

MACKAY LAND-BASED FISHING



- 🪝 Local tips and tricks
- 🪝 Sustainable fishing
- 🪝 Mackay Net Free Zone

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The Mackay region is home to a diverse and exciting array of land-based fishing options, from purpose-built fishing pontoons to remote beach and creek accesses offering tranquility and solitude.

No boat, no worries - from bread-and-butter species like bream, whiting and flathead to the iconic barramundi, fierce sooty grunter, and hard-hitting mangrove jack, land-based fishing in the region will not leave you disappointed!

While all the locations listed here are outside of known crocodile habitats, crocs are unpredictable predators that can show up anywhere.



Always be croc wise and fish back from the water's edge. If in doubt, stick to pontoons, elevated rock walls or piers.

MAP AND LISTING ICON KEY



WALKING LOCATION



ARTIFICIAL REEF



DRIVING LOCATION



PLATFORM

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Bassett Basin | 11. Mouth of McCreadys Creek |
| 2. Carlyle St and Brisbane St Platforms | 12. Blacks Beach rocks |
| 3. Old Hospital Bridge Platform | 13. Seaforth Creek mouth |
| 4. Forgan Bridge Platforms | 14. Victor Creek |
| 5. Ron Camm Bridge rock bars | 15. St Helens Beach / Carpet Snake Point |
| 6. Horse and Jockey Road sand banks | 16. Illawong Beach |
| 7. Dumbleton Weir area | 17. McEwens Beach |
| 8. Melba House | 18. Sarina Beach |
| 9. Mackay Marina Wall | 19. The ledge |
| 10. North Wall Beach | 20. Dunrock Esplanade |

PIONEER RIVER

The Pioneer River is easily accessible to anglers and offers a variety of options, from deep rocky holes, bridge structures and artificial reefs to sand flats, yabbie beds and even freshwater options.

BASSETT BASIN

Bassett Basin can be accessed via Carr Street (at the eastern end of Martin Street). At low tide, much of this area is sand and there is little flow in what water remains, however, this is the ideal time to pump for bait as much of the area is yabbie bed. From mid-tide up, the Bassett Basin area connects the main Pioneer River flows with Vines Creek and can be an excellent spot to target flathead, bream and whiting in the cooler months. Tidal movement is the key to success in this spot.

Be wary of being cut-off by the rising tide, as it can come in surprisingly quickly. Fish the main channels for flathead and bream, but don't be afraid to cast right up into the shallow, freshly inundated yabbie beds for whiting. As an extra tip, look for arrow shaped impressions in the sand at low tide as these are flathead lies and show where these fish congregate once the tide comes in.



CARLYLE ST AND BRISBANE ST PLATFORMS

Within walking distance from each other, these platforms, complete with rod holders, allow anglers to access deep water out from the shallow rocky riverbank. A complex marine artificial habitat reef has been installed within casting distance of each platform. The artificial habitat reefs each contain one "ledge and cave" reef unit surrounded by four smaller "pyramid" reef units. Signage is in place with further details.

Try cut baits, prawns and yabbies for bream, cod and flathead or live baits and lures for barra, mangrove jack and fingermark.





OLD HOSPITAL BRIDGE PLATFORM

This 15m x 11m, L-shaped platform, complete with rod holders and seating, allows anglers to access deep water out from the shallow riverbank.

A complex marine artificial habitat reef has been installed approximately 10m north of the pier, within casting distance. The Bridge Road artificial habitat reef contains one "ledge and cave" reef unit surrounded by four smaller "pyramid" reef units. Signage is in place with further details.

Try cut baits, prawns and yabbies for bream, whiting, cod and flathead or live baits and lures for barra, mangrove jack and fingermark. Plenty of structure exists below the jetty, so don't be afraid to fish in close for bream, cod and Moses perch.



FORGAN BRIDGE PLATFORMS

Three shaded platforms exist along the Forgan Bridge, in Sydney Street. The two platforms on the southern end are situated over deeper sections of the bridge, which are known to have a healthy population of barramundi. While fast currents in the area make fishing tricky at times, smart anglers can fish neap tides or the lull around the tidal change with excellent results. Big live baits are best if you want to tempt quality fish. However, be equipped and prepared to raise your catch from the water to the bridge. This is not the spot for light gear.

The northern platform is over shallower water and fishes well for whiting, flathead and bream from mid-tide up.



FISHING ON FOOT



RON CAMM BRIDGE ROCK BARS

Anglers can access the rock bars near the Ron Camm Bridge through George Daniel Park, behind the Mater Hospital (via Willets Road, North Mackay). If you can catch the first of the making tide around these rocks (usually three hours after the low tide at the river mouth), you can enjoy tangling with predatory fish like queenfish, trevally, barra, cod and the occasional mangrove jack. Lures work well, both hard bodied and soft plastics, and if you can line the tide up with dawn or dusk, consider giving surface lures a run.



HORSE AND JOCKEY ROAD SAND BANKS

Anglers can access the sand banks under the bridge via a walk from Horse and Jockey Road at low tide. This is a popular location for chasing whiting on foot, with most anglers fishing the tide with yabbies or worms. Use light gear and keep an eye on the tide so you don't get cut off. Please note - fishing off the Edmund Casey Bridge (Glenella Connection Road) is strictly prohibited.



NOTE: Low tide times vary depending on how far upstream you fish. As a rough rule of thumb, add an hour delay for every 5km upstream from the mouth you fish.





DUMBLETON WEIR AREA

The rocky approaches accessible via tracks along Maraju Yakapari Road (downstream of the wall) offer exciting barra fishing at times. Often the best fishing is seasonal and if you can combine wet season flows over the wall with high tides pushing up the river, the results can be explosive. Barra up to, and over, the 1 metre mark have been caught land-based in this area, usually on lures. Shallow diving minnow lures are popular, as are surface lures at dawn and dusk. Take care over the rocks and when traversing the tracks. Anglers must stay away from the weir wall by at least 400 metres upstream and 250 metres downstream.



MELBA HOUSE

Anglers can access the rocky freshwater reaches of the Pioneer River near Melba House (Anzac Avenue, Marian). The rock pools and wet season rapids in this area are well known for holding sooty grunter. Sooty grunter prefer to hunt in the shade, so dawn and dusk will be your best bet. Small poppers, divers and spinnerbaits are your go-to for enticing a bite.



NOTE: As the light gets stronger, fish will sit deeper, so adjust your tactics accordingly.



MACKAY MARINA WALL

Very popular amongst bluewater anglers, the marina wall (Southern Breakwater Road), especially at the most seaward point, is well known for producing catches of mackerel, tuna, queenfish and trevally. Mixed reef fish, cod, jew and the occasional fingermark are also caught. Long casting with surf rods is popular, with most anglers using metal lures or unweighted pilchards or gar on ganged hooks. Fishing big live baits closer to the wall is also effective, especially at dawn and during the night for fingermark and jew. Take care while climbing over the rocks to avoid falling as they can be slippery.



NORTH WALL BEACH

A beach with a slightly steeper gradient than many in the Mackay region, North Wall is popular among surfers and anglers alike. In spring, schools of tuna often come within range of the shore and anglers casting metal lures. Dart and flathead can also be caught within casting distance. A long-shanked hook loaded with lots of yabbies makes an appealing offering.



MOUTH OF McCREADY'S CREEK

Accessed by parking on Swan Street, Slade Point, this creek mouth is a popular spot for families and anglers happy to set live baits and relax. A deep hole can be fished with live baits or lures for barra and the approaching sand bars work well for whiting and flathead. This area needs tidal movement to fish well, so plan your trips from half-tide up.



BLACKS BEACH ROCKS

The rocky headlands at the northern end of Blacks Beach are popular in the cooler months (June to August) through to late spring for land-based mackerel fishing. Like the marina wall, long casting unweighted pilchard or gar baits with long surf rods work best. Using ganged hooks without wire leader is the best way to get a bite – but be prepared for the odd lost fish. Fingermark, cod, coral trout and parrot fish are occasional bycatch.



NORTHERN HOTSPOTS

SEAFORTH CREEK MOUTH

Anglers can access the mouth of Seaforth Creek via Poinciana Avenue, Seaforth. Best fished on the first of the run-in tide or last of the run-out, this area offers a mixed bag of catches, from whiting, bream and flathead to mangrove jack and barra. Yabbies or live mullet and herring baits are popular. Walking nearby Seaforth Beach and fishing the run-in tide with yabbies or worms attracts some quality whiting in winter.



VICTOR CREEK

You can access our region's Net Free Zone in Victor Creek without the need for a boat. There is a sandy beach beside the ramp where you can cast a net for live baits before fishing out into the creek. From mid-tide up, this area fishes well for grunter, flathead and the occasional barra. Live prawn baits work well. Be wary of boats queuing on busy days. Anglers are discouraged from fishing from the boat ramp pontoon, and be croc wise!



ST HELENS BEACH / CARPET SNAKE POINT

At the top of our Mackay Net Free Zone you'll find St Helens Beach with a stunning foreshore for beach fishing. Here you'll find your bread-and-butter species like whiting and flathead, which can be easily targeted by fishing the incoming tide as it follows the beach's natural gutters. At low tide, it's well worth a walk out to Carpet Snake Point. Don't let the name fool you, fishing from the rocky point allows you to access a rocky inshore reef where you'll catch a range of species like parrotfish, cod and sweetlip, that feed around the rocky bottom. Barra, salmon and grunter will also move across the rubble flats as the tide rises.



NOTE: Make sure you take out drinking water as it's a good walk, and don't leave it too late to return, as the incoming tide moves in fast and can make returning from the point difficult.

SOUTHERN HOTSPOTS



ILLAWONG BEACH

The long flowing gutters between the Pioneer River mouth and Illawong Beach Resort (Illawong Road, South Mackay) are well known amongst whiting fishers in the region. Best worked in winter with fresh yabbies or beach worms, anglers can walk out at low tide and then fish the run-in tide, staying with the schools as they move up to scavenge on newly inundated ground. Light gear and polarised sunglasses increase your chances. Flathead are a welcome bycatch. Some patchy yabbie beds can be found in the area.



McEWENS BEACH

On the edge of Sandringham Bay, which mostly dries at low tide, McEwens is popular amongst anglers who don't mind walking. If you're keen, you can walk out and fish the pockets of deeper water around the mouth of Sandy Creek, which hold barra, grunter, flathead, bream and whiting. Lures, like shallow diving minnows and lightly weighted soft plastics, are popular, cover most bases and allow you to travel light. Remember to take refreshments and stay hydrated.



SARINA BEACH

Sarina Beach offers a mixed bag of land-based fishing options, from surf fishing for dart, whiting and flathead towards the top of the tide, to mixed reef offerings around the fringing rocks and rubble patches. Both the southern and northern points have rocky reefs that hold a variety of fish species. Expect lots of cod, grassy sweetlip, parrot fish and pelagics like trevally, school mackerel and dart. Long casting unweighted pilchards on ganged hooks are worthwhile, or you can chase reef fish with prawn or squid baits on a small running sinker rig.



THE LEDGE

On the southern side of the Bakers Creek mouth (accessed via Mooreland Street, Bakers Creek), is a deep ledge known to produce a real mixed bag of catches. From the occasional mackerel during the dry season, to big barra in the build up to the wet season, the ledge is a location where many have landed personal bests. Live baits or lures are preferable, but grunter, bream and flathead will readily take bought baits like prawns or cut gar.



DUNROCK ESPLANADE

The rocky sand bar beside the boat ramp is popular during the first of the run-in tide for anglers chasing bream, whiting and flathead. As a rule of thumb, fish the rocky edges for big bream and the sandy channels for whiting. Fresh yabbies are preferable for bait and can be pumped onsite. Light gear is the go.



REMINDER:

Barra closed season is enforced throughout the Queensland east coast, from 12.01am November 1 through to 11.59pm on January 31 annually. If you do need to keep your barra skills sharp - head up to one of our three stocked dams for some metre plus fun during the summer!



MACKAY NET FREE ZONE

The Mackay region is home to 1 of 3 of Queensland's Net Free Zones and strongly supported by a community of sustainably minded recreational fishers.



In 2019, the Voluntary Code of Practice pledge was developed to encourage local and visiting recreational fishers to adopt sustainable and responsible fishing practices while fishing in the Mackay Net Free Zone (St Helens to Cape Hillsborough).

The code seeks to ensure that fish stocks remain in a sustainable and healthy level throughout the Net Free Zone.

The code is voluntary and does not replace Fisheries Regulations, which still apply.

Take the pledge today that you will uphold and promote the values, behaviours and practices of the Mackay Net Free Zone Voluntary Code of Practice.

Value 1: Maintaining healthy fish stocks through sustainable harvest behaviours

- Limit your take of barra and king threadfin salmon to a maximum of three of each species per trip.
- When keeping barra and king threadfin salmon, limit the size to a maximum of 100cm in length.
- Limit your catch of all other species.

Value 2: Proper care and handling of all fish being released to maximise survival rates

- Ensure fish to be released are supported along their length if removed from the water prior to release (especially if being photographed).
- Do not lay fish on hot surfaces during the removal of hooks.
- Use knotless landing nets which are less damaging to fish for catch and release fishing.

Value 3: Zero tolerance for illegal fishing activities

- Immediately report any illegal or suspicious fishing activity observed.
- Any illegal or suspicious fishing activity observed within the Net Free Zone is to be reported to the Queensland Boat and Fishing Patrol or Police (Fishwatch - 1800 017 116).
- Promote the Voluntary Code of Practice among friends and visitors.

Value 4: Care and respect of our environment

- Keep our waterways pristine by removing all rubbish.
- Know your zoning. Don't be the next catch.
- Look after nursery areas such as lagoons, brackish and freshwater wetlands.
- Be croc wise - do not dispose of fish frames at boat ramps.
- Assist with sharing information and data involved in monitoring the effectiveness of the Net Free Zone. This data is valuable in sustaining the Net Free Zone.

To take the pledge, visit www.hookedonmackay.com.

To find out more about Queensland boating and fishing regulations, visit www.daf.qld.gov.au/fisheries.

This Voluntary Code of Practice is proudly supported by:



If you'd like to support those protecting our fisheries, you can find out more details on their websites.

To volunteer for MAFSA, head to <http://survey.sweetwaterfishing.com.au/mafsa/>

To learn more about or to join MRFA, head to www.mackayrecfishersalliance.org/

LOCAL TIPS



FINDING YOUR WAY

For those new to the area, a study of Google satellite imagery can help locate deep banks and holes and also provide an indication of channel locations. For some face-to-face advice, our local bait and tackle stores are full of friendly fishos that will be happy to point you in the right direction and assist with your tackle needs.



WANT MORE INFO? Check out the back of this brochure for contact details of some friendly fishos.



RIDING THE RIVER

The Pioneer River is a must-fish destination for land-based fishos looking for a family-friendly location. Yabbie beds all through Bassett Basin (accessed by foot at the end of Martin Street) make bait gathering easy, and throughout the cooler months big whiting, bream and flathead turn up in numbers. Try slow rolling fresh yabbies over newly inundated yabbie beds and near the mouths of drains and look out for flashes in the shallows from feeding whiting schools. Prospect likely areas by long casting into the shallows and slowly retrieving your bait (slow enough that your bait is 'crawling' along the bottom). Never let your line sit slack.



HOOKED FOR SUCCESS

When fishing for bread-and-butter species like bream, whiting and flathead, keep the gear light with a small longshank hook and running ball sinker with swivel and 10lb leader set up. If your goal is to target our iconic barramundi, we recommend upping your gear to at least a 5/0 suicide or octopus style hook and using a leader of at least 20lb (heavier around abrasive structure). Lures are also a great option, especially for a quick flick. Shallow-diving (1-3 metres) minnows in gold or silver work well for barra, jacks and salmon; whereas small, lightly rigged soft plastics can be excellent for flathead, grunter and bream. Just make sure you work them slowly and "hop" them along the bottom.

“One of the things that really sets this area apart is its Net Free Zone. It’s been introduced a few years ago and since its implementation, has really increased the fishing in the area.” Jason Kidd, Inshore Fishing Mackay



FRESHWATER FUN

Nothing beats walking or canoeing this region’s wild freshwater streams to sight target fish. From Funnel Creek, inland of Sarina, to Cattle Creek, deep in the Pioneer Valley, anglers can fish creeks with pristine rapids and bankside vegetation reminiscent of high-country trout streams. Casting small poppers at dawn often entices an explosive bite and then, as the sun rises, working bankside snags with spinnerbaits and diving lures can offer adrenaline-charged action! Be wary of accessing any fishing spots through private property – most farmers do not appreciate people driving through their land, but are usually happy to grant permission if asked.



FLOODED, FORGET IT

In the summer wet season Mackay is prone to flash flooding, especially around king tides. It’s important you do not enter flooded waterways as hidden dangers may lie out of sight. However, during these wet season events we do see fish move into areas they wouldn’t usually be found. When in flood, you can often find sizable barra in the Mackay Gooseponds and in the freshwater regions of many other estuarine systems. Barra will use the floodwaters to push upstream, to feed on the masses of bait being carried in the flood currents. Look for areas of slack water or structure near narrow points in the flow, as these areas make excellent ambush points for hungry barra.



BE CROC SMART

We are in North Queensland, so when fishing estuarine environments in the Mackay region please remember to be croc smart and wary of marine stingers. Always try to keep your distance from the water’s edge and don’t let kids or dogs play in the water. Also, never fillet fish and leave scraps at popular land-based fishing spots – this attracts marine predators and is messy and irresponsible. Never underestimate how far upstream marine predators can travel. Both crocs and bull sharks will travel right up into the freshwater reaches of estuarine systems, so don’t be complacent.

GET HOOKED UP WITH ALL THINGS MACKAY FISHING!

Fishing Inspo

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Fishing Operators

Inshore Fishing Mackay

- ☎ 0457 254 740
- f InshoreFishingMackay

Elizabeth E II

- ☎ 07 4955 2563
- 🌐 elizabetheii.com.au
- f ElizabethEII

Mackay Fly and Sportfishing

- ☎ 0407 674 350
- 🌐 mackaysportfishing.com.au
- f Mackayflyandsportfishing

Action Charters

- ☎ 0417 452 346
- 🌐 actioncharters.com.au
- f ActionChartersMackay

Tackle Stores

Tackle World Mackay

- ☎ 07 4957 2145
- 318 Shakespeare Street, Mackay

BCF

- ☎ 07 4942 3499
- 8-10 Windmill Crossing, Mackay

Freddys Fishing & Outdoors

- ☎ 07 4942 0360
- 6 Trade Court, Mackay

Anaconda

- ☎ 07 4852 3000
- Tenancy 3, Mackay Bucasia Rd & Holts Rd, Mackay

Fish, Stay, Play

Visiting the region or planning a stay-cation, Mackay Tourism can help you plan your next fishing holiday, with access to a range of fishing tour operators and other important information to make your trip enjoyable. **#discovermackay**

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- 📍 **Mackay Region Visitor Information Centre**
Field of Dreams, Sarina
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