

NEWS & EVENTS

TRAVEL DESK

THE LATEST, THE HOTTEST
AND THE NEWEST
FROM AUSTRALIA'S
SUNSHINE STATE

Get to know ELLE & JAKE HARRISON

SINCE WINNING THE SILVER MEDAL ON MY KITCHEN RULES IN 2013, THESE FUN-LOVING SIBLINGS HAVE CONVERTED A SIX-METRE SHIPPING CONTAINER INTO AN ITALIAN-STYLE CAFÉ AT BRISBANE'S EAT STREET MARKETS

Queensland has so much to offer. We have been lucky enough to sail the Whitsundays, holiday on Hamilton and Daydream Islands, sunbake on Whitehaven Beach, host the Australian-Italian Festival at Ingham, plus take a road trip from Brisbane to Rockhampton! The best part in general would have to be the coastline and beaches. There's nothing more spectacular than lying in the sun, or dining at a seaside restaurant and indulging in amazing seafood that was caught only a few kilometres away from the shore. We can't get enough of food – it's in our blood. Our family comes from generations of farming. From bananas to pineapples and cane, Queensland has an abundance of tropical produce that goes perfectly with our weather and laid-back way of life. The Gold Coast now has some competition when it comes to nightlife – Ocean Street in Maroochydore on the Sunshine Coast has really taken off! There are so many restaurants, all funky and affordable, not to mention the bars and bar food on offer. When it comes to relaxing, there's no better place than the Sunshine Coast.



► Brisbane locals Jake and Elle are still wowing diners with their marvellous food creations.



► The Whitsunday Islands look just as incredible from above as they do on the land itself.

INCIDENTAL EXERCISE

Take a hike

Keen hikers will enjoy the Gold Coast Hinterland Great Walk (best between March and October), a 54-kilometre trek that takes in mist-covered mountaintops as it coils through the World Heritage-listed Gondwana Rainforest. Ngaro Sea Trail in the Whitsundays (best between May and November) is the waterview trek to do. Feel the sea breeze blow through your hair as you meander open forests and ascend rugged peaks from Whitsunday Island to South Molle and Hook Islands. If you fancy yourself a pro, why not commit to the 90-kilometre Fraser Island Great Walk from Dilli Village to Happy Valley? It's great any time of the year! On the way you'll be able to enjoy views of the towering rainforests, crystal-clear water and coloured sands of the world's largest sand island. Or try the 30-kilometre Whitsunday Great Walk (best between April and September), taking you through Conway National Park. The route is full of cliff edges and steep elevations but offers magnificent views of the Whitsunday Islands.



COMMUNITY SPIRIT

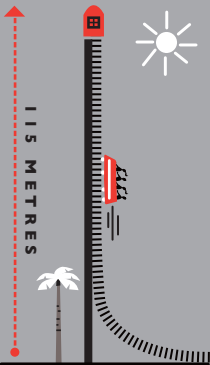
In the neighbourhood

If there's one thing Aussies do well, it's dusting themselves off and pushing through a crisis together. In September last year, Brisbane's New Farm Riverwalk was officially reopened after a section of it was washed away in the devastating 2011 floods. With the city skyline as its backdrop, the 900-metre walkway is split into designated sections for cyclists and pedestrians – giving all users their own space.

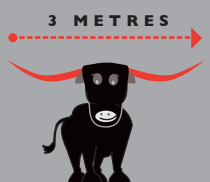
Words: Sarah Friggieri. Photos © Alamy, Channel Seven, iStock, Tourism and Events Queensland

Record breakers

With more than 50 rides and attractions (including Tower of Terror II, one of the tallest and fastest rides in the world), Dreamworld on the Gold Coast is Australia's biggest theme park.



Spanning a whopping 184,000 hectares, the World Heritage-listed Fraser Island is the largest sand island in the world.



The Texas Longhorn with the world's longest horns (measuring almost three metres tip to tip) can be found at Leahton Park, a cattle property just outside Charters Towers, where you can go on a wagon ride for the chance to meet JR, the record-holding steer.

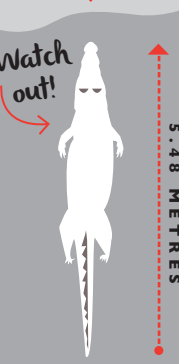
In July 2013, the Queensland Music Festival was given the Guinness World Record title of 'largest orchestra', when 7224 musicians played a medley of 'Waltzing Matilda', 'Ode to Joy' and 'We Will Rock You'.



Just over two square metres in size, Oasis Roadhouse at Lynd Junction, south west of Cairns, is Queensland's smallest pub. The smiles and welcomes are huge, though, and the roadhouse's famous Oasis Burger is big enough to satisfy any roadtripper's appetite.



Queensland is home to the largest living crocodile in captivity. With a home inside Marineland Melanesia on Green Island, salty Cassius is 5.48 metres long and weighs in at more than a tonne!



Digital detox

LOOKING TO UNWIND AND DISCONNECT FROM THE WORLD FOR A WHILE? A RELAXING RETREAT IS JUST WHAT YOU NEED!

LOW

Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat, Tallebudgera Valley

One of the most talked about retreats, multi-award winning Gwinganna in the Gold Coast Hinterland aims to soothe your soul and inspire you to live a healthier life. Wellness packages range from two to seven days and focus on organic living, spa, movement and relaxation in a low-tech environment with refreshing mountain air.

MEDIUM

Eden Health Retreat, Currumbin Valley

When you're ready to throw your computer against the wall and flush your mobile down the toilet, it's time to book a date with Eden, where there's no alcohol, coffee or smoking, nor laptops, phones or radios. Apart from the guest computer and payphones, you'll be truly disconnected from the world – and it'll be so worth it!

HIGH

Lady Musgrave Island

To completely cut yourself off, camp on the sands of Lady Musgrave Island, a tiny coral cay located on the Great Barrier Reef, almost 100 kilometres north east of Bundaberg. There's no electricity, only composting toilets, an emergency radio, fuel storage and a compressor bunker. Just make sure you pack your snorkelling gear, tent, food, water and a torch.



> Fill your lungs with fresh mountain air at Gwinganna.



Up for a dip?

The buzz term among hoteliers right now is 'infinity pool' – and guests can't wait to dip their feet in. So it's no surprise that you can find four of the best in Queensland's Whitsundays. Hamilton Island's qualia has not one but two infinity pools you can sip cocktails by. Then there's the beautiful infinity pool at the adults-only Beach Club Hamilton Island (visitors will love its spectacular beachfront location). Meanwhile, further north, private island resort One&Only Hayman Island offers superb views of the Coral Sea from its fabulous infinity pool. What are you waiting for?

Fishing corner



Family day out

Fifteen minutes from Mackay's city centre, Shoal Point Beach at Shoal Point is one of the best family friendly fishing spots. There are barbecues on site and the water remains fairly shallow – ideal for apprentice anglers.



Bonanza at Boyne

Considered Australia's best family fishing competition, the Boyne Tannum HookUp at Bray Park on Boyne Island offers cooking demonstrations, rides, food and entertainment for the whole clan – oh, and a few fun battles too. Proving its popularity, the event will be celebrating its 20th anniversary in June 2015.



Island getaway

Fraser and Moreton Islands have unspoilt beaches that extend for kilometres and are only accessible via 4WD, meaning the ultimate island-getaway fishing experience. The white-sand backdrop ain't a bad view at all.

Words: Sarah Friggieri. Photos © Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat, iStock, Jason Loucas Photography, One&Only Hayman Island, Tourism and Events Queensland

STAY

Shacking up

➡ **Let's face it: Queensland is** known for its beach vibe. And since visitors and locals alike spend endless hours on the sand and in the ocean, it would be remiss of us to skip past the best beach shacks the Sunshine State has to offer...

01. Eliza Fraser Lodge, Fraser Island

Juxtaposing this contemporary two-storey eco lodge against the rugged landscape of Orchid Beach brings the best of both worlds. Features include four bedrooms, an open fire pit, barbecue and bar. All freshly prepared meals, nature-based experiences and daily housekeeping are included.

02. Beach House Noosa, Sunshine Beach (pictured)

Complete with designer furnishings and Asian antiques, this house sits right across the road from the beach, providing the ideal opportunity to wake up to the sun rising over the ocean. Laze on the lounges by the saltwater pool or head to Noosa National Park, just a short stroll away.

03. Town of 1770 Beach Shacks, Town of 1770

Settled by Captain James Cook in 1770, the aptly named town has warm weather year-round and an amazing atmosphere. Four self-contained bungalows – Treehouse, Sunset, Light House and Escape – offer views of the Southern Great Barrier Reef.

Got a thirst for thrill?

➡

Scuba dive the Great Barrier Reef – it's a no-brainer when in Queensland! If diving isn't your thing, go for a snorkel. The Great Barrier Reef is home to an array of impressive sea life, so get in the water and gawk away.

Cruise the Sunshine Coast on a **Harley-Davidson** with Freedom Wheels and be the coolest kid on the block.

Skydive. It's a high in a completely legal sense. Skydive Australia offers three Queensland dives – at Brisbane, Mission Beach and Cairns – to give you the ultimate views of Queensland from above.