorn the walls.

2. rossville

Established in 1885, Rossville was named after storekeeper and hotel operator Jack Ross (who owned the Lion's Den Hotel), this community serviced the Annan River tinfields. The remains of the numerous mines and machinery are still hidden in the rainforests around the mountains of this area.

3. ayton / bloomfield

Ayton, a township on the Bloomfield River, was established in the mid 1880's to cater for the pastoralists in the area and the burgeoning sugar industry. The timber industry was well represented in early Bloomfield, with a sawmill operating until after Word War II.
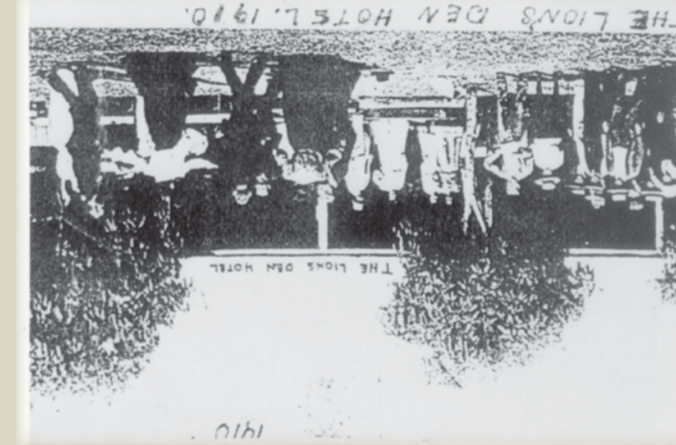
4. wujal wujal

In 1887 the Lutheran Church established a mission on the Bloomfield River, however it had a short life, closing in 1901. In 1957 the Aboriginal Community now known as Wujal Wujal was established.

Archer Point

5. archer point

During WWII, Archer Point was home not only to its lighthouse, but also a RAAN signals unit. When agriculture began at Lakeland, Archer Point became, for a short time, its deep water port.

Hope Vale

6. hope vale

Hope Vale is an Aboriginal shire just north of Cooktown. This community was first established as a mission by the Lutheran Church in 1885 at Cape Bedford. After a number of false starts and a forced relocation during WWII, the Aboriginal people of the area built Hope Vale in 1949.

By the late 1880's transport services between Cooktown and surrounding regions included 150 bullock teams and over 200 pack horse teams to carry supplies, including equipment and the Royal Mail.

Lakeland & Laura

7. lakeland

Originally part of Butcher Hill cattle station, this area was purchased to grow cereal grain in 1966, however production was diversified into other crops such as peanuts. Lakeland is now a major producer of bananas, coffee and other products.

8. laura

The township of Laura is the terminus of the old Cooktown to Laura railway. In fact, as the railway was intended to continue on to Maytown, Laura was initially the last construction camp but when the Queensland Government decided not to proceed further Laura became a permanent town and passengers for the goldfields continued on their journey by coach from Laura. Nearby is the renowned "Split Rock Gallery" of Aboriginal rock art paintings.

9. old & new laura

Old Laura is the original homestead for the Laura cattle property, built by the O'Beirne family in 1879. In 1966 the owners moved their base of operations to what is now the New Laura Ranger Base on Lakefield National Park. The old homestead has been preserved as an example of how the old timers lived and worked.

10. palmer river roadhouse

Located on the banks of the Palmer River, this roadhouse provides a taste of the area's history, as well as food and fuel. A welcome stop on the trip from Cairns to Cooktown.

Palmer River Goldfields & Maytown

Maytown was the main settlement on the Palmer River goldfields in Far North Queensland

Originally named Edwardstown, by 1875 the name was officially changed to Maytown

1. old maytown road

Commonly called "The Coach Road", this track connected the goldfield to Laura from 1879 onward. The road is now exceedingly rough and should only be attempted by experienced 'off-road' drivers.

2. old german bar townsite

This town was at the crossing place of the North Palmer River. The area was named after a German prospector who first found gold in this area. There was a small settlement here from the late 1870's. Flagstone floors and an oven are still found in the area.

3. chinese cemetery

The Chinese Cemetery is on the south bank of the North Palmer River, where the Chinese commenced alluvial mining in 1875. It is a 100 meter square site, containing an estimated 25 graves.

4. chinese alluvial workings

In this area chinese miners used diversion mining techniques to extract ore from Thompson Gully and Butcher's Creek catchments. Stone pitched gullies, stone dams and diversions still exist.

In 1878 the field had a population of approximately 20,000... it is now a ghost town.

5. louisa mine

This mine produced gold from between 1876 to 1893, and again in 1941. Water was the enemy here and forced the mine's closure in 1894.

6. comet mine & mill

The Comet Mill operated from 1885 to 1900. Its boiler, located in its original position, is the largest on the field. The mill also employed berdan pans as well as stamps in extracting gold, and these still lie nearby.

7. mabel louise & perseverance mill

Remains of the fifteen head Mable Louise Mill dating from 1877 lie on the bank of Butcher's Creek, east of the track. They include a Robey mobile engine and dismantled parts of the stamps,

8. ida

The Ida was one of the best producing mines on the Palmer goldfield, yielding 400 kg of gold in the fifteen years to 1890. Among the scatter of mining machinery is a Galloway boiler, and a huge flywheel. The town site was on the flat to the north-west.

MAYTOWN, PALMER GOLDFIELD: 1902

9. queen of the north mine & mill

The Queen of the North Mine & Mill is one of the most compact on the field, with most of the machinery intact and dominated by three large boilers and a stationary engine. The machinery dates from the mid 1870's, the peak period of production for this mine. The mine was the deepest on the field at 82 metres in 1879, its most profitable year.

10. alexandra

This mine was only active in the periods of 1876 to 1880, 1882 and 1897 to 1898. It was only profitable during the first five years when using only a horse and whim, the ore being handpicked for crushing, this being done in Maytown.

ALL MINE SHAFTS IN THIS AREA ARE DANGEROUS!

Do NOT enter fenced off areas. Some mines have an earth 'skin' covering a deep shaft below.

There are no supplies available on the Palmer Field. Everyone entering the field MUST be self-sufficient.

Travellers are advised to travel in company with other vehicles, and seek advice prior to setting out as to the state of the roads.

Map labels: Nelson's Gully, Thompson's Gully, Charcoal Burners, School, Maytown Reserve, Warden's Residence, Boatshed Site, Palmer River

Map labels: Laura, Cooktown, Palmer Goldfields Reserve, Maytown, Lakeland, Palmerville, Mt Carbine, Mossman, Mareeba, Cairns