



Cairns is known for its tourism as many are attracted to the beautiful reef, world heritage rainforest, and cascading waterfalls.

Hiking in tropical North Queensland is a rewarding experience especially when there are waterfalls and beautiful, clear swimming holes awaiting at the end!

Before your hike, make sure you prepare by having all the essentials that you need for your trip including hydration, a first aid kit, appropriate footwear, sun protection and snacks to keep your energy levels up.



Once you've finished the hike, cool off with a refreshing swim!

Babinda - The Boulders

The Boulders, as the name says, is famous for its big, smooth, granite rocks. It is a very popular swimming location for all. The Boulders is wheelchair accessible and is a great place for lunch with many BBQ facilities, tables and chairs to use. The main swimming hole is located just 200m from the car park.

For further views, there is a 2km track downstream leading to a nice lookout, overlooking unique rock formations. The Boulders is also the starting point for the Goldfield walking track (approximately 19km). Weekends can be fairly busy, so to avoid the crowds go during the week.



The Boulders is a great walk for all, as it's very accessible.

Barron Falls

The boardwalk to the Barron Falls is approximately 1km from the car park where you are surrounded by lush rainforest on both sides. To get to the falls, drive to Kuranda which is located on the Tablelands and takes approximately 35 minutes from Cairns City.

The walking track to the falls is wheelchair accessible and there are also some great lookout points along the way.



Barron Falls offers green rainforest all around and nice lookouts.

It is recommended to check out the falls straight after some heavy rain as this is when it is the most impressive. Kuranda also has some other short walks through rainforest including the Jurum Creek Walk or even the River Walk.

Kuranda is also known for its original and heritage markets which open every day from 9.30am to 3.30pm.



Barron Falls is a pretty spectacular sight after it's been raining.

Stoney Creek

Stoney Creek is a local favourite as it is a great place to cool off and enjoy the many rock pools. The track is directly next to the creek and finishes at an old weir (approximately 2-3km from the carpark). However, there are many beautiful rockpools along the way, where the first is only 200metres from the carpark.



For instance, the waterhole in this article is approximately a 5-minute walk from the car park (not too far!). If you decide to walk to the end, wear some sturdy shoes as the track is not paved and very rocky. For those looking for a longer hike near Stoney Creek, try Glacier Rock Lookout.

You can find the trailhead for this hike at Rainforest Estate on Stoney Creek Road, Kamerunga. Glacier Rock Lookout is part of the Douglas Track which leads all the way up to the Tablelands.



Follow the signs to get to Hartley's Creek Falls.

Hartley's Creek Falls via Flat Rock

Hartley's Creek Falls is a hidden waterfall, which is less known to tourists. To get there you will need to drive approximately 40 minutes north of Cairns City to Hartley's Creek Retreat. You will find the trailhead on the Southern side of Hartley's Creek Retreat.

Walk 500m on the track and you will come to a sign. From the sign, Flat Rock is 1.9km away and little further along (3.3km from the sign) is Hartley's Creek Falls. It is a beautiful and very secluded swimming hole - perfect for a dip so bring along your bathers and towel!



Bring your togs so you can take a dip in the swimming hole at Hartley's Creek Falls.

The drive up to Harley's Creek is very picturesque with the ocean on one side and the rainforest on the other.

On the way back, it is recommended to see Gatz Balancing Rocks, located approximately 5 minutes drive south of Hartley's Creek Retreat on the beach side.



The scenery on this drive is incredible, as you get views of the beach and the rainforest.

Josephine Falls

Josephine Falls is located at Wooroonooran National Park, just over an hour south from Cairns City. From the carpark, it is a short 700m rainforest walk to the falls lookout. Swimming is permitted and there are many large, flat rocks to sit on and relax. Josephine Falls is also the starting point for hiking Mt. Bartle Frere, the highest mountain (1611m) in Queensland. This trail is recommended only for very experienced hikers, as it is very strenuous and can take over 10-12 hours to complete. Camping is available and fees apply. It is recommended to go early in the day to avoid the crowds.



This one isn't for newbies, but if you're experienced check out Josephine Falls.

Crystal Cascades

Located just 20 minutes from Cairns City is the beautiful Crystal Cascades. With pristine freshwater, this is another local favourite for swimming and relaxing. There are a number of swimming spots along the track with waterfalls.

Right at the end of the walk (approximately 1.2km), you will see a very large waterfall flowing into a large swimming hole.



Crystal Cascades is also a great place for families or groups to spend the day.

This is another great location for lunch as there are BBQ facilities and amenities for public use. For those more adventurous, take the track to Lake Morris (approximately 200 metres from the car park).

This track goes through the forest and can take 5-6 hours to complete. It is only recommended for experienced hikers as it is fairly strenuous.

So there you have it, those are all of my top recommendations for hikes in and around Cairns. Happy hiking!

Where is your favourite waterfall to visit in tropical North Queensland?