

Three nights in Cairns, Australia

by Camille Pepe Sperrazza

Day 1: Our extraordinary cruise aboard the Paul Gauguin has ended here. ([See cruises - Singapore, Indonesia, and Australia](#)). This allows us to spend three nights at this gateway to the Great Barrier Reef. We have a one-bedroom suite, with executive lounge privileges, at the gorgeous Shangri-La Hotel at the marina. Our huge balcony overlooks the harbor, which is lined with countless boats, and this panorama view continues into the living room, bedroom, and bathroom. We spend the afternoon walking the Boardwalk and exploring the town. Everyone is so pleasant, and many call us "mates".

Camille and koala

I pre-planned all our tours and the first is the Cairns Tropical Night Zoo and Australian barbecue where there's interactive fun, singing, dancing, food, unlimited wine and beer as well as close-ups with some animals, unique to this part of the world. I get to hold a Koala and pose for a photo with it. Later, a kangaroo eats right out of my hand. We watch them jump around their habitat and everyone is awed by how friendly and adorable they are, coming right up to us for the grain we're provided with. Fortunately, they know not to bite my hand off when the grain is gone.

Day 2: The Great Barrier Reef and Green Island. About 2,900 reefs make up the area known as The Great Barrier Reef which is so distinct, it can be seen from space. We are on a pontoon at the Norman Reef, best described as a docking station in the ocean, accessible by a tour boat. Some people are snorkeling off the side of the pontoon; others are diving. Lunch is being served; there's a sundeck above, and when you climb down one stairwell, there are underwater views of divers and huge fish. You can even board a helicopter for a look at the reef from the sky. We head to the semi-sub where we are submerged beneath the ocean in the comfort of a vessel, still privy to the huge coral reef structures. Some look like their own planets. Others are called "brain coral" because they resemble the organ. Purple feather-like structures wave past us, and colorful fish nibble at the reef. At one point a turtle swims by.





Earlier, we spent two hours on Green Island, also part of the Great Barrier Reef. We expect it to be desolate, but it has gift shops, snack bars, a pool, and even a hotel. The small beach is barren except for a few sunbathers, and the ocean is beautiful shades of clear white and blue. The water is so transparent, coral can be seen from its surface. We make our way through the small rainforest on the island, along a modern Boardwalk, pausing to read signs explaining how the island evolved over thousands of years. We had prepared for a day of wet adventure as many Australians had warned us the boat ride out to the island and the pontoon could be rough, but this is not the case at all. The boat that transports us is larger than anticipated, and fully enclosed, a pleasant ride with cake, coffee, cheese, and crackers provided. The weather is cold and breezy so I wear a hooded sweatshirt on top of my bathing suit. I should have worn long pants.

Day 3: Our last day in Cairns is spent at Hartley's Crocodile Park where we see several crocodile shows, snakes, koalas, and get to feed and interact with the friendliest kangaroos and wallabies. Later we drive through Palm Cove, a lovely resort area, and have dinner at a restaurant that serves giant barbecued spare ribs.

Day 4: We have 30 hours of travel time: Cairns to Sidney; Sidney to Los Angeles; Los Angeles to New York. On the Sidney to Los Angeles, leg actress Linda Grey and actor Patrick Duffy are on our flight.

For more information or to book a trip, [contact](#) "Commodore" Camille today.

This article was accurate when it was written, but everything in life changes. Enjoy the journey!