

Cape Tribulation Tropical Research Station

ABOUT US:

Cape Tribulation, on the Coral Sea off far-north Queensland, Australia, is about 120Km north of Cairns, at 16 S, 145E (about the same latitude as Costa Rica but in the S hemisphere). It is in the Daintree tropical lowlands, considered to be the “jewel” of the Australian Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. This is a very special area of rainforest sandwiched between the coastal fringing reef (and the Great Barrier reef) and the coastal mountain range (which rises to over 1000 meters (3,000 feet)). The area has a wide variety of habitats from coastal reefs to tropical rainforest. The Research Station is a research and conservation organisation that specialises in lowland tropical ecosystems, in particular those of the Daintree lowlands, and has been in operation for over 16 years. We are non-affiliated, and funded by the not-for-profit, tax-exempt AUSTROP Foundation.

The Station provides research facilities, full accommodation and access to forest and coastal environments. We have a very wide range of research equipment, appropriate to supporting a wide variety of research activities. You may contact The Station Director for more information regarding available equipment and materials.

The Station is also home to a resident flying fox colony (unreleasable animals), whose inhabitants do “ambassadorial” (ambassadorial) duties at the Bat House visitor center. In addition to greeting visitors, our bats serve as subjects for endless amusement, speculation, and the occasional psychological or behavioural study.

ABOUT RESEARCH:

The Daintree tropical lowland forests, wetlands and shorelines present an inexhaustible array of potential research projects, from the very long term (eg plant phenology, micrometeorology) to the short term (HPLC analysis of ant gland contents). The Station is well equipped (2 aircon labs, extensive field equipment, HPLC, GC, Gel

Electrophoresis, microscopes, histological facilities, and so on). The only limitations are the imagination and capabilities of the researcher. Accommodation is in light and airy bunkhouse style buildings. Food is plentiful and we are proud to boast a wide variety of cooking styles and menus (The Station is not called "Cape Tribulation Cooking Camp" for nothing!).

The Station does not have a **formal intern** program schedule (after all we primarily exist to facilitate research). It is impossible to be specific as to what projects will be in progress at the Station, but there will certainly be something new and different! We do research year-round; whether a specific project is available depends on the idiosyncrasies of the weather, plants, animals and funding authorities (usually us!).

We can also accommodate student groups up to a maximum of 20.

Previous research has included:

- *development of techniques for assisted regeneration of rainforests;
- *development of appropriate technology for living in the wet tropics (particularly energy conservation);
- *productivity, phenology and pollination of cluster figs;
- *ecology of flying foxes (fruit bats) and their relatives;
- *conservation biology of flying foxes - particularly development of non-lethal deterrent systems (applied science/electrical engineering),
- *rainforest and reef conservation
- *chemical analysis of plant and insect materials
- *Weed control technologies
- *plus a variety of projects by researchers inside and outside the Station.

Current research includes:

- *developing GPS collars for flying foxes,
- *developing GIS systems to go with this,

- *hydrology of the Cape Tribulation basin,
- *development of instrumentation for various projects (we can use ALL the computer programmers and electronics engineers that might wish to come!!).
- *analysing the toxins of stinging trees.
- *recovery of littoral vegetation following removal of exotics.
- *weed control
- * Energy use efficiency

*Great Barrier Reef work - though close to our heart, this project has been put on hold for the time being because of high water turbidity levels on the fringing reef—largely as a result of prawn trawling (shrimp boats).

There are also a number of tourism-based projects available - mostly conducting surveys of tour operators and tourists, and analysing the responses. We are particularly interested in people's attitudes relating to the natural environment and conservation.

ACCOMMODATION

The Research Station can accommodate up to 20 in 4 comfortable, if basic, 2 room bunk houses (some double rooms are available for couples) . Showers have solar hot water (so hope the sun shines!!) and laundry facilities are available, toilets are composting toilets (use no water). Water is from a local spring (the best water you are likely to drink) - All meals are provided, breakfast and lunch are self catered and dinner is a communal affair with everyone helping with preparation and cooking and cleaning up. Student groups fondly refer to this place as "Cape Tribulation Cooking Camp".

Power (mains-equivalent 240V ac) is produced primarily by solar 2.5 KW solar array with a diesel back-up generator.

We attempt to live 'gently' on the landscape and practice and demonstrate low impact 'sustainable' living.

ABOUT RESEARCHERS

Researchers are encouraged to contact the Station Director as soon as practical, especially as permits may be required from Queensland Department of the Environment, especially for research that must be performed outside of the Station and on neighbouring properties. You will also need to be aware of what facilities and equipment are locally available for your project.

Non-reusable and specialist items will either have to be supplied by the researchers or bought from the (very limited) Station supply.

Researchers will be encouraged to assist with meal preparation and clean-up, and general Station maintenance/cleaning (especially laboratories) –the Station does not have paid staff.

As part of the conditions for working at the Station, researchers are required to lodge a copy of any research outcomes with the Station for inclusion in the Station library.

About INTERNS and STUDENTS:

Internships and studentships must be one month's minimum duration to allow you time to get to grips with the local environment and subject material.

Both Students and Interns are involved in specific research projects, with the expectation that they will produce a short report on their project at the end of their stay. Interns have a higher volunteer component.

Interns may be working with visiting scientists, or they may be working by themselves under the supervision of the Director. The research projects may be new, or they may be projects on which previous interns or researchers have been working. Once again, project possibilities are very wide ranging, but the realities of the local environment and demands at the station may present certain limitations. We will work with

you on identifying feasible projects and research designs at the time that you contact us with a proposal. Flexibility is key, and conditions can change in less than a moments notice here in the tropics. It does help if you had an idea of a research area!

It is difficult to determine specifics of research projects in advance - weather and the Director's workload, so it is better if your project relates to something we are doing at the time.

About VOLUNTEERS:

Volunteers assist in research and Station activities: radio-tracking bats, counting figs, stomping grass for forest regeneration, constructing Station buildings, digging holes, and running the Bat House (Austrop's Visitor Center), or whatever else is necessary. They are our lifeblood! The normal stay is 2-3 weeks but extensions are available at the discretion of the Director (and are rarely refused).

Be prepared to be the only volunteer for a week or so. Self-motivation and independence are essential, but teamwork is essential when working with others.

You should NOT expect to be tagging around behind a learned scientist for the duration of your stay or have your own project - but it still will be a thoroughly worthwhile experience!

ABOUT MONEY:

AUSTRALIAN-BASED VOLUNTEERS, INTERNS, and STUDENTS must check with us about local rates before arrival, otherwise:

VOLUNTEERS pay \$A 35 per day for food (lots) and basic accommodation.

INTERNS pay \$A 45 per day - the difference is reflected in the fact that interns are also part-time volunteers, and are involved in specific research projects requiring input of staff time and equipment. This fee also

includes limited laboratory access (bench fees).

STUDENTS pay \$A 55 per day (they have a small volunteer component, the rest is research time). This includes laboratory access and materials (lucky you).

RESEARCHERS (Institution based researchers) pay \$A 70 per day, which includes accommodation and bench fees, in addition to accommodation and food.

OTHERS : Assistants and spouses accompanying researchers pay \$US 50 per day.

In cases where you may have REAL difficulty in meeting these charges, they should be negotiated BEFORE arrival.

BUT READ THIS.... we get asked if we can reduce rates for longer stays..

OK, (for an intern enquiry about fee reduction) I really can't do much - as the costs incurred by interns are seldom covered by the fees (lab time/ chemicals/ apparatus/ whatever) - in real terms - consider what \$US30 buys you in terms of accommodation AND 3 meals a day at home - never mind lab access and material costs!! Not a lot unless you are in a subsidised program. Backpackers hostels here are now charging 40 bucks a day (no food)....

I just checked with a couple of our US volunteers - their Unis charge students \$US40 per day - room and board - NO tuition, not much difference between them!!.

People considering stays longer than 3 months should contact the Director to negotiate rates. - that we CAN do.

**** NEVER EVER BRING NON-AUSTRALIAN DOLLAR TRAVELLER'S CHECKS !!!!! - THEY ARE SELDOM ACCEPTED, AS THE BANKS CHARGE A HEFTY EXCHANGE FEE FOR PROCESSING THEM. AUSSIE DOLLAR**

TRAVELLER'S CHECKS ARE FINE, AS ARE MAJOR CREDIT CARDS. **Not DEBIT CARDS**

(Some foreign PAPER currencies - (Euros, US Dollars, Pounds) are acceptable as the banks don't charge us for conversion) - no coins.

We would far prefer that fees be paid "up front" upon (or before) arrival.

If you are willing to pay by electronic funds transfer from overseas, the details are:

Acct: Australian Tropical Research Foundation

National Australia Bank
Front Street
Mossman 4873 Queensland

Swift Code NATAAU 3303 M

Acct # 084 830:79523-4272

ABOUT APPLYING:

First- look at the website, especially the "What's new?" pages which are/were fairly regularly updated (well, we do our best!). Look at the information on the Station itself and the current conservation activities - and if you decide that you would like to come here - please e-mail the Station with the approximate time and duration of your stay, whether you wish to be a volunteer, intern or student and some basic information about yourself and your interests.

** There is no application form needed - but if you have a CV (resume) you should PASTE it into the e-mail (please NO attachments!)** We will then confirm your acceptance. If you don't hear from us, just ask again - e-mails do get lost (OFTEN!) AND computer hard disks crash - especially in the tropics.

GETTING A VISA IS **YOUR** RESPONSIBILITY, and is not one that we

can help you with. In most cases a simple tourist visa is adequate, as you are not being paid to work here.

Try and AVOID applications for Student status and Occupational Training visas – whatever your University or College might require – the process of applying can cause considerable hassles, and often result in your abandoning your trip here. Besides they are unnecessary, unless you intend to stay more than 6 months, or you come from a country which does not readily obtain tourist visas to Australia.

Below is further information you may need to for you and, if so, what you should bring.

This info is in ADDITION to that on the website. <http://www.austrop.org.au>

ABOUT YOU (and us)

Volunteers, Interns and Students can be of any age, but preferably more than 20 yrs old (but we have had fantastic 17 yr olds...). A good command of English is very important.

To live peaceably here, it is essential for everyone to be capable of clear communication, as well as constructive confrontation. The Director needs to be made aware of any problems that arise, whether it be work or otherwise (I can't read minds!). Failure to be open can result in group dynamics that can be uncomfortable for everyone, and very destructive to the Station. You will need to be able to work closely with people (or alone) so... leave your personal problems at home.

Remember – there is always someone who travels with you – YOU!

As a visiting researcher said, "cleaning the Station toilets is also helping us save the rainforest"!

You **MUST** have a open and flexible attitude and be willing to actively contribute, even to the most mundane activity. Remember that

scientific research is NOT all about "lab coats and clipboards" - 99% is preparation!

PLEASE DO NOT EXPECT US TO FULFIL YOUR LIFELONG DREAMS! - this is **not** our role (that is, we are neither prepared nor equipped to help individuals find a direction in life - if you do find your direction as a result of visiting here - and that has happened often - then that's wonderful). We are a real, working, tropical research station. Our role is to work for the long-term survival of the environment, with particular reference to the local Daintree Lowland Rainforest environment. Your role is to assist us in doing that. Having pre-conceived notions of your role and of your experience here most often results in conflicts with this work. Your tasks could (and will) range from the terminally boring, mundane and strenuous, to quite exciting.

"Happy Mondays" are the Station days-off - where you are free to explore, rest and whatever.

If you are a musician - do bring your instruments - especially if they are portable - the Station does have a guitar and a few other instruments (no keyboards as yet). Bongos??.....well, no - the neighbours tend to have a low tolerance!

Backpacker Issues:

While you are with us, realise that your stay is limited and we request that you try to put the urge for the urban existence behind you for the duration of your visit. You will have plenty of opportunity for that sort of activity when you return home or after you finish your time with us.

Cape Tribulation has become the "backpackers' mecca" for Far North Queensland. This creates a number of serious problems for an environmentally-oriented research station such as ours - the "bright lights" are right next door, and exert a magnetic fascination on young urban volunteers and others. This can be very

disruptive of the Station's activities and role. To put it bluntly, we are trying to provide a model of a "sustainable" environmental lifestyle, and the backpacker establishments near our station are facilitating a lifestyle that is totally contradictory to our philosophy in many respects..

The station has general e-mail access, which you can use about 2x a week for free. The Station is NOT just another way-point in the backpacker circuit, and should not be considered as such.

.....

Please read this next section carefully, **PRINT IT OUT AND SAVE IT FOR FUTURE REFERENCE.**

If you are interested in coming to the station, the most important thing IS TO MAINTAIN CONTACT, so we can keep you updated on what is happening, AND, IF YOU DO DECIDE TO COME HERE - PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT YOU CONTACT US at least 2 WEEKS BEFORE YOU LEAVE YOUR HOME COUNTRY SO WE CAN BE SURE THAT WE KNOW WHEN YOU ARE ARRIVING (and WHEN you are leaving home. We also need to know your country of origin (e-mails do not tell us where you are coming from unless you spell it out for us)., and believe it or not, your sex – not all names give this away!!!!

In addition, we sometimes make requests that you get something for us that can't be obtained here in Australia — this is voluntary but greatly appreciated).

ABOUT CONTACTING US

Email is the preferred mode of communication and is about the ONLY way you can be guaranteed an answer.

Hugh@austrop.org.au

BUT if that doesn't work or it bounces (PLEASE SAVE THE BOUNCE NOTICES! - they help us fix the problems)
hugh@ledanet.com.au

If you apply by letter, send an international reply coupon (ask the Post Office) and a Self-Addressed-Envelope (not stamped – Canadian or US stamps aren't recognized by our postal service!). We are a small outfit and it is easy for correspondence to get lost (we also have a terrible postal mail system). If you don't hear, contact us again.

Cape Tribulation Tropical Research Station

**PMB 5 Cape Tribulation
Queensland 4873 Australia**

Phone (61 -this is the country code) 7 4098 0063, Fax by prior arrangement (the Station relies on solar power and cannot leave the fax on. Call us and ASK to send a fax.)

ABOUT PHONES

Cape Tribulation does NOT have mobile (cell-phone) service (thank heavens!!) – there are two public phones, and in cases of emergency, the Station phone is available. Buy a phone calling card when you arrive in Australia – they are cheap and offer good rates -

ABOUT PACKING:

The facilities are fairly spartan, but comfortable. This is the rainforest and the tropics, but relatively speaking the mosquito and sandfly density is really low.

Bring as little as possible! Don't turn up with 3 suitcases and a backpack. (it happens). You need rough clothes for working - (both long pants and shorts), bathing suit, warm top and track suit in winter, a set of clothes for social occasions and footwear (sandals/TEVAS are fine, flip-flops are no use), boots for that hike in the forest or heavy work, and a wide-brimmed hat (not a baseball hat). Bring your own mossie repellent (bug spray) and sunscreen if you have special requirements. If you intend to go on from the station, then bring what you need for that part of the trip.

Plus all the other stuff (library, walkman, 3000 CD's. – oh, and your clarinet)

IF IT IS WINTER HERE - JUNE-AUGUST... you might bring a **light** sleeping bag - the nights can get very cold, and you may need it as a extra cover over the blankets that the Station supplies.

TRANSPORT TO THE STATION

If you want cheap transport on your arrival, it is *** ESSENTIAL*** that you contact us when you arrive in Cairns - The backpacker bus pickup is usually at about 7.30 am. You MUST phone us about 6pm the night before, so we can expect you.

The Bus company is

Cape Tribulation Connections ,
4041 7447

– phone them when you arrive - tell them that you are volunteers for the Bat House. We will have to confirm that. Cost \$20 one-way. They'll tell you where and when to meet the bus.

Unfortunately, some of the backpacker establishments seem to have gone into "gouge" mode and have started signing up unsuspecting volunteers (who DIDN'T read this blurb!!!) for complete packages to Cape Trib - one pair got charged 120 dollars **each** for a trip that should have cost them \$20!!

NEVER BUY RETURN Bus or Ferry tickets - they are no cheaper, and prevent you from getting the cheaper return bus transfers (or a lift).

You get off at PK's Village (the nearby backpacker establishment) which is directly opposite the Bat House. **MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE PHONED US FIRST, SO THAT WE KNOW TO EXPECT YOU AND CAN COLLECT YOU.**

**** REPEAT! The most important thing is to maintain contact before you arrive, so we can keep you updated on what is happening.

An oft-repeated scene:-

Sweaty person arrives at Station with huge backpack.

"I'm Jake".

"Oh!"

"I contacted you 6 months ago!"

"I never heard back from you! Well we are presently full up - 25 Californian college students - guess you'll have to camp and come back in a week"

"^%*&%&*&^#%#&^!!!!!"

"Bye".

Make sure that this does not happen to you. We want you to have the opportunity to work and learn at our Station but advance and continual communication is essential !

Cheers,
Hugh Spencer
Director

Oh.... And insurance

We are covered by an extensive public liability insurance....but we'd far prefer you to provide your own travel insurance while here. Most University based intern and student programs have their own travel insurance systems – do ensure that yours is up to date. If you have issues, then it is usually far easier to claim on your own policy than wait for the Foundation policy to deal with it...