Living in Cairns

Find the suburb, lifestyle and connections that suit your move.

Cairns is a tropical coastal city in Far North Queensland, with access to the Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics rainforest. City dining, outdoor activities and coastal communities offer different ways to settle into local life. Choose a home around your workplace, household needs and the routine you want to build. [2]

For a relocation, compare a central apartment, an established suburban home and a northern beach address separately. A location that suits weekend outings may require a different weekday commute. Confirm the furnished property's inclusions and suitability across your whole stay.

Cairns at a glance

Topic	What to know
Location	Far North Queensland, on Australia's north-east coast.
Time zone	Australian Eastern Standard Time. Queensland does not observe daylight saving.
City layout	A central urban area, western foothill suburbs, northern beach communities and southern residential areas.
Lifestyle	Markets, dining, cultural events and outdoor recreation, with reef and rainforest excursions nearby. [2]
Housing choices	Apartments, townhouses and detached homes; furnished availability varies by address and stay length.
Getting around	Local buses, walking, cycling and driving. Check the full route and service hours. [7]

People and demographics

The 2021 Census recorded 166,943 people in the Cairns local government area, a median age of 39 and an average household size of 2.5 people. This is the council region, which includes communities beyond the central city; it is not the population of the Cairns City suburb. [1]

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accounted for 9.7% of the region's population. Australia was the birthplace reported by 69.0% of residents; England, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea were among the leading overseas birthplaces. [1]

These figures describe the 2021 Census, not a current population estimate. Suburb suggestions below are editorial starting points based on location and amenities. Choose around your household, workplace and the specific home.

Central and established suburbs

Cairns City and Cairns North

Explore: Cairns City and Cairns North. Compare apartments near city activities and the Esplanade with homes further north. Cairns North also offers a useful starting point for researching health-sector commitments. [3]

Consider this area for: renters with central work or hospital-area commitments. Transport: test the walk or bus route to the actual entrance [7].

Before choosing: inspect street noise, parking, lifts, storage and the apartment's cooling.

Parramatta Park and Bungalow

Explore: Parramatta Park and Bungalow. These city-fringe suburbs offer a mix of residential streets and commercial surroundings. Examine the immediate neighbourhood rather than relying on distance from the centre. [3]

Consider this area for: renters investigating an inner-city base. Transport: compare nearby bus stops and practical walking routes [7].

Before choosing: check traffic, nearby business activity, privacy and after-hours noise.

Edge Hill and Whitfield

Explore: Edge Hill and Whitfield. Edge Hill offers cafés and cultural activity around the Tanks Arts Centre, while Whitfield extends towards the foothills. Explore parks and local shopping as part of the comparison. [3]

Consider this area for: renters interested in established neighbourhoods and local recreation. Transport: check bus frequency and the final walk to home or work [7].

Before choosing: inspect slopes, driveway access, ventilation and the route to daily services.

Westcourt and Earlville

Explore: Westcourt and Earlville. Shopping and services along the Mulgrave Road corridor provide a practical focus for these inner suburban areas. Compare residential streets with properties near busy roads. [3]

Consider this area for: renters prioritising access to everyday shopping and inner-south commitments. Transport: check the route and crossing points along major roads [7].

Before choosing: confirm road noise, parking and the journey at your actual shift times.

Relo tip: Compare one typical weekday from three shortlisted addresses. Include work, groceries, school or childcare, exercise and the journey home.

Western foothills and the northern corridor

Manunda, Manoora and Mooroobool

Explore: Manunda, Manoora and Mooroobool. These established suburbs provide varied housing and access to local shopping and services. Assess each listing on its own features and immediate surroundings. [3]

Consider this area for: renters comparing several inner-west accommodation options. Transport: test the exact bus stop, connections and walking distance [7].

Before choosing: check building condition, cooling, privacy, street lighting and everyday access.

Redlynch, Brinsmead and Kanimbla

Explore: Redlynch, Brinsmead and Kanimbla. The western foothill suburbs offer leafy settings and opportunities to explore a more suburban routine. Compare hillside streets with valley locations individually. [4]

Consider this area for: households wanting to investigate additional living space and western-side commitments. Transport: check bus access or the complete drive to work [7].

Before choosing: review property-level flood information, drainage, driveway access and school journeys.

Stratford, Freshwater and Aeroglen

Explore: Stratford, Freshwater and Aeroglen. These are distinct northern-side neighbourhoods with established residential streets. Stratford has character housing, while Aeroglen is near the airport side of the city. [3,4]

Consider this area for: renters considering an established northern-side base. Transport: compare local buses and the route to the actual destination [7].

Before choosing: inspect aircraft or traffic noise where relevant, stairs and cooling.

Smithfield and nearby northern suburbs

Explore: Smithfield and surrounding residential areas. Consider this northern-side base when your routine involves the James Cook University area or nearby services. Match the home to the actual campus building or workplace. [5]

Consider this area for: renters with northern work or study commitments. Transport: test local bus connections and the walk at each end [7].

Before choosing: check travel towards the city, parking, shopping access and quiet workspace.

Choosing with family needs in mind

Use Queensland's EdMap to check state-school catchments for the exact address, year level and enrolment year. Contact the school about eligibility, capacity and documents before relying on a place. Research childcare separately, including vacancies and hours. [9]

For a furnished family home, confirm beds, laundry, storage, a dining area and space for homework. Test the daily route to school, parks, shopping and activities, including wet-weather arrangements.

Northern beaches and southern options

Machans Beach, Holloways Beach and Yorkeys Knob

Explore: Machans Beach, Holloways Beach and Yorkeys Knob. These distinct beach communities offer coastal routines north of the city. Compare local services and the surroundings of each property. [5]

Consider this area for: renters prioritising a coastal base with a workable daily journey. Transport: check the bus route and onward connection from each address [7].

Before choosing: review flood information, aircraft noise where relevant and current beach access conditions.

Trinity Beach, Trinity Park and Kewarra Beach

Explore: Trinity Beach, Trinity Park and Kewarra Beach. Explore foreshore dining at Trinity Beach, marina surroundings in Trinity Park or residential streets in Kewarra Beach. Each offers a different setting. [5]

Consider this area for: renters comparing northern coastal and residential lifestyles. Transport: test work and school travel individually for each listing [7].

Before choosing: confirm the actual beach walk, traffic, outdoor shade and cooling.

Clifton Beach and Palm Cove

Explore: Clifton Beach and Palm Cove. Clifton Beach offers a residential coastal setting, while Palm Cove combines a beach village with visitor accommodation and dining. Compare tourist precinct streets with quieter residential addresses. [5]

Consider this area for: renters placing coastal outings high on their wish list. Transport: check bus hours and the full journey to city-based commitments [7].

Before choosing: inspect seasonal activity, parking and the practicality of a regular city commute.

Woree, Bayview Heights, Mount Sheridan and Edmonton

Explore: Woree, Bayview Heights, Mount Sheridan and Edmonton. Use these separate areas as starting points for a southern-side home. Compare the exact property with local services and your workplace. [4,6]

Consider this area for: renters with southern destinations or households exploring suburban options. Transport: test buses or the full drive at your start and finish times [7].

Before choosing: review drainage and flood information, school routes, shopping access and cooling.

Further south and beyond Cairns

Gordonvale offers another southern search area, while Babinda and more distant communities require a separate commute assessment. Port Douglas and the Atherton Tablelands are different locations, so treat them as independent relocation choices rather than Cairns suburbs. Check transport and daily services before choosing a wider-region base. [6]

Choose the area around your routine

Your priority	Starting points to compare
Central work or an arrival base	Cairns City, Cairns North or a practical city-fringe address.
Established neighbourhood setting	Edge Hill, Whitfield, Stratford or another suitable inner suburb.
Western-side commitments	Redlynch, Brinsmead or nearby areas matched to your destination.
Northern work, study or beach lifestyle	Smithfield or a northern beach home with a practical daily connection.
Southern destinations	A suitable southern address matched to the actual workplace.

Transport and tropical living

Getting around Cairns

Use Translink's current journey planner and Cairns bus timetables to compare routes, transfers and service hours. Include the walk from home and the final connection to the workplace. Check weekends, early starts and late finishes separately. [7]

Local buses form the main public transport option for everyday urban journeys. Do not assume a rail station or tourist railway provides a regular suburban commuter service. A car may be useful when shift hours, multiple destinations or a workplace do not align with bus services.

Tickets and fares

At review, Cairns is included in Queensland's 50-cent Translink fares. The Cairns ticket page lists single, daily and weekly paper tickets and payment onboard by credit or debit card or cash. Check current prices and ticket conditions before travelling; private transfers have their own charges. [7]

Getting to the airport

Translink has announced that Route 100 between Cairns Airport and Cairns City will start on 23 November 2026. As this guide was reviewed on 13 October 2026, it should not be treated as an operating service yet. Check the launch and timetable before relying on it. [8]

For earlier arrivals, arrange a suitable taxi, rideshare, booked transfer or other confirmed transport. Check the meeting point, terminal, luggage capacity and late-arrival arrangements. Airport workers should plan to the actual facility and shift times.

Walking, cycling and driving

For walking or cycling, assess shade, lighting, crossings and the condition of the actual route. Allow for tropical heat and heavy rain, and confirm secure bicycle storage. Compare parking arrangements and weekly car costs with public transport convenience.

Weather and the home you choose

Cairns has a warm tropical climate with a wetter summer period and a comparatively drier winter period. Humidity, heavy rain and cyclone conditions can affect daily plans. Check seasonal conditions and official local advice for the dates of your stay. [10]

Inspect air conditioning, ceiling fans, ventilation, window coverings and insect screens. Ask whether all bedrooms are cooled, when systems were serviced and how electricity usage is charged. Check for damp smells and visible mould, and confirm how maintenance requests are handled.

Wet-season preparation

Check Cairns Regional Council's flood information for the exact address and consider access roads as well as the dwelling. Ask for the property's emergency arrangements, evacuation information and any instructions for securing outdoor items. Follow current official warnings; do not drive through floodwater. [11]

Beaches and outdoor recreation

Follow current beach signs, lifeguard directions and closures. Marine stingers and crocodile risks mean that a coastal address does not automatically offer safe swimming. Check the conditions at each location and use designated facilities that are open for swimming. [12]

The Esplanade lagoon, council recreation facilities and local parks provide options for everyday activities. Check current opening hours and conditions, and match excursions to the weather and your household's needs. [13]

Everyday life and settling in

Lifestyle beyond work

Explore local dining, markets, cultural events and community activities as you settle in. Reef trips and rainforest outings can be part of weekends, while a nearby café, park or recreation facility may shape your day-to-day routine. [2]

Council libraries, sporting clubs and community groups can help you build local connections. Investigate nearby health services, pharmacies and grocery options, including opening hours that suit your schedule.

Budget for the whole stay

Compare accommodation, electricity, internet, parking, cleaning and other disclosed charges. Cooling costs can matter in a tropical home. Confirm usage limits, payment dates and extension terms, together with any garden or pool maintenance responsibilities.

Furnished availability and prices vary by location, season, property and length of stay. Compare the total cost for your dates and required inclusions rather than relying on a city-wide rental average.

Your accommodation checklist

- Set your move-in date, expected stay, household size and total budget.
- Shortlist addresses around the exact workplace, school and daily services.
- Test journeys at your real start and finish times.
- Confirm furniture, bedding, kitchen equipment, laundry, internet and workspace.
- Check air conditioning, fans, insect screens and electricity usage limits.
- Review flood information, access routes and the property's emergency arrangements.
- Confirm parking, accessibility, pet arrangements and any pool maintenance responsibilities.
- Request written inclusions, payment dates and extension or cancellation terms.

Frequently asked questions

Which Cairns suburb is best for a relocation?

Start with your workplace, household needs and budget. Central, foothill, coastal and southern homes support different routines. Compare the property and complete daily journey before deciding.

Can I live in Cairns without a car?

Some homes can support a routine around walking and buses. Check all regular destinations and service hours, particularly for shift work, school runs and evening activities. [7]

Is the new airport bus operating?

At this guide's review date, Route 100 is scheduled to begin on 23 November 2026. Confirm the launch and current timetable before planning an airport journey. [8]

Does Cairns observe daylight saving?

No. Cairns remains on Australian Eastern Standard Time throughout the year. Check seasonal time differences when coordinating with colleagues in other states.

What should I check in a tropical furnished home?

Confirm cooling in the rooms you will use, fans, ventilation, insect screens, electricity inclusions and maintenance arrangements. Review flood information and emergency instructions for the exact property. [11]

How do I check schools before booking a home?

Search the exact address in EdMap for the relevant enrolment year and year level, then contact the school. Check childcare vacancies and opening hours separately. [9]

Ready to make Cairns your next home?

Explore furnished accommodation for your move and find a base that fits the way you want to live. Whether you are relocating for work, moving with family or coordinating an employee assignment, start with the location, space and stay length you need.

Sources

Information reviewed: 13 October 2026. Demographic reference period: 2021 Census, Cairns local government area. Check current transport arrangements, weather advice and property details when planning your move.

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics — Cairns local government area, 2021 Census
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2. Cairns Regional Council — Living in Cairns
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3. Choose Cairns — City fringe and inner suburban living
https://choose.cairns.qld.gov.au/living-in-cairns/where-to-live/city-fringe-and-inner-suburban

4. Choose Cairns — A tree change in Cairns
https://choose.cairns.qld.gov.au/living-in-cairns/where-to-live/tree-change-in-cairns

5. Choose Cairns — Beach living and northern suburbs
https://choose.cairns.qld.gov.au/living-in-cairns/where-to-live/beach-living-cairns

6. Choose Cairns — South of the city
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https://translink.com.au/tickets-and-fares/fares-and-zones/cairns
https://translink.com.au/tickets-and-fares/50-cent-fares

8. Translink — New Cairns Airport bus announcement
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9. Queensland Government — EdMap school catchments
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10. Choose Cairns — Cairns weather
https://choose.cairns.qld.gov.au/cairns-weather

11. Cairns Regional Council — Flooding
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12. Cairns Regional Council — Beaches and foreshores
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