

SILKY OAKS LODGE

Business with purpose

Connecting with Country and culture

The Daintree and Wet Tropics Rainforest is the oldest living rainforest in the world - and one of the most complex ecosystems on Earth, regarded as the evolutionary source of many of Australia's unique flora and fauna species.

Silky Oaks Lodge - which reopened in December 2021 after a multi-million-dollar refurbishment following its acquisition by Baillie Lodges in 2019 - is situated on the Mossman River adjacent to the Daintree UNESCO Natural World Heritage Area. The lodge is perfectly positioned to connect guests with the region's extraordinary wilderness areas, from the Daintree Rainforest to Cape Tribulation as well as the world's largest coral reef system, the UNESCO World Heritage-listed **Great Barrier Reef**.

Enabling this connection for guests is key to the Silky Oaks Lodge experience.

"One of the most valuable opportunities for tourism is the ability to give guests a first-hand experience of fragile, valuable ecosystems like the Daintree and Great Barrier Reef. Through education comes a greater understanding of the need for protection and conservation. Silky Oaks Lodge is the ideal base for exploring the natural and cultural wonders of Tropical North Queensland," explained Silky Oaks Lodge General Manager Drew Bernhardt.

"We partner with like-minded local tourism operators to offer our guests a selection of specialised and personalised guided adventure experiences in the neighbouring Daintree Rainforest, the wilderness around Mossman Gorge and Mossman River, the Atherton Tablelands, Cape Tribulation and the Great Barrier Reef," he said.

Regenerating rainforest

From Silky Oaks Lodge there are extensive hiking trails leading into the rainforest, or guests can swim or snorkel - spotting freshwater turtles and jungle perch - in the clear waters of the Mossman River.

Now surrounded by lush rainforest, the 80-acre Silky Oaks Lodge property was heavily logged up until the early 1900s. But extensive replanting in the early 1990s - when around 200 endangered native rainforest species were gradually reintroduced - regenerated the rainforest.

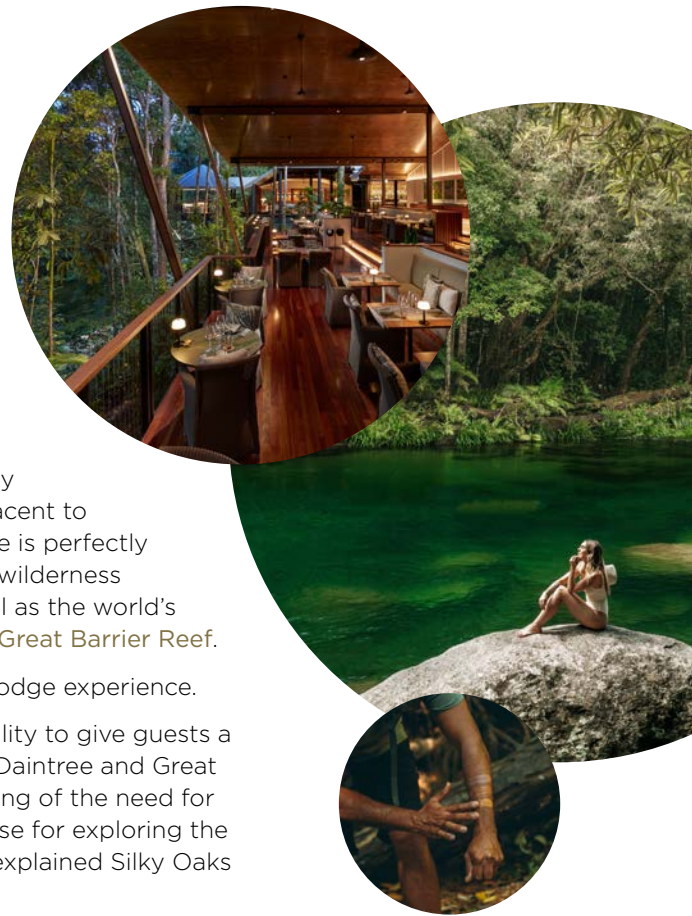
Today, the forest surrounding the lodge boasts 74 species of mammals (including tree kangaroos and koalas); 150 species of reptiles; and 330 species of birds, including the giant cassowary. Self-guided walks enable guests to learn about the rainforest ecosystem and the importance of its conservation.

Cultural connections

Silky Oaks Lodge has long enjoyed a strong affiliation with the Mossman Gorge Kuku Yalanji Traditional Owners of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, whose history dates back 50,000 years. The Kuku Yalanji culture is built around a deep respect for nature and an intimate knowledge of its cycles, and this knowledge has been passed down through generations.

Yalanji guides can take Silky Oaks Lodge guests on exploratory adventures in the rainforest, explaining traditional uses of food and medicine plants, demonstrating hunting techniques and telling both modern and Dreamtime stories of the rainforest.

Guests also connect with the Indigenous heritage of the land through the Silky Oaks Lodge menu, which incorporates selected traditional Indigenous flavours as well as lush tropical fruits and nuts, organic produce from the nearby Atherton Tablelands and seafood from the clean waters of the Coral Sea.



Forest-friendly refurbishment

Local Port Douglas-based architect Gary Hunt was commissioned to undertake the environmentally sensitive refurbishment of the lodge. Set amid the forest canopy, perched above the Mossman River, airy spaces minimise the need for air conditioning and welcome the sights and sounds of the jungle. Local builders and tradespeople were employed and the lodge features custom furnishings, textiles and artworks by North Queensland designers.

“Having established remarkable and rewarding relationships with local artists at our other properties, we’re now really enjoying working closely with the Yalanji Arts Centre and community,” said Drew Bernhardt.

Yalanji artists were commissioned to produce a nine-metre-long ceramic artwork, made up of 40 individual pieces, which now adorns the new Silky Oaks Lodge entrance.

There are also handmade pots and vessels by Cairns-based artist Shireen Talibudeen, and a

series of mesmerising destination photographs commissioned from Catherine Nelson in the lounge, restaurant and each guest suite.

Essential to the lodge’s culinary philosophy is working almost exclusively with local suppliers wherever possible to champion the bounty of organic and sustainable produce harvested in Tropical North Queensland’s rich food bowl, minimise food miles, and to support the local community and economy.

An extensive kitchen garden has been created on site, which further minimises food miles and carbon emissions. The thriving garden boasts more than 100 plant types, including Indigenous edible ingredients such as the Mt White finger lime, red dragon fruit, pandan and tamarind.

In the Healing Waters Spa, guests connect with the spirit of the Daintree via custom-made body products from spa care company Alkeme as well as the Sodashi spa range.

Other sustainability initiatives (Our mandates):

All Baillie Lodges properties operate under a Sustainable Management Policy and Environmental Management Plan, which details the lodge’s operational systems and sets targets relating to environmental management, including resource usage and minimisation, water and waste management, and employee responsibilities.

- All waste water at Silky Oaks Lodge is sent to the property’s own waste water management plant, where it is processed through a sand filter system and used to irrigate the property’s forested areas.
- Silky Oaks Lodge uses a paperless check-in system.
- E-bikes are available for guests to explore the local area.
- Extensive recycling is undertaken, with staff separating compostable materials, cardboard and paper, glass, plastic, aluminium and rubbish.
- Guest suites are set high above the Mossman River amid the rainforest canopy, with deep verandas and wide doors allowing cool breezes to flow to guest areas, reducing the need for air-conditioning.
- Biodegradable chemicals are used for cleaning.
- Guest bathroom amenities are presented in refillable vessels, reducing waste.
- Silky Oaks Lodge works closely with the National Indigenous Training Academy to offer training and employment opportunities for its students.