



SNORKELLING ON FITZROY ISLAND

Replacing the convertible with a boat, next we head to Fitzroy Island (fitzroyisland.com), a lush, mountainous tropical island a half-hour boat ride away and check into a beachfront cabin. Surrounded by coral reef, the island offers a tantalising taster to the Great Barrier Reef, and we dive right in. As it's marine stinger season, I slip into a stinger suit before snorkelling around Shark Fin Bay (not as scary as it sounds – it's named after a fin-shaped boulder on the beach).



SUNDOWNERS AT FOXY'S BAR

Foxy's Bar is a sort of flashback to the 80s with its pub food menu, bistro-style service and a dancefloor taking centre stage as an ageing rocker thumps his electric guitar. But we're not here to dance – we're here to kick back and enjoy the view. Foxy's is all about its dreamy beachfront location with ocean and mainland mountain views framed by palm trees.



DINNER AT ZEPHYR

By the time we sit down for dinner on the patio at waterfront Zephyr Restaurant, I'm ravenous. Torn between a spinach cheese soufflé and scallop croquette for entrée, I opt for the soufflé followed by North Queensland lamb shank on a bed of creamy smoked eggplant. A glass of sem sav washes it down nicely as darkness descends over the tropics.



14:00

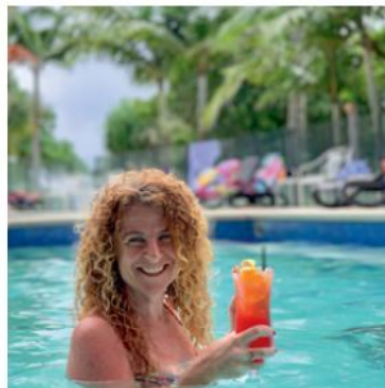
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GOODBYE RUBY, HELLO FITZROY

Just a quick road trip today as we make our way down the winding Gillies mountain range and back to Cairns. All good things must come to an end, and it's now time to say goodbye to our Ruby Red Mustang and enjoy the wind-in-hair, salt-on-skin 45-minute boat ride to Fitzroy Island.



COCKTAIL TIME

A tropical island stay isn't quite complete without relaxing by the resort pool and a refreshing dip (exclusive for resort guests) while enjoying a refreshing cocktail from the swim-up pool bar.



SUNDOWNERS

With so many activities available on Fitzroy Island, you have the choice of being super active or chilled out and relaxed. Regardless of which option you choose, the perfect way to end any day on a tropical island is with bubbles in hand while watching the sun set over the glistening Coral Sea and the mountains on the mainland.



LISA

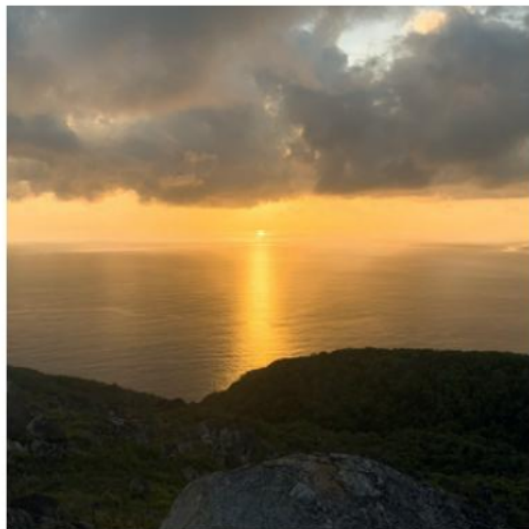
starts with a spa treatment, takes in some history and goes to Fitzroy Island

WEEKEND WARRIORS



FITZROY ISLAND SUMMIT HIKE

Fitzroy Island has a network of hiking trails, and the best one for viewing the sunrise is the Summit Trail, which takes about 30 minutes from our cabin to the lookout on the island's highest point. The reward for the sweat is a spectacular 360-degree view of the sea and mountains surrounding Cairns. I arrive in time to see a big ball of orange rising above the horizon, casting a warm glow across the Coral Sea.



FIONA

watches sunrise, heads to one of the country's best beaches and has dinner at an aquarium



NUDEY BEACH SNORKEL

A serial overachiever on Australia's best beaches lists, Nudey Beach is bookended by granite boulders that create intimate coves. I don a snorkel and mask, poke around the rocks and watch the crabs scurry for cover as I invade their territory. Don't be confused by the name – Nudey Beach is not "clothing optional". Swimmers are definitely required!



PUBLIC ART WALK AROUND CAIRNS

Returning to Cairns with a sun-kissed glow, I lace up my walking shoes for a self-guided tour of the Sea Walls Artists for Oceans project that sees carparks and bland concrete walls transformed across the city. My favourite is the beguiling multi-coloured *Enigmatic Emanations* oversized mural by artist Vans The Omega (@vanstheomega), inspired by scuba diving adventures on the Great Barrier Reef.



SUNDAY

09:00

11:00

12:00



TURTLE HUNTING

Not far from the shoreline turtles pop their little heads up and many swim among the snorkellers, so I hire a kayak and go for a paddle to see if I can spot one up close. Just as awesome as spotting a little turtle popping its head up out of the water is glancing back to shore at the tropical, palm-tree-lined beach.



CAIRNS TURTLE REHABILITATION CENTRE

I drop into the Cairns Turtle Rehabilitation Centre (cairnsturtlehab.org.au) to see first-hand the amazing work the volunteers are doing rehabilitating sea turtles that have been found sick or injured. The Great Barrier Reef is home to six of the world's seven species of marine turtles, and this non-for-profit organisation is dedicated not only to their rehabilitation and release, but also public education on man-created threats the turtles face.



FROM THE WATER TO THE AIR

When I get the opportunity to squeeze a quick 30-minute scenic helicopter ride into my itinerary with Nautilus Aviation (nautilusaviation.com.au) after returning from Fitzroy Island, I jump at the chance. There's nothing like a front-seat aerial view over the Great Barrier Reef.