



BOWEN

The Whitsundays

YOUR SELF-DRIVE ITINERARY

Bowen offers mature-aged travellers the perfect getaway, combining true relaxation with coastal adventures that will keep you wanting more.

You can fly into the Whitsunday Coast Airport and hire a car to travel to Bowen, just 45 minutes to the north.

Or if you are driving your own car or RV, or towing a caravan, Bowen is halfway between the major centres of Mackay and Townsville – just a 2-hour drive from each.

Grey nomads 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



As you approach Bowen from the south, keep your eyes peeled as you travel through cane fields and rainforest topped mountains. Just before arriving in Bowen, you will spot the iconic Big Mango only 5km from the town centre.

Stop and get a selfie near this famous landmark and then cast your eyes to the north where you will see glittering water and seagrass flats - catching your first glimpse of Bowen.

Visit the Big Mango Visitor Information Centre for a delicious Bowen mango sorbet - 100 percent natural and available all year round. While there, have a chat with the friendly staff and volunteers and pick up a 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.



Next, head into Bowen and drive up to the top of Flagstaff Hill. From here you can see what the next few days are all about. Take in the views of the Bowen township and look out over the islands that make up the top of the Whitsunday group. These views make the perfect backdrop for a photo, so ensure your camera is handy.

After a short drive down to the Bowen Marina, you will spot the trawlers and fishing boats. On Henry Darwen Drive, you will find Bird's Fish Bar with the freshest seafood unloaded from the boats daily. Enjoy perfectly cooked and fresh seafood while taking in the sea breeze in their outdoor dining area overlooking the harbour.



Bowen has several accommodation options and there is something for every budget. If you are towing a caravan, Horseshoe Bay Resort is an excellent choice and it is only a short stroll to the beach.

Once checked in, you may like to enjoy a dip in the ocean at Gray's Bay, followed by dinner at The Cove Restaurant where you can relax and take in the stunning sunset over the bay. Another great choice for accommodation is Rose Bay Resort - absolute beachfront.

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

Day 2 - Home of Secluded Beaches



The Café at Horseshoe Bay overlooks the pristine waters of the bay. Relax, take in the salt breeze while enjoying a scrumptious breakfast featuring local produce. You may even want to go back for lunch!

Bowen is one of the only places in Queensland where you can snorkel the fringing reef directly off the beach.

As you stroll across the carpark you will step onto the multiple award-winning Horseshoe Bay. If you are feeling energetic and like to keep fit, you may like to take a bush walk to the top of Rotary Lookout to get a different perspective.

Once back at the beach, you can go for a swim or snorkel. Bowen's diverse fringing coral reef is accessible from the beach and just 50 metres off the beach, you will find Bywa – the underwater sculpture. Bywa means 'waterspout' and symbolises the indigenous 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. Serious snorkelling will definitely build up your appetite!



As well as Horseshoe Bay, there are seven other beaches to choose from. Check out page 5 of the Visitor Guide you picked up at the Big Mango Visitor Information centre. Pick up some take-away lunch from one of Bowen's Cafes and enjoy exploring. Kings Beach is an off-leash dog friendly beach so if you have brought your fur baby on holidays, head for a stroll at Kings Beach. On your drive you will notice Bowen has a large horticulture industry, producing a diverse range of fruit and vegetables. Did you know Bowen is known as Australia's salad bowl of the north?

For dinner, if you would like a relaxed evening on the beach and dinner with a view, there are barbecues and picnic tables at most of our beaches. Pick up some supplies and make your way to Rose Bay.

Day 3 - Explore Bowen's History



We suggest taking a morning stroll along Bowen's historic jetty at the Front Beach right in the centre of town. This jetty is 750m long and more than 150 years old.

It stretches 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. Today the jetty is the perfect spot for a walk, to throw a line or to spot a turtle.

Grab a coffee and breakfast treat from Cuppa's on the Cape, a van set up daily across the road from the jetty.



At the Front Beach, you will also find the 'little mango' - and an information booth manned by friendly volunteers. Just past that, you will find the Catalina Memorial (see page 24 of Visitor Guide), an interpretive display dedicated to the flying boats that were stationed in Bowen during World War II.

Also at the Front Beach, you will find information about the movie Australia that was shot in Bowen, starring Nicole Kidman and Hugh Jackman.

If you are ready for lunch after all of this, head into our CBD and grab a bite to eat at Jochheims Pies - the home of the famous Jackman Pie - in honour of actor Hugh Jackman who was a regular customer while in Bowen to film the movie in 2007. (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. A history lesson on Bowen is not complete without a trip to Bowen's local museum. The friendly volunteers here will guide you through the treasure trove of Bowen history. (See page 24 of the Visitor Guide)



Next take out the Bowen Visitor Guide again and refer to page 10 and check out the mural map. Bowen's unique history and culture is told through 27 murals that adorn buildings through the town.

In the afternoon, 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. After the movies, it is time for dinner so check out one of the pubs in the main street - they all offer great meals at reasonable prices.



Day 4 - Take a day trip to Collinsville or Airlie Beach

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

Information about Collinsville starts on page 35 of the Visitor Guide and there is a town map on page 41.

Known as the heart of the Whitsundays Outback, 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 fruit orchards teeming with wildlife. Arriving in Collinsville you will see reminders of the town's coal mining and pastoral history. First stop into the iconic Collinsville Bakery for a breakfast.

The Coalface Experience at the Collinsville Workers Club will give you an insight into the history of coal mining and the relationship the workers had with the pit ponies. 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.

Collinsville's latest tourist attraction is the Pit Pony Experience which celebrates the lives of Australia's last working mine Pit Ponies. 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.

The Historic Bowen River Hotel is situated on Strathmore Station, 32 kms from the mining town of Collinsville. Country town hospitality with the menu to match. Enjoy lunch and take in the historic building – built in the 1860's it has many stories to tell.

Option 2 – Airlie Beach and the Whitsunday Islands

Airlie Beach is the gateway to the 74 Whitsunday Islands – and this vibrant town is just one hour's drive south of Bowen. There are plenty of options to visit the islands and the famous Whitehaven Beach.

If you are into adventure, you may want to take a trip on Ocean Rafting. If it is more relaxed day that you are after, check out Sealink's Big Island Tour. This is on a very comfortable large vessel and the lunch is scrumptious. It will take you around the islands and to Whitehaven where you can swim in the ocean and dip you toes into the silica sand.

Other options for a day trip from Airlie Beach include a full-day Great Barrier Reef Adventure or a day trip to Hamilton Island.

The best way to decide which trip suits you is to ask the friendly team at the Bowen Visitor Information Centre who can also book all of your Airlie Beach tours.

There is also information about tours available on pages 43 and 45 of the Bowen and Collinsville Visitor Guide.

As you return to Bowen, refresh at your accommodation and make your way into town - let the Grand View Hotel take care of dinner. This grand historic pub has been fully refurbished and overlooks Bowen's Front Beach.