



BOWEN

The Whitsundays

Self-Drive Itinerary

Bowen offers families 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, Bowen is halfway between the major centres of Mackay and Townsville – just a 2 hour drive from each.

Mum, Dad and the kids will be thrilled with the diversity of activities and fun-filled discoveries waiting around every corner in Bowen – the heart of secluded beaches.

The Heart of Secluded Beaches

discoverbowen.com.au

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. 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 per cent natural and available all year round. While there, have a chat with our friendly staff and volunteers and pick up a 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. The kids can enjoy a run around on the grassed area.

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 family 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 for families. There is something for every budget. Horseshoe Bay Resort is an excellent choice, it caters for all budgets with various styles of accommodation. 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.

For all accommodation options, check out the list on page 48 of the Bowen and Collinsville Visitors Guide.



DAY 2 – Heart 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.

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

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

There is also a park with swings for the kids to enjoy.



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 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 the map on pages 28 and 29 in 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?



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. The kids can enjoy the playground and beach, under your watchful eye, while you prepare the meal – a beautiful, picturesque spot to enjoy your barbeque dinner.

DAY 3 – Explore Bowen’s History



We suggest treating the kids to some time at the Bowen waterpark at the Front Beach. The kids will have a great time on the slides and can be dunked by the big bucket. Parents can sit back and enjoy the views as the water park is right on the waterfront. Grab a coffee and breakfast treat from Cuppa's on the Cape, a van set up daily across the road from the waterpark.

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 22 of Visitor Guide), an interpretive display dedicated to the flying boats that were stationed in Bowen during World War II.

The Bowen Jetty is over 150 years old and stretches 750 metres out into Edgum 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. Enjoy a stroll on the Jetty and see who is the first to spot some marine life.

As the kids are likely to be hungry after all that activity, 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 “Australia” in 2007. (See page 23 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 23 of the Visitor Guide)

Next take out the Bowen Visitor Guide and refer to page 9 and check out the mural map. Bowen's unique history and culture is told through 28 murals that adorn buildings through the town. A map is included on page 8 of the Visitor Guide.

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 to say goodbye to Bowen to take a short drive to Collinsville. You will be leaving with memories of our secluded beaches, awesome views, fringing reefs, delicious seafood and country hospitality.



DAY 4 – Collinsville, Heart of the Whitsunday's Outback



Start the day early and head to Collinsville. This historic mining town is located 85km to the west of Bowen and is a 45-minute drive.

Information about Collinsville starts on page 41 of the Visitor Guide and there is a town map on page 47.

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.



As you return to Bowen, refresh at your accommodation and make your way into town - there are several options for dinner in Bowen, including historic hotels and restaurants.