

BOWEN

The Whitsundays



4 day self drive itinerary

Bowen offers families the perfect getaway, combining true relaxation with coastal adventures that will keep you wanting more and there is something for all the family. Fly into the Whitsunday Coast Airport and hire a car to travel to Bowen, just 45 minutes to the north.

Driving? Bowen is halfway between the major centres of Mackay and Townsville – just a 2-hour drive from each.

Travelling families will be thrilled by the unique charm and country hospitality of Bowen, along with its stunning beaches, lookouts, bushwalks and fresh seafood and other produce.

DAY 1 – Welcome to Bowen

Morning

8am Head north on the Bruce Highway to Bowen

11am *Big Mango* only 5km from the town centre on the Bruce Highway. You will have time for a selfie near this famous landmark – the kids will love it as much as the millions before them. Cast your eyes to the north where you will see glittering water and seagrass flats - catching your first glimpse of Bowen.

11.30pm Visit the *Big Mango Visitor Information Centre* where your delicious Bowen mango sorbet awaits. While there, have a chat with the friendly staff and volunteers and pick up your copy of the latest edition of the Bowen and Collinsville Visitor Guide. The map in the centre will be a handy companion over the next four days. Free time for some souvenir shopping at the centre.

12pm Follow the highway north veering right into Bowen. Head to the top of *Flagstaff Hill* where you will start to get a view of what the next few days have in store. Take in the views of the Bowen township and look out over the islands that make up the top of the Whitsunday group. You can't miss Gloucester Island when looking out past the lighthouse. Gloucester Island, which includes the likes of Armit Island and Saddleback Island. First seen and named 'Cape Gloucester' in 1770, it is part of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. These views make the perfect backdrop for a photo, so ensure your camera is handy and on panorama.

Afternoon

12.45pm *Bird's Fish Bar* Take a short drive down to the Bowen Marina where you will spot the trawlers and fishing boats. Enjoy perfectly cooked and fresh seafood while taking in the sea breeze in their outdoor dining area overlooking the harbour.

Your lunch: **Tropical Pack** with fresh Spanish Mackerel, a delicious pineapple fritter and freshly cooked chips whilst sipping an ice-cold beer or wine overlooking the marina. (playground for the kids)

2pm On the way to your accommodation at *Horseshoe Bay Resort*, it's time to check out the historical murals painted by several well-known artists. Check the guidebook you picked up from the visitor centre for the best route around town to get all 28 of them.

3pm *Horseshoe Bay Resort*- Check in to your site overlooking the bay. Now time for dip in the calm ocean at Grays Bay before dinner.

Evening

5.30pm Sunset Cocktail at *The Cove Restaurant*. Choose your meal from Asian fusion menu. Pinch yourself for a reminder you are on holiday in paradise. Exhale... and take in the stunning sunset over the Grays Bay while the kids frolic on the granite boulders of Grays Bay.

For future accommodation options, check out the list on pages 49 and 50 of the Bowen and Collinsville Visitors Guide.

DAY 2 – A day at the Beach

7am *The Café at Horseshoe Bay* – your morning coffee awaits! Take in the fresh ocean breeze while enjoying a big hearty breakfast featuring local produce.

8am Stroll across the carpark and step onto the multiple award-winning Horseshoe Bay. Take a leisurely hike up to the *Rotary Lookout* for a different perspective of the bay and views stretching over the cape. Turn left after your descent from the lookout for more spectacular views at the World War 11 Radar site.

FREE TIME Once back at the beach, it'll be time for a swim or snorkel. Bowen is one of the only places in Queensland with coral reef accessible while walking in directly from the beach. Swimming out to the right you will find Bywa – the underwater sculpture. Bywa means 'waterspout' and symbolises the story that waterspouts are the vessels that carry marine animals into the heavens for the spirits and ancestors to feed on. Today, many local sea creatures have made the sculpture home.

Pick up some take-away lunch from *The Café*, ready to explore the farming area of Bowen.

3pm Drive north over the Don River Bridge and explore the Delta area. On your drive you will notice Bowen has a large horticulture industry, producing a diverse range of fruit and vegetables. Mangoes, tomatoes, melons, pumpkins, chillis, corn, beans just to name a few. No wonder Bowen is known as Australia's salad bowl of the north.

5.30pm Dinner time already! beach BBQ? There are barbecues and picnic tables at most of our beaches. Pick up some supplies from IGA and make your way to Rose Bay.

DAY 3 – Explore Bowen's History

Morning

7am Coffee first!! *Cuppas on the Go*, just order on their app and collect at the window and your good to go for the day.

7.20am take a morning stroll along Bowen's 150-year-old *HISTORIC JETTY* at the Front Beach right in the centre of town. Stretching 750m into Edgumbe Bay, providing a safe dock for tugboats that assist the coal ships in the North. Wind back a few years, however, and the jetty was a hive of activity, sending out meat, livestock, coal and salt to other domestic ports. Keep your eyes peeled for our local family of Dugong feeding on the seagrass. Most are lucky enough to spot a turtle or 2 popping up for a breath.

Front Beach, you will also find the 'little mango' – and an information booth manned by friendly volunteers. See the picture boards featuring information about the movie *Australia* that was shot in Bowen, starring Nicole Kidman and Hugh Jackman.

Walk to the *Catalina Memorial* an interpretive display dedicated to the flying boats that were stationed in Bowen during World War II.

9.30am *Waterpark* Let the kids cool down. Just a short stroll from the Jetty entrance.

10.30am *Bowen Historical Museum*. The friendly volunteers here will guide you through the treasure trove of Bowen history.

Walk through the little cottage, the kids won't believe that this was lived in by a family of yesteryear. (See page 24 of the Visitor Guide)

Afternoon

12pm *Jochheims Pie Shop* - In keeping with the Hugh Jackman theme there is a big meaty pie waiting for you. Hugh Jackman who was a regular customer while on location in Bowen to film the movie in 2007. Therefore, the pie named in his Honor (See page 24 of the Visitor Guide)

While in the CBD you will notice the very wide streets. In the 1960's, Bowen was destined to be the Capital of North Queensland.

2pm Head to the *Summergarden Theatre* at Queen's Beach.

This art-deco style building is featured on page 9 of the Visitor Guide. With state-of-the art equipment, this is the oldest continuously operating cinema in Queensland. Say hi to the owner, Ben, who has operated the theatre for more than 60 years. Hugh and Nicole were also very comfortable here with on location.

Evening

5.30 *The Grand View Hotel* on the main street – Choose from an al la carte style menu. With waterfront views, enjoy live music, fresh local produce.

DAY 4 – Day trip to Collinsville or Airlie Beach

Option 1 – Collinsville, Heart of the Whitsunday's Outback

7am Grab your visitor Guide for the approximately 1-hour drive to the Heart of the Whitsundays Outback, Collinsville. (information about Collinsville starts on page 35, there is a town map on page 41)

Collinsville is at the foothills of the Clarke Ranges and is your quintessential outback town boasting country hospitality and a rich past. Leaving Bowen, you will enjoy a scenic drive past farmlands and mango orchards teeming with wildlife.

8am Arriving in Collinsville you will see reminders of the town's coal mining and pastoral history. The Collinsville information centre is the perfect place to stop for a chat and a look around. The building itself is a piece of country history. Don't forget to ask about the 'scratchings on the wall'

10am Morning tea is unbeaten at the *Collinsville Bakery*. The Red Velvet cake is a must! Though the kids will devour the chocolate covered donuts.

While in town, stroll around and look for the historical mining murals and heritage signs that will provide an insight into the lives of the region's early settlers.

12pm There's an "Its 5 O'clock somewhere" feeling coming on! The Collinsville *Workers Club* has a Workers Beef Burger on the menu that is sure to satisfy the whole family. For an amazing insight into the history of coal mining and the relationship the miners had with the pit ponies, pop up stairs to Collinsville's latest tourist attraction *The Pit Pony Experience*. Centred around a life size Collinsville Pit Pony sculptured in bronze, the Pit Pony Experience acknowledges the contribution from the

community on a donors wall located behind the horse. Don the headphones to be taken back in time, listen firsthand to the miners explain a day in their life. Wearing the wife's underwear to work is mentioned more than once, find out why.

3pm The Historic *Bowen River Hotel* is worth the detour on the way back to Bowen. Situated on Strathmore Station, 32 kms from Collinsville. Built in the 1860's it has many stories to tell. Have a chat with the publican for some firsthand local stories. Many a story across the bar has been told of the resident friendly ghost. The chitter chatter on the drive home from the kids will be full of excited memories from the day. History lesson- TICK!

4.30pm Travel to Bowen, Pick up for seafood platter from Rynns Seafood and take in the sunset at the bay.

Option 2 – Airlie Beach and the Whitsunday Islands

7.30am Breaky on the Go.

Airlie Beach is the gateway to the 74 Whitsunday Islands – this vibrant town is just one hour's drive south of Bowen.

Book your tour at the Bowen Visitor Centre.

8.30am check in for *Sealink's Big Island Tour*, recommended for families big and small. The whole family will enjoy the spacious decks with 3 to choose your spot for the day. This Scenic tour will take you past many of the Whitsunday Islands and on to the world-famous Whitehaven Beach on Whitsunday Island.

6pm Last night in Bowen with time to explore any of the dining recommendations on pages 43 and 45 of the Bowen and Collinsville Visitor Guide.

Wishing you a safe journey home and look forward to your next visit where your real beachside holiday awaits.

