

# YOUR FAMILY'S GUIDE TO EXPLORING OUR NATIONAL PARKS



KIDS IN NATIONAL PARKS  
NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND

**TROPICAL NORTH  
QUEENSLAND**

Featuring 79 walks ideal for children

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# A BUSH ADVENTURE WITH CHILDREN

Sometimes wonderful ...

LOOK WHAT I FOUND!

THIS IS AWESOME!

CAN WE COME AGAIN?

Sometimes more of a challenge ...

I'M TIRED/ HUNGRY/BORED

I NEED THE TOILET

ARE WE NEARLY THERE?

Whether the idea of taking your children out into nature fills you with a sense of excited anticipation or nervous dread, one thing is certain – today, more than ever, we are well aware of the benefits of childhood contact with nature:

1. Positive mental health outcomes;
2. Physical health benefits;
3. Enhanced intellectual development; and
4. A stronger sense of concern and care for the environment in later life.

Planet Ark – *Planting Trees: Just What the Doctor Ordered*

**Above all, it can be fun! But let's remember ...**

**"If getting our kids out into nature is a search for perfection, or is one more chore, then the belief in perfection and the chore defeats the joy."**

Richard Louv – *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*

Please don't let your expectations of what should happen as you embark on a bush adventure prevent you from truly experiencing and enjoying what does happen. Simply setting the intention to connect your children to a natural place and discover it alongside them is enough. We invite you to enjoy each moment of your experience however it unfolds, and hope the following tips, ideas and activities help you along the way.



KIDS IN NATIONAL PARKS  
NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND

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# PLANNING TIPS

## 1. Be prepared!

Involve your children in planning – this is a shared adventure.

We recommend that you...

### Choose your walk wisely

Check the last pages of this booklet for locations, lengths and highlights of walks suitable for children. Match descriptions and distances with your children's needs and interests. It's important they have a clear idea of where and why you are going and how long your walk might take. Also visit [www.npsr.qld.gov.au/parks](http://www.npsr.qld.gov.au/parks) for up-to-date park alerts and more information on the various tracks. Remember to stay on marked tracks.

### Pack a backpack

Include water bottles, sunscreen, insect repellent, a basic first aid kit, snacks and any materials essential for genuine 'Bush Explorers' e.g. a map, magnifying glass, compass, pen and paper or other art materials.

### Dress appropriately

Choose protective clothing that can get dirty including long pants, closed-in walking shoes and hats.

## 2. Lead by example!

Be genuinely engaged and enthusiastic, it's contagious! On your walk try to:

- Discover with fresh eyes;
- Invite curiosity through your words and actions;
- Share your knowledge if it's requested; and
- Remember, on this adventure you are not a tour guide or a teacher, but a fellow explorer!

**Children are born passionately eager to make as much sense as they can of things around them. If we attempt to control, manipulate, or divert this process... the independent scientist in the child disappears.**

John Holt, author



## 3. Get smart with your smart phone!

Be clear with your 'Bush Explorers' that on this adventure your phone may be used as an Explorer's tool to:

**Navigate** – you could use your GPS or download a compass app;

**Capture memories** – through photographs, video or audio recordings. Be prepared to allow your 'Bush Explorers' to use your phone (or camera) responsibly if they wish.

Phones and cameras help us to take only memories from our beautiful natural environments. Leave our national parks just as you found them so that others can best enjoy them after you.

You can also make the choice to pack the phone away and enjoy a nature day without technology!

Of course, your phone is also an important safety device. In an emergency situation, dial 000.



We recommend you use the ideas and activities on the following pages as needed.

Some days you may need many of them, other days you may need none.

# AS YOU WALK

## 1. Vary your pace

There will be times when you all want to walk quickly, particularly when you begin your bush adventure. However, help your Bush Explorers slow down sometimes, engage all their senses and really pay attention to what is happening around them.

## 2. Select a walking stick

We have noticed children love carrying sticks in the bush, so let's go with it... carefully! Sticks can be wonderful walking aids for tired legs. Assist your child to carefully choose the stick that is right for them and listen as they explain their choice. It is important that even sticks with super powers are used wisely – ensure your Bush Explorer knows their stick cannot be used for whacking the bush or harming anyone.

## 3. Gather 'handy' imaginary snapshots

One way of tuning in to the bush and encouraging children to keep walking



is to take imaginary photos. Use your hands to frame the perfect shot of each beautiful or interesting discovery. Use your fingers, or a notepad, to count and then recall each of your finds. Have fun creatively naming your snapshots (e.g. Grandpa Ironbark, Slippery Slope, Termite Town). At the end of your walk or back at home create an original map of your journey to include these landmarks. You might even add real photos!



## 4. Take extraordinary real photographs

Ban boring photographs and get creative with composition! Try photographing up the trunk of a tree or through a hole in a leaf, and experiment with close-ups. You may

even be able to photograph through your magnifying glass. Be prepared to crouch, bend, lie down and peer into. It's all part of seeing the bush with new eyes.

## 5. Move silently

Bush exploring can be very noisy, but switch off your voices and you will find your senses become 'hyper-alert' like those of a bush creature. Agree on a length of time or set distance and then try a 'silent walk' during which you may only communicate without using words. Imagine the new things you might discover!

## 6. Find a bush seat

It's fun to find good sitting spots as you walk and it can provide a much needed moment of rest. Stop to try out each bush seat and don't forget to take a photograph!

## 7. Find your favourite stories

Engage the imaginations of your Bush Explorers and spur them on by linking their experiences to their favourite stories or movies. Find a leaf that reminds you of Nemo and swim him through the forest, locate the perfect

'Faraway Tree' or spot a home for a Hobbit!

## 8. Be a genuine 'Bush Explorer'

You can provide an example to your children of exploring using your senses, your mind and your imagination:



And if you just can't resist sharing your knowledge, stop to ask first 'Do you want to know about this?'

# AS YOU STOP AND PLAY

## 1. Take a moment

Remember, this is about the journey and not the destination. Follow your child's lead and take the time to stop and explore each new spot as your walk unfolds.

## 2. See yourself in a tree

Just like people, each tree is unique. Can you find a tree that reminds you of yourself? Play 'See that tree? It's a bit like me!' with your Bush Explorers and ask them to explain their choices.

*That tree looks like it's reaching up to its parents for a hug.*

*That tree is old and wrinkly, but it's still standing strong and wears a smile.*

## 3. Switch on your 'Super Eyes'

See the bush through the eyes of its smallest inhabitants. Challenge everyone to find a safe insect they can zoom in on and watch quietly for a whole minute (this could mean getting down on hands and knees). After a minute, share your 'insect adventures' e.g. "I think this ant is searching for food and showing his mates where to go" or "this spider is repairing its broken



web after that branch fell down and crashed through it." What might these insects say about the humans exploring their forest?

## 4. Splash, sink, soak

If your adventure leads you to water, stop to throw a small object in, listen to it 'plop' and watch the circular ripples. You can experiment to see who can make the smallest splash or if the water is flowing, hold a 'leaf boat' race. If it's safe to do so, try taking your shoes and socks off and exploring slowly with bare feet. It's cooling, relaxing and fun!

## 5. Scrunch and sniff

Can you find the one smell that would immediately bring this bush track to mind? Experiment with crushing and rolling fallen leaves in your hands, and then smelling your 'forest perfume'. Decide which perfume you each like best.

**I go to nature to be soothed and healed, and to have my senses put in order.**

John Burroughs, nature essayist

## 6. Listen with your fingers

Encourage your Bush Explorers to really tune their ears into the sounds of the forest by holding a listening challenge. Stand together and count on your fingers how many sounds, both near and far away, you hear in one minute.

## 7. Discover natural treasures

Begin by deciding what qualifies as a treasure and agreeing to leave all treasures where they are found, then... find natural objects to match each colour of the rainbow or each letter of the alphabet, spot a brightly coloured object such as a leaf and search for other natural objects of a similar colour, play 'I Spy' with colours, shapes or textures, or challenge your Bush Explorers to find five new discoveries in five minutes.

## 8. Leave your treasures

As your Bush Explorers play they will find natural treasures they can't bear to part with. Photograph the treasures so they can be remembered, but return them to the bush. Find a special place to display each treasure, so others can discover them, or leave them in a secret, hidden spot for your next visit.



# AS YOU REST, EAT AND CONTEMPLATE

## 1. Eat mindfully

Once you've found a place to stop and snack, take a moment to slow down and savour the texture and flavor of your food. Just as you have been engaging all of your senses as you explore the bush, engage them now as you sit and eat.



## 2. Construct 'fruity' bush creatures

If your snack includes apples, you have the beginnings of fun bush creatures. Use the apple cores as the bodies and find natural objects on the forest floor to build arms, legs, wings or any other body parts the imagination desires. Photograph your creatures in their best camouflaged 'habitat' before returning the found materials to the forest. Don't forget to take your apple cores home to compost!

## 3. Share stories

This is a perfect opportunity to share stories and memories. If and when the moment arises, tell your children about other bush adventures you have had, what you know about the history of the place you have been exploring, factual information about the flora and fauna, or fictional tales set in your bush location.

## 4. Watch the birds

If you sit quietly, you will notice that birds begin to fly and perch closer and closer to your group. Watch as they hunt for food, feed their babies, bathe and sing. Observe differences in size, shape, colour and behaviour. Identify birds if you are able or enlist the children to help remember the significant features of each bird so you can identify them once you have returned home.

## 5. Sit silent and still

Many ancient cultures, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, practise a type of sitting that requires complete silence and the engagement of all the senses. Agree on a length of time for which everyone will sit silent and still. Ask your children: "I wonder what we'll see and hear? I wonder how we'll feel?" Once your time is up, encourage your children to share their experiences. Remember the bush can have a very real effect on our emotions.

## 6. Let your hands explore

Given time, your Bush Explorer's hands will naturally begin to explore the area around them. They might crush or grind leaves, sift through and sprinkle dirt, sort the objects they find, thread leaves onto a stick, or run their hands over the bark of a tree. Engaging the sense of touch in this way can be peaceful and calming, and is an essential part of exploring and connecting to the bush.



## 7. Create land art

Celebrate your bush adventure by using only natural materials to build a sculpture or make a 'picture'. Your artwork might be realistic e.g. a forest face or bush landscape, or abstract e.g. a rock tower or arrangement of leaves or rocks selected and placed according to colour. Photograph the finished result and then leave your ephemeral art to be reclaimed by nature.

## 8. Make music

Music, in the form of rhythms or songs, can tell the story of your day and/or keep everyone going as you reach the end of your walk. Keep the beat with bush instruments, sing a song you all know and change the words to be about your bush adventure, or compose a brand new song together, incorporating all your experiences.



# GREAT WALKS FOR FAMILY OUTINGS

Here are 79 amazing short walks in Tropical North Queensland national parks that are perfect for kids ... so get out there!

All distances are return. For directions to these parks, visit: [www.npsr.qld.gov.au/parks](http://www.npsr.qld.gov.au/parks)



**WARNING!** Crocodiles and marine stingers may be present in or near the waters of some of these parks. Please obey all signs and supervise your children.



## Townsville towards Cairns

### PORCUPINE GORGE NATIONAL PARK

Pyramid lookout (400m) – an easy, short walk to a pleasant lookout.

Pyramid track (2.4km) – walk down to explore the gorge floor, but save your energy for the walk back up.

### BOWLING GREEN BAY NATIONAL PARK

Alligator Creek boardwalk (200m) – a boardwalk with interpretive signage to the banks of Alligator Creek.

Alligator Creek lookout (1km) – walk to a lookout of the lower sections of Alligator Creek.

Cockatoo Creek track (3km) – a walk through open woodlands to the pretty Cockatoo Creek.

### MAGNETIC ISLAND NATIONAL PARK

Hawkings Point track (1.2km) – the track leads to excellent views from the top of a large boulder.

Forts walk (4km) – steep in a few places, this track leads to historic WWII fortifications.

### PALUMA RANGE NATIONAL PARK (JOURAMA FALLS SECTION)

Jourama Falls track (3km) – a great track, more suitable for older kids as a 600m section to the lookout is uphill, but worth it for the views of the falls and forest.

### PALUMA RANGE NATIONAL PARK (MOUNT SPEC SECTION)

Rockslides walking track (800m) – viewing of

the beautiful rockslides which are a series of waterholes and cascades.

Birthday Creek Falls walk (1km) – walk to the base of the prettily cascading Birthday Creek Falls.

McClellands lookout (300m) – beautiful views of the bay.

Witts lookout track (3km) – wander through the rainforest then up to the lookout for outstanding views.

### GIRRINGUN NATIONAL PARK (BLENCOE FALLS SECTION)

Blencoe Falls lookout (400m) – walk through hoop pines to view the spectacular falls.

Jabali walk (5km) – a walk through open eucalypt forest to experience rugged bush.

### GIRRINGUN NATIONAL PARK (WALLAMAN FALLS SECTION)

Banggurru walk (800m) – a fabulous walk along the banks of Stony Creek with signage to help you learn about the rainforest.

Djyinda walk (3.2km) – steep in some sections, this walk through the rainforest takes you to the base of the mighty Wallaman Falls.

### HINCHINBROOK ISLAND NATIONAL PARK

The Haven track (1km) – a short, pleasant track through forest beside a creek.

### GOOLD ISLAND NATIONAL PARK

Western Beach walk (4km) – a good walk through open woodland to the beach.



### GIRRAMAY NATIONAL PARK (MURRAY FALLS SECTION)

River boardwalk (300m) – a short walk with several vantage points of Murray Falls, where clear water flows over boulders into rock pools.

Yalgay Ginja Bulumi walk (1.8km) – a pleasant walk through open forest and rainforest to a view over Murray Falls. Signage provides insight to the culture of the area's Traditional Owners.

### GIRRAMAY NATIONAL PARK (EDMUND KENNEDY SECTION)

Wreck Creek walk (5km) – this walk through the wetlands features sections of boardwalk; be sure to look out for the colourful mangrove crabs. At low tide only it is possible to return along the beach.

### KIRRAMA NATIONAL PARK

Society Flat rainforest walk (720m) – a gorgeous walk through giant kauri pines and rose gum trees.

### FAMILY ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK

Muggy Muggy Beach (3km) – featuring rainforest, woodland, mangroves and beach this is a coastal walk that has it all.

### DJIRU NATIONAL PARK

Lacey Creek walk (1.5km) – with interpretive signage, this walk leads to a viewing platform over Lacey Creek.

Fan Palm walk (1.3km) – a loop track through native fan palm forest.

Children's walk (400m) – a short children's discovery walk.

### CLUMP MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

Bicton Hill circuit track (3.9km) – climb through lowland rainforest to a lookout with gorgeous views.

### EUBENANGEE SWAMP NATIONAL PARK

Swamp walk (1.5km) – walk through rainforest, then up a grassy hill for views of the swamp featuring multiple bird species.

### WOOROONOORAN NATIONAL PARK

Josephine Falls walking track (1.2km) – walk through thick rainforest to lookouts over Josephine creek and falls. Look up to see Bartle Frere, Queensland's highest peak. (Josephine Falls section).

Wajil walk (1.7km) – a walk through lowland rainforest to the base of Kearneys Falls. Signage provides insight to the culture and stories of the area's Traditional Owners. (Goldsborough Valley section).

Tchupala Falls track (1.2km) – a walk to the pretty falls though an area supporting ferns, mosses and other water-loving plants. (Palmerston section).

### FRANKLAND GROUP NATIONAL PARK

Normanby Island circuit track (1km) – pass through rainforest, mangroves and rocky outcrops on this diverse walk.

### FITZROY ISLAND NATIONAL PARK

Secret Garden track (1km) – a short walk through rainforest around huge granite boulders.

Nudey Beach track (1.2km) – walk through rainforest and woodlands to a beautiful beach.

Lighthouse Road (3.6km) – a challenging walk with steep sections suitable for older children, this walk winds towards the lighthouse where spectacular views await.

## Cairns to Cape Tribulation

### BARRON GORGE NATIONAL PARK

Din Din Barron Falls lookout (1.2km) – an elevated boardwalk high above the forest floor leads to views of the gorge and the beautiful Barron Falls.



Wrights lookout (3km) – walk to Wrights lookout for views over Barron Gorge, Cairns and the coast.

Stoney Creek Garndal Garndal track (2km) – a walk through rainforest past clear pools and small waterfalls.

#### **GREEN ISLAND NATIONAL PARK**

Boardwalk (1.3km) – from the jetty, this pleasant boardwalk winds through the forest to the beach, with interpretive signage along the way.

#### **DAINTREE NATIONAL PARK (MOSSMAN GORGE SECTION)**

Baral Marrjanga (540m) – an elevated boardwalk through the lower rainforest canopy.

Lower river track (600m) – winds along the Mossman River and then joins the Baral Marrjanga track.

Rex Creek bridge (920m) – continuing on from the Baral Marrjanga, this track includes a suspension bridge over the Mossman River.

Rainforest circuit track (2.4km) – starting from the end of Rex Creek bridge, this is a gorgeous circuit track that winds through the spectacular Daintree rainforest.

#### **DAINTREE NATIONAL PARK (CAPE TRIBULATION SECTION)**

Jindalba boardwalk (650m) – a boardwalk through the tropical lowland rainforest.

Jindalba circuit track (3km) – traverse rainforest creeks on this more challenging walk.

Marrja boardwalk (1.2km) – a boardwalk through the rainforest and mangroves.

Dubuji boardwalk (1.2km) – another excellent boardwalk, this one winds through rainforest, swamps and mangroves, and is well signed with information about rainforest species survival strategies.

Kulki (600m) – a boardwalk leads to a lookout over ocean, rainforest and the gorgeous Myall Beach.

### **Atherton Tablelands**

#### **DAVIES CREEK NATIONAL PARK**

Davies Creek Falls circuit track (1.1km) – with two spectacular lookouts and a then a track beside a creek fringed with paperbark and pandanus trees, this is a great short walk.

Supervise children to ensure they stay behind barriers at the lookouts.

#### **CRATER LAKES NATIONAL PARK (LAKE BARRINE SECTION)**

Lake circuit track (5km) – a lovely walk around a lake within a volcanic crater, surrounded by rainforest.

#### **CRATER LAKES NATIONAL PARK (LAKE EACHAM SECTION)**

Lake Eacham Children's walk (1.4km) – a fun walk with signage and activities for kids along the way.

Lake circuit track (3km) – a walk around the lake offering beautiful views and signage about the Traditional Owners.

#### **CURTAIN FIG NATIONAL PARK**

Curtain Fig boardwalk (180m) – this boardwalk encircles a 500-year-old uniquely formed strangler fig.

#### **MOUNT HYPIPAMEE NATIONAL PARK**

Dinner Falls circuit (1.2km) – see a crater formed by an ancient natural gas explosion and visit a charming waterfall.

#### **MILLSTREAM FALLS NATIONAL PARK**

Big Millstream Falls lookout (680m) – ideal for viewing of the spectacular waterfall.

World War II Heritage track (1km) – visit an area used by the Australian Army during WWII. Signs describe the lives of the soldiers.

#### **TULLY GORGE NATIONAL PARK**

Butterfly walk (375m) – a short walk through tropical rainforest where butterflies are often seen during spring and summer.

River walk (1.4km) – first visit the Tully Gorge lookout, then follow the track along the river through a variety of woodlands and rainforest.

### **West of Tablelands**

#### **FORTY MILE SCRUB NATIONAL PARK**

Forty Mile Scrub circuit walk (300m) – a chance to discover an isolated pocket of semi-evergreen vine-thicket.

#### **UNDARA VOLCANIC NATIONAL PARK**

Kalkani Crater rim walk (2.5km) – walk around the rim of this ancient crater.

Atkinsons lookout trail (3.8km) – granite ridges afford great views over the park.

Note: Access to the lava tubes in this park is by guided tour only.

#### **CHILLAGOE-MUNGANA CAVES NATIONAL PARK**

Balancing Rock track (440m) – a short walk to see this spectacular limestone formation.

Donna Cave to Balancing Rock (2km) – wander through eucalypts and ironwood trees as you listen to the kookaburras.

The Archways (220m) – a short self-guided tour through a semi-open cave. Torches required.

Note: Ranger-guided tours of other family-friendly caves are available.



### **Cape York Peninsula**

The following parks are remote and access may be by unsealed road requiring 4WD vehicle.

#### **LIZARD ISLAND NATIONAL PARK**

Chinamans Ridge (680m) – a short, steep track leading to stunning views.

Watsons walk (1km) – a pleasant sandy track through paperbark trees.

Pandanus track (1.4km) – this walk includes a boardwalk through the mangroves with signage about Aboriginal uses of plants and animals in the area.

Blue Lagoon (455m) – a secluded mangrove beach leads to lovely views over Blue Lagoon.

Research Road (4.4km) – a sandy road through woodland to the Lizard Island Research Station.

#### **CAPE MELVILLE NATIONAL PARK (CYPAL)**

Mahina monument track (300m) – a short walk to a monument of the lives lost during Cyclone Mahina in 1899.

#### **RINYIRRU (LAKEFIELD) NATIONAL PARK (CYPAL)**

Kalpowar discovery walk (4km) – follow the banks of the lovely Normanby River through vine forest and then open woodland.

#### **FLINDERS GROUP NATIONAL PARK (CYPAL)**

The 'Dart' (300m) – this short track leads to a rock inscribed during an 1899 naval survey ship visit.

Yindayin rock shelters (2.8km) – viewing of rock art images is the highlight of this cultural walk.

#### **KUTINI-PAYAMU (IRON RANGE) NATIONAL PARK (CYPAL)**

Mount Tozer viewing platform (140m) – a short stroll to enjoy the views of Mount Tozer.

Chilli Beach forest walk (720m) – another short walk, this one through coastal dune and swamp vegetation.

#### **JARDINE RIVER NATIONAL PARK**

Twin Falls (Yaranjangu) (480m) – a walkway through acacia woodland to Twin Falls.

Eliot Falls (Yaranjangu) (550m) – a shady boardwalk leads to views of the lovely Eliot Falls.

The Saucepan (670m) – walk through dry heath featuring casuarinas and banksias.

Fruit Bat Falls (400m) – a short boardwalk to view the falls.

### **Disclaimer**

For details on any of the tracks above, please refer to the appropriate national park web page on the Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing website. All walks have potential dangers; supervise children closely at all times and stay on marked tracks.





[www.kidsinnationalparks.org.au](http://www.kidsinnationalparks.org.au)

Kids in National Parks is an initiative of the National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ), which is dedicated to promoting the preservation, expansion and good management of national parks in Queensland. Founded in 1930, NPAQ has played a pivotal role in the establishment of many national parks in Queensland. We strive to educate the community about national parks and their benefits while fostering an appreciation and enjoyment of nature.



**As a not-for-profit organisation, we are reliant on your donations to continue our work protecting the unique natural spaces that Queensland's species call home.**

**Make a donation or become a member today!  
Visit [www.npaq.org.au/get-involved](http://www.npaq.org.au/get-involved)**

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