

Your great Australian journey starts here

SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND



Length: 4–7 days Fly/drive option: Brisbane, Maroochydore, Hervey Bay

Enjoy sun, surf and the world's largest sand island as you work up an appetite worthy of Noosa Heads' Hastings Street restaurant strip. Past the craggy spires of the Glass House Mountains you'll tour a string of Sunshine Coast beaches before being lured north by nature. Wander among koalas and goannas in Noosa National Park, view the whales in Hervey Bay, and admire the wonders of Fraser Island, where rainforest and lakes sit atop nothing but sand. Return through the fertile hinterland of the Darling Downs, the land of peanuts, pines and pumpkin scones.

Travel tips

This drive is great year-round, with Hervey Bay averaging 22°C in winter and 28°C in summer.

A permit is required to take a vehicle onto Fraser Island, and can be purchased online from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (www.epa.qld.gov.au).

Accommodation can be at a premium along the coast during school holidays and on weekends, so bookings should be made ahead.

Websites

- www.sunshinecoast.org
- www.tourismnoosa.com.au
- www.hervey.com.au
- www.epa.qld.gov.au/parks_and_forests
- www.queenslandholidays.com.au

South-East Queensland – Travel Times		
Route	Distance	Duration
Brisbane - Noosa Heads	160 km	2hrs 20mins
Noosa Heads - Hervey Bay	187 km	2hrs 40mins
Hervey Bay - Maryborough	34 km	30 mins
Maryborough - Dalby	308 km	4hrs
Dalby - Toowoomba	83 km	1hr
Toowoomba - Brisbane	141 km	2hrs



A to B Brisbane to Landsborough

Begin by heading north from Brisbane (www.experiencebrisbane.com) on the Bruce Highway, swinging onto Glass House Mountains Road north of Caboolture. This quieter road dawdles beneath the Glass House Mountains (www.epa.qld.gov.au), a series of volcanic plugs weathered into abstract shapes. Scramble to the summit of 364 m Mt Tibrogargan – known locally as the Gorilla – for a **great view** across the spires and coast.

Beyond Beerwah the road passes **Australia Zoo** (www.crocodilehunter.com/australia_zoo), the late Steve Irwin's famed zoo containing a host of Australian and international wildlife, including crocodiles.



At Landsborough it's worth detouring onto the Blackall Range, crowned with an alliterative trio of **rustic villages**: Maleny (www.tourmaleny.com.au), Montville (www.montvillevillage.com.au) and Mapleton. Mary Cairncross Reserve, near Maleny, offers a glimpse of the rainforest that once blanketed the range. Its 52 ha of forest are rich in wildlife, and the reserve also has great views back to the Glass House Mountains.

Also near Maleny is Baroon Pocket Dam, a popular **fishing** and **swimming** spot, and the starting point for one of Queensland's newest walking tracks, the **Sunshine Coast Hinterland Great Walk** (www.epa.qld.gov.au). The 2 km section to Baroon Lookout offers a spectacular glimpse of what it's like spending 4–6 days completing the entire 58 km walk.

Montville has an olde worlde charm that makes it the ideal spot for a **Devonshire tea**, which you can walk off around the waterfalls in Kondalilla (www.epa.qld.gov.au) or Mapleton Falls (www.epa.qld.gov.au) national parks.

B to **C** Landsborough to Noosa

Although the main tour route continues through Nambour, if **beaches** are your thing, it's worth heading for Caloundra (www.caloundratourism.com.au), and clinging to the Sunshine Coast (www.tourismsunshinecoast.com.au) shoreline, beach-hopping north to Noosa Heads. In Caloundra there's good, consistent surf at Moffat Point, **kite surfing** at Bulcock Beach and you can **cruise** through the Pumicestone Channel between the mainland and Bribie Island with Caloundra Cruise (www.caloundracruise.com).

One hop north is Mooloolaba's wonderful **Underwater World** (www.underwaterworld.com.au), home to around 25,000 sea creatures. There's even the chance to swim with the mightiest fish – **shark dives** can be arranged through Scuba World (www.scubaworld.com.au), as can reef and wreck dives. If you prefer staying on the surface, there's **sea kayaking** (www.ausseakayak.com.au), **sailing** (www.funsail.com.au) and river and canal **cruises** to fill a day in Mooloolaba or Maroochydore (www.discovermaroochy.com.au).

You'll find one of Australia's **top golf courses** at the Coolum Hyatt Regency (www.coolum.regency.hyatt.com) and the coast's best **surf** at Sunshine Beach. Novice surfers will prefer the gentler conditions at Noosa Heads' Main Beach, your next stop, where **surf lessons** are available.

One of Australia's most stylish towns, Noosa (www.tourismnoosa.com.au) also has a great natural pedigree. At its doorstep is the delightful Noosa National Park (www.epa.qld.gov.au), with a web of **walking tracks** that lead to such points as Hells Gates or isolated Alexandria Bay. Check the trees for **koalas** and the ground for goannas.

North of town, the Noosa River enters the tangle of the Everglades and Great Sandy National Park (www.epa.qld.gov.au). On a calm day the stout-coloured river is magically still and truly beautiful. Several companies operate boat and **canoe tours** up the river. Bookings can be made at the visitor centre.

After such a flurry of activity you'll appreciate Noosa's mild side. Have your rough spots scrubbed with a **spa treatment**



Mooloolaba Underwater World

at Ikatan Spa and Balinese Gardens (www.ikatanspa.com.au), west of town, and finish the day among the **dining** delights of Hastings Street, one of Australia's culinary capitals.

C to D Noosa to Hervey Bay

Return to the Bruce Highway at Eumundi. **4WDers** have the option of driving north from Noosa along the beaches of the Cooloola coast, past the *Cherry Venture* wreck to Rainbow Beach.

If you're in Eumundi on a Saturday or Wednesday, pay a visit to the **Eumundi Markets** (www.eumundimarkets.com.au). If not, you might like to sample a drop of the local Eumundi Lager at its birthplace, the Imperial Hotel.

Nearby is the small town of Pomona, home to Rudolph Valentino; at least on Thursday nights when the Majestic Theatre screens the silent *The Son of the Sheik*, complete with Wurlitzer accompaniment.

In Gympie you can pan through the relics of the town's gold-rush days and ride the Valley Rattler (www.thevalleyrattler.com), a **steam train** that journeys south through the Mary Valley to Imbil - if you're here in June you might even try to outrun the train over 18.5 km in the annual Race the Rattler.

From Gympie turn onto the lightly used road back to the coast at Rainbow Beach, where, as the name suggests, you'll find a line of coloured sand cliffs just out of town. The 100 m high Carlo Sandblow is one of the country's best hang-gliding and **paragliding** sites, with flights over Wide Bay available with Paragliding Rainbow (www.paraglidingrainbow.com). Offshore, the volcanic pinnacles and prolific marine life of Wolf Rock are revered among **divers** (www.wolfrockdive.com.au).

A different marine encounter awaits in nearby Tin Can Bay, where you can handfeed Mystique and Patch, the two wild **dolphins** that visit the bay most mornings. Feedings take place in front of Barnacles Kiosk, by the boat ramp.

Continue north to Maryborough (www.maryborough.qld.gov.au), the proclaimed **Heritage Town**, where the streets are like wooden canyons of grand

Queenslander homes. Wander the historic Wharf Street precinct and visit the National Trust-listed Brennan & Geraghty's Store. Each Thursday there's also the chance to ride the *Mary Ann*, a replica of Queensland's first **steam train**.

It's a short drive back to the coast at Hervey Bay (www.queenslandholidays.com.au), a town framed by a seemingly endless strip of beach, and basking in both sunshine and proximity to two major attractions: migrating humpback whales and Fraser Island.



Eumundi markets

D to E Hervey Bay and Fraser Island

Whale watching is Hervey Bay's big-ticket item, with whales generally appearing in the bay by the start of August, an arrival celebrated in the annual Hervey Bay Whale Festival (www.herveybaywhalefestival.com.au). Between August and October there are guaranteed sightings on the whale-watching cruises out of Urangan Marina. For an aerial perspective, Air Fraser Island (www.airfraserisland.com.au) offers whale-watching flights, as well as scenic jaunts over Fraser Island.

You can also take a helicopter flight with MI Helicopters (www.mihelicopters.com.au) to Pelican Banks for a **private picnic lunch** on a sandy island.

The greatest sand island of all – Fraser (www.epa.qld.gov.au) – is just offshore and readily accessible, with boats crossing to the island from River Heads and the Urangan Marina. Fraser is like a bag of magic sand tricks. There are dunes over 200 m high, more than 40 lakes perched atop the sand, and towering forests rooted in nothing but sand. At Wanggoolba Creek you can view the transparent waters (and the occasional eel), or you can take a dip in Eli Creek and let the flow of the water carry you back to the beach.



Wangoolba Creek

Fraser is definite **4WD** country. You can bring your own vehicle, hire one from a multitude of rental firms in Hervey Bay or join a tour. A more challenging way to see the island is to set aside a few days to hike the **Fraser Island Great Walk** (www.epa.qld.gov.au) between Dilli Village and Happy Valley, taking in many of the island's great attractions.

There are eight formal **campgrounds** on Fraser Island and a selection of **accommodation** options, from basic to lavish (www.queenslandholidays.com.au).

D to A Hervey Bay to Brisbane

From Hervey Bay the drive returns almost to Gympie, swinging west onto Wide Bay Highway towards the fertile Darling Downs. When you pass near Bjelke-Petersen Dam consider it a hint that you're approaching Kingaroy, famed as both the hometown of the controversial long-serving former Queensland Premier Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen and as a major peanut producer. You can see reminders of the former with a tour of the Bjelke-Petersen family farm, Bethany (www.bethany.net.au) – where tours include the famous **pumpkin scones** – and you can stock up on the latter at the Peanut Van (www.peanutvan.com.au) in the town's main street. Come in September for the **Peanut Festival** (www.peanutfest.southburnett.com.au).

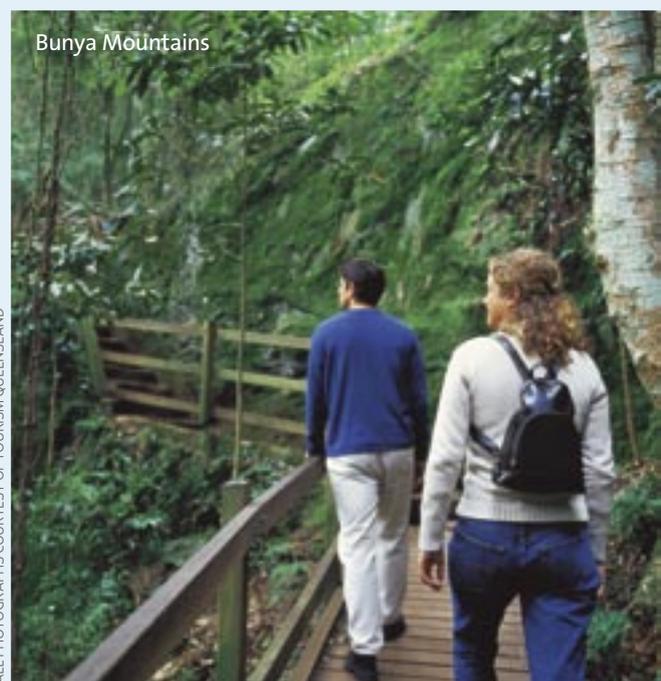
Other great **food and wine** from Queensland's largest wine-growing region can be sampled on the South Burnett Food and Wine Trail (www.tourism.southburnett.com.au).

South of Kingaroy the road passes **Bunya Mountains National Park** (www.epa.qld.gov.au), abounding in wildlife, including spectacular king parrots and satin bowerbirds, and the extraordinary bunya pines. Found nowhere else on earth, these pines produced pineapple-sized cones weighing up to 10 kg. Cones appear about every three years, between January and April. The park has three **campgrounds** and there's a selection of **accommodation** around its edge (www.tourism.southburnett.com.au).

Swing back east at Dalby – perfect for a picnic in the parklands by Myall Creek – and make a final stop in Toowoomba (www.toowoombaholidays.info), a city decorated with colonial architecture. Take the time to wander the series of paths below the mountain escarpment – for details visit the information centre on James Street – before returning to Brisbane. ■



Hervey Bay



Bunya Mountains

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