



Places to Visit on the Atherton Tablelands

The Atherton Tablelands is a great place to play tourist.

Southern Atherton Tablelands Tour

Most of these places are National Parks, free to access, and most are set in rainforest. If it's wet and you're walking on unpaved rainforest paths, spray insect repellent on your legs to discourage leeches.

1. From Atherton, drive east to Yungaburra on the Gillies Highway. You'll drive through the 7 Sisters, rounded cinder cones from the most recent episode of volcanic activity. The craters point east.



2. Turn right just before Yungaburra. A few km will bring you to the Curtain Fig Tree. This giant strangler fig has killed the tree it started on.
3. Go back to the highway and enter Yungaburra (note the heritage listed hotel as you drive through). There is a platypus viewing area on the creek just before the town, but you'll have most luck very early in the morning or in the evening.
4. Keep following the highway out of Yungaburra. Take the second turn right (signposted for Lake Eacham). Take the first left turn to Lake Eacham. This volcanic lake is a popular swimming spot but don't drown, we'll never find the body (no defined bottom to the lake has been found). There is a pleasant rainforest walking track around the lake – about an hour's worth of walking. Keep an eye out for platypus and turtles in the lake.



5. Go back to the Gillies Highway and continue east towards Cairns. The second big volcanic lake, Lake Barrine, is on the right. This one has a 1920s restaurant (great scones), boat tours, and another walk around the lake. Even if you don't do the full walk, go in about 100m to the two giant bull kauri trees – two of the few that escaped the timber getters.



6. If you liked the Curtain Fig, you'll love the Cathedral Fig. Keep going along the Gillies Highway towards Cairns and keep an eye out for the left turn (marked Cathedral Fig / Boar Pocket Rd / Danbulla National Park). This is a narrow sealed winding road, a few km long, but the tree is worth it. Return the way you came (don't get tempted to keep driving around the back of Lake Tinaroo. The road is terrible and the pine forests depressing).
7. Go back to Atherton and the International Club where the conference is being held. Take the Kennedy Highway out of town (it will pass the cemetery, including the war cemetery – a lot of troops trained on the Tablelands for the New Guinea campaign).
8. Keep going a fair distance until you see the turnoff to the right to The Crater/Mt Hypipamee National Park. There are toilets and picnic tables (watch out for scrounging birds). The Crater is spectacular – a deep hole in the granite rock, formed by a volcanic explosion. The burbling brook you can see from the path to the Crater is the Barron River, running over a series of small waterfalls – I've seen a platypus in one of the pools. Watch out for tree kangaroos while driving through rainforest here.
9. Come back towards Atherton, but keep an eye out to the right for a turnoff saying Malanda/Upper Barron Road. Guess when the road starts running along the wall of a huge volcanic crater. Stop at the viewing ramp for the Bromfield Swamp a.k.a. huge volcanic crater. Take binoculars if you've got them – bird sanctuary.
10. Keep going and turn right at the T intersection towards Malanda. The road will go past Malanda Falls which has been turned into a swimming pool for the town. Not very spectacular but might be worth a look. The restaurant next to it isn't bad.
11. Go through the town (or stop off at the Malanda Milk factory and see the museum) and take the road to Millaa Millaa. The highway bypasses Millaa, but there's a small local history museum in the main street if you're a museum junkie. A km or two past the town is the turnoff (left) to the very pretty Millaa Millaa Falls. The restaurant on the corner of that turnoff is OK too. The Falls turnoff is a few km down the road, to the left.



12. After the Falls you can either keep going around the Falls circuit to Zillie and Elinjaa Falls (sealed road but narrow and bendy) or go back to the highway and travel towards Innisfail, keeping an eye out for the Mungalli Falls turnoff to the left. Falls is not amazingly spectacular but the view from the café towards the Johnstone River gorge and Queensland's highest mountains is, and the food at the café is pretty good (this is the source of the famous Mungalli milk and yoghurt. Try the Davidson's Plum yoghurt – a native rainforest fruit). Zillie and Elinjaa Falls both require a bit of walking on rainforest tracks.
13. Atherton also has the Chinese Temple. Go down to the main street and drive west – this becomes the Herberton Road. Once over the railway and creek, the Temple is just on your left. Nice little museum and there's something special about the Temple, the last of the many tin and timber temples in northern Australia. (There is a platypus viewing area on the creek you've just crossed. Never seen a platypus there, but someone says they saw a tree kangaroo up in one of the trees nearby). Temple open 9am - 4pm Wednesdays to Friday and 10am - 2pm on Saturdays, \$10 adults or free if you're a member of the National Trust.
<https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/places/hou-wang-temple/>

If you like museums, Herberton has a good one: the Historic Village, which will keep you occupied for most of the day, and it has a very nice cafe. Keep going along Herberton Road past the Chinese Temple – about 20-30 minutes' drive to Herberton. The Village is on the left on the eastern outskirts of the town. Open daily 9-5, prices approx. Adults \$29 Children \$13 Concession \$26 <https://www.historicvillageherberton.com.au/>

Northern Atherton Tablelands Tour

1. Head north from Atherton – look for signs at the eastern end of the main street saying 'To Mareeba'.
2. On the outskirts of Tolga, only a few km out of Atherton, is The Humpy. This has Tablelands produce – jams, honey, teas, coffees, macadamias, fruit and veg. Good place for edible souvenirs. I recommend the Davidson Plum jam. Tolga also has the Tolga Woodworks, featuring wooden artefacts made from local timbers (bowls, sculptures etc.)
3. Keep driving through Tolga and towards Mareeba. Around 10km out you'll see a World War II igloo on the left. This is the site of a massive WWII military tent hospital – the igloo was the recreation hall and picture theatre. (Member Peter Bell wrote the conservation report). If you like ruins, turn left here and a few km

up the road you will see concrete slabs – the floors of just a few of the hospital wards, and the only ones to survive. The first one you come to is the dysentery ward, and there's a path mown through the tall grass downhill to the floor of the morgue (I like to show visitors a good time). Toilets, picnic area and interpretation signs on the other side of the highway from the turn-off - this was the hospital laundry area but is now a memorial park.



4. Continue driving towards Mareeba. Mareeba attractions: Information Centre which is also the home of the Mareeba Historical Society museum. Also the Coffee Works (locally grown coffee and more edible souvenirs), Mareeba Wetlands if you like birdwatching. Get directions at the Info Centre.
5. Take the road to Kuranda (if you're coming back from Mareeba town centre, the turnoff is to the left after the petrol station – look for the signs – and if you miss that turn you can turn left just after the Information Centre). Once you get to Kuranda, turn off the highway at the traffic lights. Kuranda used to be the counterculture centre of the north and is still popular with tourists.
6. In Kuranda, take the first turn right (just before the service station) and look for signs to the Barron Falls (or rather, at that time of the year, the Barron Gorge – most of the water is dammed for the hydro-electric station). It's a reasonable walk to the Falls, over a pleasant board walk. Worth going.



7. Have a wander around Kuranda itself – lots of attractions.
8. On your return to Atherton, if you have time, take the turn left just after The Humpy at Tolga. This will bring you out on the Atherton-Tinaroo road. Turn left and go to Tinaroo Dam and Lake Tinaroo (through Kairi pronounced KEER-eye). The dam was built in the 1950s to irrigate tobacco, as far away as the other side of Mareeba. Lots of good places to go swimming, canoeing, and fishing, as the

lake is full of barramundi and redclaw (freshwater crayfish) – you’ll need to buy a permit to fish, \$10, buy online at <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/rsa/sips-dams-and-weirs/profile?dam=tinaroo-dam> . Try for barra early morning/late afternoon. I’m sure the crocs are only freshwater crocs and harmless. You can hire kayaks at Tinaroo Village.

