

Title:

The Ancient Beauty of Australia's Daintree Rainforest

Word Count:

579

Summary:

The Daintree is the largest tropical rainforest in Australia, and covers an area of approximately 1,200 square kilometres in North Queensland. It stretches from the Daintree River north to Cooktown and west to the Great Dividing Range, and is one of the most complex tropical rainforest ecosystems on earth. Its structural complexity and the diversity of its flora is unrivalled on the Australian continent.

Keywords:

daintree, rainforest, river, australia, tour, travel, holiday, vacation, queensland, tropical

Article Body:

The Daintree is the largest tropical rainforest in Australia, and covers an area of approximately 1,200 square kilometres in North Queensland. It stretches from the Daintree River north to Cooktown and west to the Great Dividing Range, and is one of the most complex tropical rainforest ecosystems on earth. Its structural complexity and the diversity of its flora is unrivalled on the Australian continent.

The Daintree region offers many unique natural features to be explored. The striking landscape is rich and diverse, and includes spectacular scenery, mountain ranges, fast flowing streams and waterfalls, deep gorges and dense rainforest. The Daintree's outstanding coastal scenery includes an unusual combination of tropical rainforest, white sandy beaches and offshore reefs. Mt Pieter Botte rises to the west of Cape Tribulation with massive granite outcrops, and the summit provides breathtaking views of vast undisturbed forest. To the south, the horizon is dominated by the huge granite boulders of Thornton Peak, one of highest mountains in Queensland.

The vegetation of the Daintree area is among the most diverse in Australia. 13 different types of rainforest have been identified, from the tall forests of the coastal plains with massive curling liana growth and exotic buttress roots, through to the middle altitude forests with characteristic small-leaved species, and the montane forests with areas of heath-like vegetation that crown the

mountain tops. The mangrove forests which line the mouth of the Daintree's creeks and rivers have the highest species diversity for this habitat type in Australia. The wet tropical rainforests of North-East Queensland contain the richest variety of fauna found in Australia. While representing only 0.1% of the Australia landmass, the region is home to 65% of Australia's bat and butterfly species, 30% of the frog, marsupial and reptile species, and 20% of the bird species.

Millions of years ago when Australia was much warmer and wetter, rainforests thrived in places as far inland as Ayers Rock. As Australia became more arid, rainforests were gradually replaced by dry woodlands, grasslands and deserts in many parts of the continent. In the Daintree region, however, the climate and topography remained ideal for rainforests and so the area became a last refuge for Australia's original rainforests. Within this refuge many species continued to survive without the need to adapt to new conditions. The descendants of these species still survive today in the Daintree and retain many of their ancestors' original characteristics, some dating back more than 100 million years.

One species, commonly known as the Idiot Fruit (*Idiospermum australiense*), is among the rarest and most primitive flowering plants on earth. It was discovered in 1970 and was arguably Australia's most significant botanical find as it clearly demonstrated just how ancient the Daintree Rainforests actually are. Of a total of 19 primitive flowering plant families remaining on the planet, 12 of these families are found in the Daintree region, representing the highest concentration of such plants worldwide. These ancient plants could provides answers to questions about the origins of flowering plants in general.

The Daintree Forest area is undoubtedly of enormous intrinsic value and it is therefore important that visitors cooperate in its preservation. The disturbance of plant and animal life should be kept to a minimum. Avoid short cuts through the forest as the resulting trails can cause erosion and die-back. Use elevated boardwalks where ever provided. Of course, don't pick flowers, take cuttings or collect rainforest seeds ... please leave these magical forests just as you found them. Don't forget the golden rule: Leave nothing but footsteps, take nothing but photographs!