

GUIDE TO QUEENSLAND RAIL TRAVEL JOURNEYS

Queensland Rail Travel is the long-distance passenger operating entity of the Queensland state government. Its trunk route is along coastal Queensland from Brisbane to Rockhampton, Townsville and Cairns. It also operates three long routes reaching into inland Queensland. These inland routes carry meagre patronage, and hence there is speculation about whether they will survive.

BRISBANE – ROCKHAMPTON – TOWNSVILLE – CAIRNS

This is Queensland Rail Travel's main route. Five trains a week operate the full route, supplemented by additional trains Brisbane-Rockhampton, which are in turn supplemented by additional trains Brisbane-Bundaberg, which in turn are supplemented by additional local trains Brisbane-Gympie.

The Brisbane to Cairns trains are Diesel Multiple Units with tilt mechanism. Economy class is comfortable, Business class more so. In Business class, the seats convert to beds for the overnight portion of the trip. The train includes a buffet, but meals are included in the Business class fare.

Although this is called the North Coast line, there are almost no views of the coast.

Place	Km	Notes
Brisbane Roma Street, also known as Brisbane Transit Centre.	0	Terminus for interstate and Queensland long-distance passenger trains, and a through station for the busy electrified suburban train network. Ten platforms. Four tracks. Through a tunnel to -
Brisbane Central	1	The main station for suburban trains. Six platforms. Through a longer tunnel to -
Fortitude Valley	2	Major shopping area and Chinatown, reflected in Chinese language signage.
Bowen Hills	4	Interchange station.
	6	Queensland Rail Citytrain's major yards on the western side. Ferry Grove line junctions via a flyover over the yards. Four tracks continue.
Albion	6	Inner suburbia.
Woolwin	7	
Eagle Junction	8	The single track Doomben branch goes off.
Airport Junction	9	The Airport branch (mixture of single and double track) goes off. This branch is privately owned, but, for all practical purposes integrated into the QR Citytrain network. The significance is that the company financed the branch, and now bears the financial risk of operation.
Northgate	11	Shorncliffe branch goes off. Four tracks reduce to three tracks.
Lawnton	27	Three tracks increase to four tracks. Bridge over Pine River.
Petrie	28	The new Kippa-Ring branch goes off. The junction features a flyover. Four tracks reduce to two.

Caboolture	51	End of suburban area.
Beerburrum	65	Two tracks reduce to single track. But, this line is still very busy with many local passenger trains, long-distance passenger trains and freight trains. Crossing loops at every station.
Glasshouse Mountains	72	The striking feature of the Glasshouse Mountain rise up steeply on the western side of the line.
Nambour	105	End of frequent local passenger train service.
Gympie North	174	End of infrequent local passenger train service. This station is on a deviation to improve curvature and gradients, but is some distance from the town. Hence QR operates a connecting mini-bus service. Old goldmining town.
Maryborough West	263	This station is on deviation to improve curvature and gradients. Walkers, a railway rolling stock manufacturer, is in Maryborough.
Bundaberg	351	Significant town – centre of sugar industry.
		Bridge over Burnett River
North Bundaberg	352	The line goes along a street for a short distance.
Gladstone	529	Major industrial centre. Major port for coal exports. Control of the railway changes here from Queensland Rail to Aurizon. The railway is now double track. There is heavy coal traffic.
Rocklands	633	Junction for the direct line to the west, over which the coal trains operate. Control of the railway reverts from Aurizon to Queensland Rail.
Rockhampton	639	Major city. End of electrification. The railway traverses the city of Rockhampton via a section of street running. Alexandra Bridge over the Fitzroy River.
		Fairly uninteresting country. Six kilometres before Sarnia, Aurizon's double-track, electrified, coal railway and a narrow-gauge sugar tramway both run parallel.
Sarnia	927	
Mackay	959	Major city. Centre of sugar industry.
Proserpine	1085	Centre for access to Whitsunday Coast and islands.
Bowen	1150	Significant town. Another major coal export port.
Durroburra to Kali	1159 - 1164	A short section of double track, and Aurizon control, exists, mainly for heavy coal traffic.
Home Hill	1249	
		Bridge over Burdekin River.
Ayr	1260	
Stuart	1331	Junction for Great Northern Railway to Mt Isa. Double track commences.
Townsville	1341	Major city. After leaving the station, single track resumes and the railway runs along the side of the street for a short distance.
		Flat, but fertile and well-populated sugar-growing district.
Cairns	1681	Major city and major tourist centre.

BRISBANE – TOOWOOMBA – ROMA – CHARLEVILLE

A locomotive-hauled train, offering Economy class seats only. Pre-packed meals are provided to passengers.

Place	Km	Notes
Brisbane Roma Street, also known as Brisbane Transit Centre.	0	Terminus for interstate and Queensland long-distance passenger trains, and a through station for the busy electrified suburban train network.
Brisbane Central	1	After departure from Brisbane Roma St, the train undertakes an extraordinary route. It leaves in the wrong direction and goes north through Brisbane Central, the main station for suburban services. It continues through tunnels to Fortitude Valley, then turns south past the Exhibition and passes through Brisbane Roma St a second time. This is necessary because the country platform at Brisbane Roma St is badly placed to access the Western line.
Brisbane Roma St	4 / 0	The line to the southern suburbs, Gold Coast and Sydney junctions here. The Western line is a four-track, electrified line.
Toowong	4	A major shopping centre is built over the station.
Sherwood	11	Briefly a five-track line.
Corinda	12	Junction for the cross-suburban line across to the Gold Coast line. This is sometimes used by local passenger trains when there are track closeds. Four tracks continue.
Darra	16	Junction for the Springfield branch. Four tracks reduce to two.
Redbank	27	Railway workshops on northern side of line.
Ipswich	39	A city in its own right. Centre for coal mining and industry.
Rosewood	56	End of suburban, electric trains. Ebenezer coal branch to the south. Two tracks continue. The railway from Ipswich to Grandchester was Queensland's first railway.
Grandchester	69	Single track commences through the Victoria tunnel.
Yarongmulu	76	Not a passenger station. Two tracks resume, but are separate and on different levels because of gradients.
Laidley	82	Conventional double track resumes, across the fertile Brisbane River valley.
Helidon	115	The foot of the Great Dividing Range. From here the line takes a tortuous, winding route as it ascends the Range. Basically it is an unimproved alignment from the line's opening in 1867. However, the mountain scenery is very impressive.
Toowoomba	161	A major city. A major station building, with the former refreshment rooms now operating as a restaurant. Toowoomba might seem at just the right distance from Brisbane to be ideal for a rail passenger service. Not so – because of the sinuous, mountain ascent since Helidon. In later years, Queensland Railways offered fast Rail Motors as far as Helidon, then connecting buses to Toowoomba. These no longer exist, in favour of through buses. For trains going beyond Toowoomba, a passenger

		could detrain at Helidon, get the bus to Toowoomba, have a leisurely meal and walk there, then be in plenty of time to rejoin his train having laboured up the roundabout railway.
Oakey	192	After departure from Toowoomba the Great Dividing Range is descended. The hills get lower and lower and soon disappear into the endless Western Plains.
Dalby	245	
Miles	371	Flat, dreary country.
Roma	512	
Mitchell	598	
Charleville	777	Royal Flying Doctor Service base and School of the Air base.

BRISBANE – ROCKHAMPTON – LONGREACH

A locomotive-hauled train, offering Economy seats and First class sleeping berths, and including a restaurant car.

The journey from Brisbane to Rockhampton is described above. This table takes up the description from Rockhampton onwards.

Place	Km	Notes
Rockhampton	0	Major city. One track. Electrified. Track controlled by Queensland Rail.
Rocklands	8	Junction for direct west to south connection used by coal trains. Two tracks. Electrified. Track controlled by Aurizon. Heavy coal traffic from this junction.
Tunnel	84	There used to be a tunnel here, but now this is just a name. There are many branches to open pit coal mines.
Burngrove	202	End of double track.
Comet	232	
Nogoa	271	End of the heavy coal traffic. Track now controlled by Queensland Rail.
Emerald	273	End of electrification.
Bogantungan	374	The line twists and turns to cross the Great Dividing Range. This station is the summit. At this point, unusually, the Great Dividing Range, is a long way inland.
Alpha	446	The nomenclature of the stations reflects the lack of settlement when the railway was first built.
Beta	467	
Barcaldine	587	
Longreach	695	Significant tourist centre – Australian Stockman’s Hall of Fame and Outback Heritage Centre, Qantas Museum and more.

TOWNSVILLE – MT ISA

A locomotive-hauled train, offering Economy class seats only. Pre-packed meals are provided to passengers.

Place	Km	Notes
Townsville	0	South along main coastal line – double track.
Stuart	10	Junction for Great Northern line (our line) – single track.
Reid River	57	Climbing to cross the Great Dividing Range. This line conveys nickel from Mt Isa to Townsville.
Mingela	92	Summit of the Great Dividing Range.
	116	Burdekin River bridge
Charters Towers	138	Significant town. Was a major gold mining centre.
Pentland	245	Across the endless Western Plains.
Hughenden	385	
Richmond	501	
Julia Creek	648	
Cloncurry	780	
Mt Isa	977	Important mining centre.

CAIRNS – KURANDA – FORSAYTH

The extremely beautiful section of line from Cairns ascending the steep, coastal escarpment is operated by Queensland Rail Travel. This section of railway is one of the scenic highlights of travel in Australia. It should not be missed.

The once week a service to the end of the line at Forsayth is operated by Cairns Kuranda Steam Limited (sic). This company was established to operate a steam train service on the coastal escarpment line, but has never done so. It now operates some freight shunting in the Cairns area, and the Savannahlander passenger train.

Place	Km	Notes
Cairns	0	The station is tucked away behind a shopping centre.
Freshwater	10	Some packaged tour operators use this station, rather than Cairns. The line travels through Cairns suburbs.
Redlynch	12	The great ascent of the Great Dividing Ranges commences. Very soon there are sweeping views of the coastal plains below. There are 13 tunnels on this section. The line climbs 200 metres to Stony Creek.
Stony Creek	23	Trains stop on the curved bridge immediately in front of the Stony Creek Falls. There are two tunnels on the next section.
Barron Falls	31	Trains stop to view the Falls and the view.
Kuranda	33	Attractive station in an attractive town. The town comes alive when the first tourist trains arrives in the morning and closes when the trains depart.
		Continuation for once-weekly Savannahlander
Myola	38	The climb is completed, but the attractive country continues.
Mareeba	75	
Arriga Junction	93	Beyond this point, the line is lightly laid and maintained, but “fit for purpose” for the light axle load Rail Motors used.

Dimbulah	117	Trains stop for refreshments in this small town. This line was originally a private line to serve mineral mines. Across a spur of the Great Dividing Range.
Almaden	194	Former junction to the once rich mineral centre of Chillagoe. Overnight stop on the forward journey.
Bullock Creek	246	Trains stop for refreshments. Line climbs in and out of valleys.
Mount Surprise	302	Overnight stop on the return journey.
Einasleigh	357	
		Approaching Forsayth, the line runs through the Delaney River Gorge - in the bed of the river. Trains do not run in the wet season.
Forsayth	423	The terminus is a tiny town.

NORMANTON – CROYDON

This train is a real anomaly. The line is isolated from all other railways. The service once provided a genuine passenger role in an isolated area. But now, it is purely a tourist operation. It uses a vintage Rail Motor. It only operates once a week, when it is incorporated into the schedules of various tourist operators.

The line operates across flat, almost featureless landscape. Tourists enjoy the isolated outback feeling.

Place	Km	Notes
Normanton	0	
Clarina	17	
Glenmore	22	
Haydon	62	
Rail Motor Stop no. 1	72	
Blackbull	91	The trains stop for refreshments here.
Croydon	152	

BRISBANE – GOLD COAST

This route is operated by Queensland Rail Citytrain

Place	Km	Notes
Brisbane Central	0	The main station for suburban trains. Six platforms. Through a tunnel to -
Brisbane Roma Street, also known as Brisbane Transit Centre.	1	Terminus for interstate and Queensland long-distance passenger trains, and a through station for the busy electrified suburban train network.
		Merivale Bridge over the wide Brisbane River – impressive views. Two dual-gauge tracks over the bridge.
South Brisbane	3	Until 1978 when the bridge over the Brisbane River was built, the interstate line terminated here.
		The Brisbane Convention Centre complex is alongside and partially built over the railway. The Southbank Parklands are nearby.

Southbank	4	Station for Southbank parklands and (via a pedestrian bridge over the Brisbane River) for Queensland University of Technology, Botanic Gardens and southern CBD.
Park Road	5	Major junction (five platforms) for suburban trains and for freight trains to the Port of Brisbane (the latter via a large flyover.)
		A double track, electrified, narrow gauge line. In addition, alongside there is the dual gauged interstate line which is actually now mainly used by northbound electric trains from the Gold Coast.
Salisbury	13	Australian Rail Track Corporation's line from Sydney and the southern states comes in.
		Three tracks continue.
Kuraby	22	Double track from here.
		The line twists and turns through the southern suburbs.
Beenleigh	40	Terminus for suburban trains.
Ormeau	53	The original line between Beenleigh and the Gold Coast was very foolishly closed in 1964, just as the area was starting its population boom. Admittedly, the line twisted and turned, but it could have been upgraded. A completely new line therefore had to be built, at great expense. The first portion to Helensvale opened in 1996 and this has gradually been extended.
Coomera	60	This section, including a long bridge over the Coomera River, is single track, but this is currently being duplicated, in time for the Commonwealth Games for the Gold Coast in April 2018.
Helensvale	68	Double track resumes. Interchange for the Gold Coast tramway.
Nerang	76	
Robina	85	
Varsity Lakes	89	Plans are underway to extend the Gold Coast railway further south to Coolangatta on the Queensland/NSW border.