

Queensland, Australia is blessed with some of the most abundant natural gifts of which the state takes great care. We took a tour up the Sunshine Coast from Brisbane and here's our story.

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to the north of Brisbane. Once an hour into the drive, make the first stop at Australia's one-of-a-kind Hunter River Iron Mine. Nine miles by boat's walk and children (who are all actively involved in the iron marketing), this is one place for anybody with a heart. The ticket costs \$15 (incl. GST), but you'll see that was no joke on your way out. A lot of work and money goes into caring for these animals, employees look happy and there are plenty of places to sit and observe signs and elephants go past, interact with kids, feed kangaroos and see birds of every colour. Not to be missed is the daily show that is held every afternoon. Seeing amazingly trained animals, this is an experience that can give your lungs a good workout.

Further north-west towards the Blackall Mountains another half an hour away is the Maroochy Plains Military trail of numerous villages typical to this part of the world. Quiet, old world and filled with things to smile about. You could stop at Maroochy to check out some of the local shopping or continue on to the Mary Cairns National Park at the Karidilla Falls. Take a guided tour to help you recognize some of the local flora, or simply walk amongst the majestic trees, drinking in the magnificent views.

Spiced the night at The Narrows Escape, a 4.5-star property that is run by Mark and



Janette Skinner and is everything you could ask for at the end of a long day. The cottages are right in the middle of the jungle and have been constructed on stilts for better impact. Nature surrounds you in all its glory and there is a wonderful sense of being alone.

#### Day two

Rise with the sleeping birds and go out for a walk. It's not when you get the chance to get this big a dose of nature? If early mornings aren't your thing, relax and head to Platonia for an early lunch. In Rufus Boman, run by Cindy and Thierry Chen, offers traditional French fare with an Australian twist, and has won several awards from the Australian Good Food Guide. Average price of a simple entrée and main course would be around \$40. The Platonia Gardens comes highly rated too but is supposed to be a popular wedding venue, so the service could be off, depending on how busy the staff is.

Lunch done, it's on to Noosa, an upmarket coastal town about half an hour away. Very popular as a holiday destination, this town has plenty of great hotels to choose from, with a huge variety of one and three bedroom apartments available at \$150-250 per day. Australia's Noosa Lake resort offers great, city apartments. The Outlook is an award-winning property

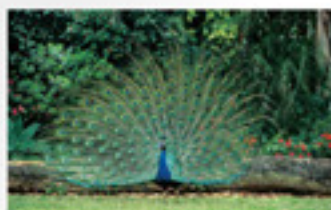


with large, open rooms and a modern décor, as is Exchange Noosa. Sebel Noosa is a five-star property right in the middle of the shopping centre on Hastings street, a few minutes walk away from the Main beach.

Walk the beach off at any of the exciting array of water activities go kitesurfing in the gorgeous Noosa river, take kite-surfing lessons, go tandem skydiving if you feel up to it, take a walk into the lovely Noosa woods, check out the variety of shops on Hastings street or simply sit at a cafe and watch the colourful world around you.

#### Day three

If it's a Wednesday or Saturday, make it an early morning and head to Eumundi markets, a colourful market of temporary shops that comes alive twice a week. The market's motto is "Make it, Make it, design it, use it or grow it" as it is very much a local market with unique local fare, farm produce, home-made specialties (or other local food) jams, pretty hand-made aprons and hats more. Stalls start winding up by mid-day so make the most of your morning and head back to be in Noosa by 12.30pm. From where it's time for the Noosa English Discovery cruise, the knowledgeable skipper leading a custom-built boat with large viewing platforms down the Noosa river. Apart from the



## An XL dose of NATURE

Bungee-jumping, kite-surfing, hang-gliding, feeding the kangaroos, star gazing—the list goes on.

**T**here are few modern countries that can make an emotionally moving, soul-soothing vacation from a crowd winner. You think you've seen it all and visited the tourism industry with jaded glances before, then all—well it's all done for money!

It was with a bit of surprise when I had to admit, even on my second visit to Queensland, Australia, that this country offers a huge dose of passion into its tourism. Whether it's a hand managed by several passionate, a cruise run by somebody who loves water or a new start by an animal lover—it is inevitably done with an extra large dose of love.

No surprise then, that Queensland never fails to meet a vision. To the natural resources

the best surfing beaches, the largest, best preserved reef in the world, state rainforests, huge areas of colourful birds, butterflies and glass hills, a natural playground for sports and adventure, walking, swimming, surfing, cycling, kayaking, bungee-jumping, kite-surfing, hang-gliding—the list goes on, all manner of modern entertainment, a huge variety of shopping, a large number of theme parks, all within easy reach: there is no need to say and do that a family could easily spend a month and still feel like they had missed something. But this is how a smaller sample could look.

#### Sunshine Coast: Day one

The Sunshine Coast, the best known section of the popular Gold Coast, is located



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