



A trip to the northernmost point of Australia is an absolute bucket list destination. The remoteness, the untouched beauty, the majestic nature and feeling of being 'on top of Australia' is like nowhere else. More and more people are making the trip every year, discovering the many hidden gems and locations that have remained a secret for so long. Our family ventured to Cape York as part of a two-week camping adventure. We hope that the following tips assist you with planning your own trip.

1. Research your route

It may seem obvious, but it pays to plan ahead and map out where you want to go. There are many options and more locations to visit than you may first realise. Do you want to go straight up the middle, or venture to the east and west coasts on your way up or down from the tip? No matter where you go, every destination has something unique to offer. As a general guide, you will need around two weeks to venture to the tip and back, without feeling rushed. If you want to go east and west, you could easily add a few days or more, each side.



The northernmost point of Australia takes your breath away.

Peninsula Developmental Road (PDR)

The main road that runs to the tip of Cape York is known as the PDR, short for Peninsula Developmental Road. This is the main 'arterial', although its red dirt has a character of its own. The PDR is under constant development, with almost permanent roadworks making improvements to the 'worst' sections of the road.

During our trip, the road was in great condition, but it always pays to check recent updates closer to your time of travel. The rainy season causes havoc with many closures. We, however, visited in the drier spring months.

Remember, drive to conditions, slow down and lower your tyre pressures for any rough sections.



Dropping your tyre pressures and driving to the conditions is essential.

The Old Telegraph Track

Snaking its way alongside and occasionally overlapping with the PDR is the Old Telegraph Track. This is a highlight for 4WD enthusiasts, with many challenging obstacles along what is very much a bush track. Those who dare to take the road less travelled are rewarded with some of the most pristine, untouched landscapes, creeks and waterholes. There is a real sense of camaraderie with other travellers, and friendships are easily formed.

The Old Telegraph Track can be tackled in two sections, North and South, and is best travelled from South to North, as this is the direction most people take, and with narrow roads, it is sometimes difficult to overtake.



The Old Telegraph Track is a unique and fun adventure, access starts from Bramwell Junction



Roadhouse.

2. Decide on your mode of transport

Cape York is a remote location but it's stunning beauty can be equally as rugged and unforgiving. It pays to be prepared and take a vehicle that will take you safely to where you want to go.



A 4WD is a great option if you're looking to be adventurous on the Old Telegraph Track. Most people choose to take a 4WD of some type, as these vehicles are built for off-road and can be the safest and best-equipped vehicles for the conditions. Accessories such as a fridge, UHF radio, tools and an air compressor are all items that will come in handy on a trip like this. If you choose to tackle all or part of the Old Telegraph Track, you will certainly need a 4WD, preferably with high clearance. Additional accessories such as a snorkel, winch and recovery gear are essential.



Being prepared with the right setup can mean the difference between ending up like the car on the left, or being able to keep on trucking, like on the right!

3. Camping, glamping or room hire?

There are many options for accommodation for a trip to Cape York. Your route and desired destinations will guide your accommodation, or if you have a fixed preference for where and how you want to stay – vice versa.

Camping is the most flexible option, allowing you to travel and stay almost anywhere. There are some stunning free camps along the Old Telegraph Track that are fairly easily accessed if camping or with a camper trailer. Likewise, heading out to coastal areas is easiest with a tent or small camper.

If glamping is more your style, it is very possible to take a caravan to the tip, and we saw quite a few! Ensure your off-road van is best prepared by protecting cables, pipes and fittings from roads and stones. As with your car, lower the tyre pressures on the van to minimise impact, and be prepared to travel a little slower than you would in a car alone. With careful driving, many campsites are accessible by van, but there may be some spots that are tricky to reach. If you want to tackle the entire Old Telegraph Track, you will need to unhitch and venture off without the van for a day trip.

Finally, if you prefer more luxury, there are rooms available at most station stays, caravan parks and resorts along the way at the tip of Cape York. Planning ahead is key, as you don't want to be stuck without having somewhere to rest your head at night. Booking prior to arrival is advisable, especially in peak periods.



Camping makes it possible to get off the beaten track and stay in some amazing locations.

4. Plan your meals

When it comes to meals, any remote travel requires planning and organisation. If you are



camping, you will need to consider food storage, to both fit in the quantity of food you will need, and to keep it fresh. Remember to pack adequate drinking water, especially if heading into bush camps.

The major towns, including Bamaga, Seisia and Weipa, all have well-stocked supermarkets. Station stays and resorts usually offer restaurants and takeaway food as well.



Food is available for purchase at various locations, including roadside stalls.

5. Yes, there is fuel available!

It is a long way to the tip of Cape York! Whatever your mode of transport, you will require multiple fuel top-ups along the way.

It can be handy to have a jerry can of fuel for unforeseen circumstances or to save a little bit of cash as prices are on the high side, as you would expect. There are plenty of opportunities to fill up along the way, and a good rule for remote travel is to never pass by a service station without filling up. You can also plan ahead using a fuel app to find the next available petrol station.



Planning ahead and taking some time to ensure you have all the supplies you need can save you a lot of time and hassle.

6. The best-hidden gems are off the beaten track

You will be rewarded for taking the road less travelled! A trip to Cape York is all about adventure. Taking the time to venture a bit further is often well worth the effort.

The well-known water holes along the Old Telegraph Track include Twin Falls, Fruit Bat Falls and Elliot Falls. Lesser known but equally amazing locations are the Saucepan and Canal Creek. It takes a bit more research and perhaps some extra hiking time to make it to these destinations, but having this amazing part of the world almost to yourself is a truly unique experience.



There are so many stunning spots to visit, you may well have them all to yourself.

Likewise, after visiting the tip, why not venture east to Five Beaches, where you can navigate the 4WD track along the pristine beach and unforgettable scenery. Up to date, local information is available from The Croc Tent, just before you reach the tip.



Local knowledge (plus lots of souvenirs!) are available at The Croc Tent, close to the tip.

7. Fishing enthusiasts, this one is for you!

Unlike highly populated areas where there is a limited supply of fish, there are many opportunities for fishing enthusiasts to catch something special at Cape York. It is well worth packing a rod or two!

Much of the fishing is off the beach, so suitable tackle and bait will be needed. If you fancy catching something big, you are in luck, with sharks not too far off the shore, make sure you have a suitable rig. Local advice and supplies are available at the tackle shop at Bamaga.



If you fancy a fish, throw in your rod and gear.

8. Remember your recovery gear

If you plan to go off the beaten track, make sure you come prepared. There are a number of water crossings along the Old Telegraph Track including the renowned Nolan's crossing, plus some steep inclines. Many people need assistance to come through the other side, and there's always a chance that you might be the one needing help.

There are often plenty of people available to help, but it is good etiquette to have your own gear. Snatch straps, winch and recovery points and max tracks (or similar) and are basic gear that you should consider taking. Make sure that you know how to use it safely, too!



Remember your recovery gear...it might be you that needs to be rescued.

9. Kids are welcome

Children love adventure, and a trip to Cape York is the true adventure of a lifetime. Kids will love seeing the red dirt (and feeling it between their toes!), playing in water holes, exploring the bush and camping under a crystal clear sky full of stars.

School-aged children, in particular, will learn all about the history of the Old Telegraph Track, why it was constructed in the 1800s, and enjoy swinging from ropes at many of the obstacles (giving parents plenty of time to plan their approach!).

There are plenty of families making the trip to Cape York, and kids love getting back to nature and exploring such remote and untouched country.



The water holes are full of pure, freshwater.

10. Take your time

Finally, make sure you allow enough time to fully appreciate and enjoy the wonders of Cape York. It is a long way to the top, and as such, some stops might be overnights. But many locations warrant longer stays – 2 or 3 nights, or even a week. The more time you have, the more you'll be able to enjoy the atmosphere of Cape York.

If you don't have as much time as you would like, perhaps only select a few key locations to visit. This would be a better option than rushing to get everywhere and not feeling like you have experienced anything properly. It's a great excuse to plan a return trip in the future, there's always more to see!

Do you plan on visiting the tip of Australia?