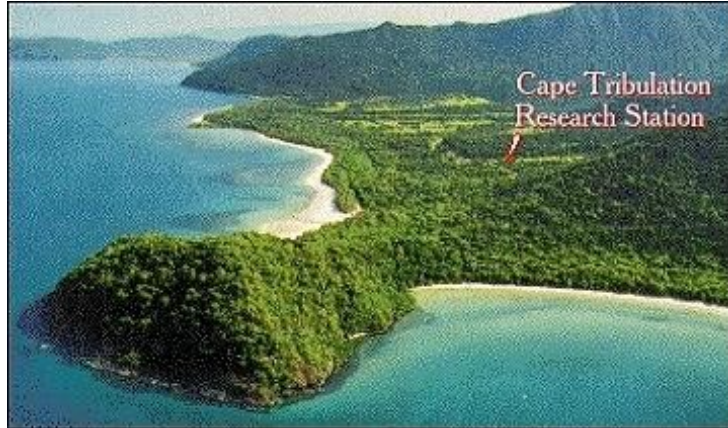


## ABOUT US

### *The Research Station*

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The Cape Tribulation Tropical Research Station is a research and conservation organization that specialises in lowland tropical ecosystems, in particular those of the Daintree lowlands, and has been in operation for over 22 years. The Research Station was established in 1988 by Hugh Spencer and Brigitta Flick in the wake of the Daintree Blockade (1984) which drew world attention to the plight of the area and to its highly vulnerable conservation status. The Research Station was set up to provide a platform for researchers interested in studying ecosystems in the lowland Wet Tropics and is dedicated to conserving this very fragmented ecosystem. There are research facilities (including two laboratories and a workshop), accommodation, and access to unique forest and marine environments.



The Research Station is operated by the Australian Tropical Research Foundation (AUSTROP), an independent, non-profit organization, founded in 1992. The Station is funded through operation of the Bat House Interpretation Center, as well as through fees for volunteers, interns, students, and researchers. In addition, AUSTROP receives grants from various sources, as well as charitable donations.

The Station is also home to a resident flying fox colony (unreleasable animals), whose inhabitants do “ambattadorial” (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.

### *Cape Tribulation*

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Cape Tribulation, on the Coral Sea off far-north Queensland, Australia, is about 120 km north of Cairns, at 16S, 145E (about the same latitude as Costa Rica but in the S hemisphere). Cape Tribulation is located in the Daintree National Park and the 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. This rainforest is 135 million year old, making it arguably **the oldest and most primitive rainforest in the world**. This area is often described as a tropical paradise ‘where the rainforest meets the reef’. Many of the species still here originated 120 million years ago when Australia was still part of the ancient landmass of Gondwana. The rainforest has a huge number of plants and animals, many of which are endemic to only that part of Australia (i.e. they occur no where else in the world). Despite this amazing diversity, this rainforest only represents 0.1% of Australian land. It is thus vital that we conserve this extremely small and vulnerable - but infinitely unique - environment.

## *Flora & Fauna*

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Unique flora and fauna exist in this part of the world including crocodiles, cassowaries, fruit bats and tree kangaroos. Many of these animals and some of the plants are threatened or endemic. Primary threats to this area are invasive species, particularly the introduction weeds, which have spread across wide areas. Unfortunately, in addition to the stunning scenery and unique wildlife, the area is known for significant loss of habitat for fauna, especially due to land clearing for 'development'.

The surrounding rainforest contains

- Over 3,500 vascular plant species;
- Australia's largest range of ferns and the world's largest concentration of ancient flowering plants;
- The highest number of endemic mammals of any region in Australia;
- Almost half of Australia's bird species;
- Nearly a quarter of Australia's frog species, more than 20 of which are endemic;
- A greater diversity of freshwater fish than any other region in Australia;
- Outstanding invertebrate diversity, including well over 60% of Australia's butterflies

(Source: Wet Tropics Region NRM Plan, Statement of Planning Intent - Rainforest CRC 2002)

## *Research*

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The Daintree tropical lowland forests, wetlands and shorelines present an inexhaustable array of potential research projects, from the very long term (e.g. 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.

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 exotic weeds
  - Weed control
  - Energy use efficiency – especially hydrocarbon-based refrigerating systems
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- 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 visitor's and tour operator's attitudes relating to the natural environment and conservation.

***About researchers***

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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 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) as 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, including published papers, with the Station for inclusion in the Station library.

***About interns and students***

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Internships and studentships must be one-month minimum duration to give you time to get to grips with the local environment and subject material. Both Students and Interns are involved in specific research projects, and will have to 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***

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Volunteers will assist in research activities and the daily running and maintenance of the Research Station, the Bat House and the 25 acre grounds; thereby contributing to the overall success of AUSTROP and its conservation aims.

Possible activities are:

- Helping out in the Bat House, interacting with visitors and flying foxes
- Feeding the resident bat colony
- Radio-tracking bats and other animals
- Removing invasive plants from rainforest plots
- Replanting native plant species
- Counting figs
- Stomping grass for forest regeneration
- Helping with the general upkeep of the facility
- Constructing Station buildings
- Whatever else is necessary!



The work that volunteers will undertake at the Station has international, national, and local significance. Volunteers will be directly helping to conserve the most ancient rainforest remnant in the world through revegetation. In addition, volunteers will be contributing to a thriving nature-based tourism industry that promotes global awareness of rainforest conservation issues. The Daintree rainforest receives more than half a million visitors each year, and many of these are young backpackers from North America, Europe and Australia. By instilling in them an appreciation of this unique environment through 'nature-based tourism', AUSTROP hopes to promote the national and international importance of conserving the rainforest.

Working conditions are normally quite pleasant. As we are in the tropics, winter days can be quite warm. Volunteer work may involve moderately strenuous activity, including digging and shifting rocks. Revegetation work can involve a lot of bending and kneeling.

Volunteers are our lifeblood! The normal stay is 2-3 weeks but extensions are available at the discretion of the Director (and are rarely refused).

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!

### ***Accommodation***

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The Research Station can accommodate up to 20 people in 4 cabin-style bunkhouses. The cabins are furnished with bunk beds, 2 or 4 persons per room. Some double rooms are available for couples. All linen, pillows and blankets are provided. The facilities are basic and fairly spartan, but comfortable. As it usually gets cool at nights, even in summer, you won't need air conditioning – but we do have fans.



Showers and toilets are located a short walk from the cabins; toilets are composting type (non-flushing) and represent a low environmental impact method of waste disposal. Water for the showers is **solar heated** so the availability of hot water is weather-dependent. Laundry can be done at the Station.

The water is from a local spring, and is the best water you are likely to drink. If it is very dry, we will get the water from a solar powered bore pump. 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".

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

**Electricity** at the Research Station is provided by a fairly large solar power system and a back-up generator. **However, electrical power is limited, so you will not be allowed to use hair dryers, curling irons, etc** during your stay at the Station. However small electronic devices (cameras etc) are fine, and recharging facilities (110V) are available (but most modern small devices nowadays are ‘universal’ – meaning that they work perfectly well on 240V as 110).

The station has general e-mail access, which you can use about 2x a week for free. 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. Calling cards are available from most newsagents in larger towns and at Cape Tribulation.

Keep in mind that while the Research Station will provide you with the necessities, you will certainly not be living in the same style that you are accustomed to at home! The Station is located in a rainforest environment - large monitor lizards (goannas), brush turkeys, bandicoots, and an assortment of other “locals” also call the station home. Despite screened doors and windows on your cabin, you may have insects, reptiles and small native rodents paying you the occasional visit in the evenings. **Don’t** keep edible materials in your room - there will be storage containers provided in the kitchen (and you will be spared gaping holes in your pack).

## *Free Time*

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"Happy Mondays" are the Research Station days off, when you are free to explore, rest, etc. Do bring your instruments if you are a musician - the Station does have a guitar, a piano and a few other instruments. Bongos...? Well no, the neighbours tend to have a low tolerance!

The Station has a collection of DVD's and videos, and there will be opportunities to watch these. There is a reasonably well-stocked library, for both fiction and non-fiction. **AUSTROP would be very grateful for the donation of books – especially RECENT University textbooks on biological and environmental matters.**

There are a number of trails and interpretative walks near to the Station – including the Station's own 'Regeneration Trail' as well as several very spectacular beaches. On the first day of your stay you will be encouraged to spend half the day exploring the area. Also, there are other activities available in the area – including horse riding, 'jungle surfing', sea kayaking, reef trips, etcetera. If you want to do these – please book only through the Bat House, do not do it independently (we can give a discount).

## *About packing*

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Bring as little as possible! Don't turn up with 3 suitcases and a backpack. (it happens). Curling irons, hair driers, every possible color arrangement of shirts and pants, six pairs of shoes, the kitchen sink, etc., are not necessary. The following list should give you an idea of what to bring:

- Beds and bedding (sheets, pillowslips, towel and blankets) are provided by the Station but a **light** sleeping bag is recommended in the winter (June-August) as the nights can get quite cold.
- Hat (with a wide brim all around for sun protection); forget the corks!
- Work clothing (items that can get dirty or torn). Cotton-polyester cargo pants are recommended over denim jeans because they dry much faster in the wet tropics. Include several short sleeve t-shirts and a long sleeve shirt – the locals favour shorts for work.
- Raincoat (lightweight and breathable); Rain ponchos (light weight) are good too (as air can flow underneath them).
- Flashlight and extra rechargeable batteries. The station can re-charge AA's. A headlamp is recommended over a handheld flashlight;
- A sweater or fleecy jacket and tracksuit pants for cool evenings (and it can get cool!)
- Sturdy sandals (e.g. Texas) - the ground around the Research Station is often muddy or rocky and the coral reef can be sharp.
- Covered footwear (sneakers are okay) and socks; Lightweight hiking boots if you plan to do trail walking
- Bathing suit
- Personal items/toiletries such as shampoo, soap, toothbrush and paste, feminine products, etc.
- Any medication that you might take and a copy of your prescription, including glasses or contacts.
- Own bug repellent or sunscreen if you have special requirements.

## ***About money:***

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Australian-based volunteers, interns and students must check with us about local rates before arrival, otherwise:

<b>Volunteers</b>	\$A 35 per day – for food (lots) and basic accommodation
<b>Interns</b>	\$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).
<b>Students</b>	\$A 55 per day - they have a small volunteer component, the rest is research time. This includes laboratory access and materials (lucky you).
<b>Researchers</b>	\$A 70 per day - which includes accommodation and bench fees, in addition to accommodation and food
<b>Others</b>	\$A 50 – for assistants and spouses accompanying researchers

In cases where you may have real difficulty in meeting these charges, they should be negotiated *before* arrival.

We can't reduce rates for longer stays, as the costs incurred by interns are seldom covered by the fees (lab time/chemicals/apparatus/etcetera). Consider what \$US30 buys you in terms of accommodation *and* three meals a day at home – never mind lab access and material costs! People considering stays longer than 3 months should contact the Director to negotiate rates - that we *can* do.

**Don't bring non-Australian-dollar Travellers Cheques! They are seldom accepted, as the banks charge a hefty exchange fee for processing them. Australian dollar travellers cheques are fine, as are major credit cards. No debit cards.**

Some foreign *paper* currencies - (Euros, US Dollars, Pounds) are acceptable, but the banks charge us for conversion (5%). Coins are not accepted.

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

## ***Insurance***

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We are covered by a extensive public liability insurance... but we'd far prefer you provided 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.

## ***About applying***

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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 please *paste* it into the e-mail (we prefer to have no attachments, and no docx files!). 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.

## ***About you (and us)***

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Volunteers, Interns and Students can be of any age, but preferably more than 20 yrs old (but we have had fantastic 17 year 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 an 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 expectations 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.

### ***Local 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 is NOT just another waypoint in the backpacker circuit, and should not be considered as such.

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Please read this next section carefully, **print it out and save it for future reference!**

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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. We also need to know your country of origin, 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***

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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), please send your email to:

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) 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.

## ***Transport to the Station***

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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**.

- Outside Cairns – Free call number: 1 800 838 757 (9 am to 5 pm)
- In Cairns: (07) 4032 0500 (until late)

You can organise the transport with them directly - but you *must* say that you are a volunteer at the Bat House, and tell them where you will be staying. You will be picked up outside your accommodation at sometime after 7 am. Usual cost is \$30 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 information!) for complete packages to Cape Trib - one pair got charged 120 dollars **each** for a trip that should have cost them \$30!

*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 we expect you and can collect you!***

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

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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