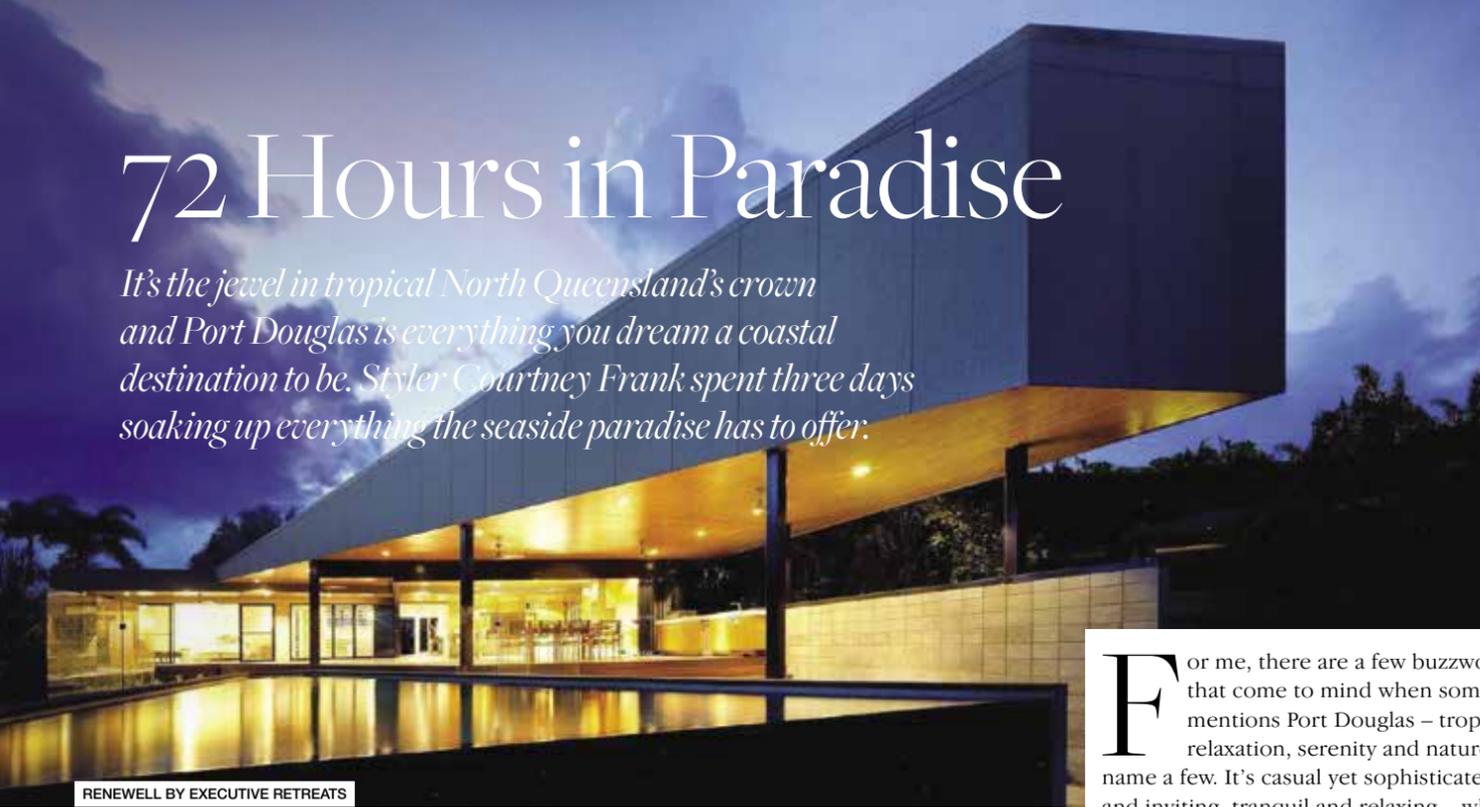


# 72 Hours in Paradise

*It's the jewel in tropical North Queensland's crown and Port Douglas is everything you dream a coastal destination to be. Styler Courtney Frank spent three days soaking up everything the seaside paradise has to offer.*



RENEWELL BY EXECUTIVE RETREATS



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**F**or me, there are a few buzzwords that come to mind when someone mentions Port Douglas – tropical, relaxation, serenity and nature to name a few. It's casual yet sophisticated, lush and inviting, tranquil and relaxing – which makes it the perfect destination for a wedding, honeymoon, babymoon or romantic couples' getaway. Or in my case, a three-day break from my crazy, chaotic everyday life!

## FRIDAY

We arrive at Cairns Airport and are whisked away to the beautiful Thala Beach Lodge for a tour of their picturesque eco and wildlife retreat. We're treated to lunch at Osprey's Restaurant, where we dine amongst the treetops, overlooking the magnificent 58-hectare reserve. It's the perfect start to what's sure to be an amazing weekend.

**Top pick:** an afternoon spent relaxing at the private-access beach, sipping on a fresh coconut.

Next, we head into the heart of Port Douglas for the part of the weekend I'm most excited about. An afternoon spent sailing on the Great Barrier Reef. I'm a North Queensland girl, so I've been lucky enough to venture out to the reef on several occasions, but I must admit, my past experiences were nowhere near as special as this because Sailaway Port Douglas has really nailed their afternoon sunset cruise. Departing at 1pm, we ventured out to the Low Isles where we explored protected Coral Cay, snorkeled in crystal blue water and lounged underneath the coconut palms. I promise you, it was every bit as relaxing as it sounds.

With salty beach hair and sun kissed skin, we check into the incredible Niramaya Villas



THALA BEACH LODGE

& Spa, which will be our accommodation for the night. Immediately, I wonder if I've somehow been transported to Indonesia, because these villas are the very definition of tranquility. There are frangipani trees, soaring pavilions and lillipad dotted lakes and my private villa is almost as big as my apartment back home. I'm officially in heaven.

**Highly recommend:** the villas at Niramaya are perfect for the loved-up couple. Honeymoon accommodation, sorted.

Friday night concludes with dinner at Zinc Port Douglas, an extremely stylish (and popular) local restaurant that happens to host many wedding receptions and celebrations. Their menu is extensive and delicious and we feasted on fresh local seafood and expertly crafted cocktails.

## SATURDAY

Today is all about meeting local wedding vendors and exploring the beautiful town of Port Douglas. After checking out of our accommodation, we start the day by visiting St Mary's by the Sea; a historic 1880 fully restored non-denominational church that literally overlooks the Coral Sea. It's an icon of the town and with its high ceilings, huge glass altar window and stained-glass windows, it's easy to see why it's a popular venue for wedding ceremonies. Today's lunch is at the iconic Salsa's Bar & Grill which we learn is a local favourite. We feast on some many delicious dishes, but the standouts were easily the Barramundi spring rolls and the pulled pork piquillo poppers.

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NIRAMAYA VILLAS & SPA

**Hot tip:** located just across the road from St Mary's Chapel, Salsa's is the perfect post-ceremony location for cocktails or a relaxed and intimate wedding reception.

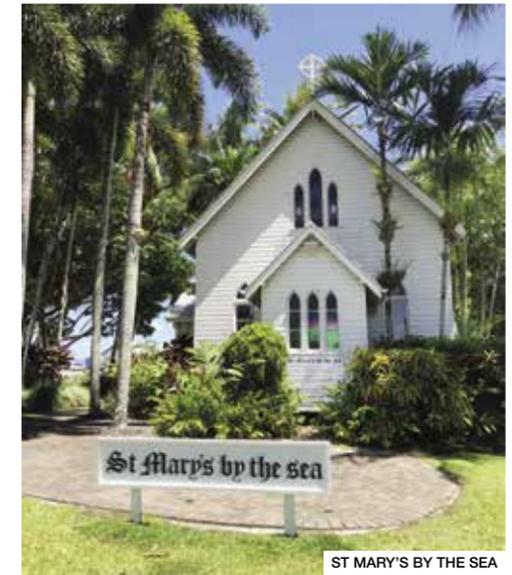
It's 3pm and we're off to our accommodation for the night, which I've heard is an absolute showstopper. And oh my goodness, it did not disappoint. ReNewell is an Executive Retreats property and is located on Newell Beach. The house is unassuming from the outside, but when you step through the front doors, you're greeted with the most magnificent open plan home filled with natural light and a beautiful sea-breeze. There's a huge infinity pool where we spend the rest of the day lounging and looking out over our private beach with a glass of wine in hand. Later, we're treated to a private dinner by Port Douglas Catering which now sits in one of my top five favourite meals of all time. I go to bed a very happy girl.

**Need to know:** ReNewell is a very popular retreat for weddings and special events, but it's one of Australia's most sought-after holiday destinations, so book quickly.

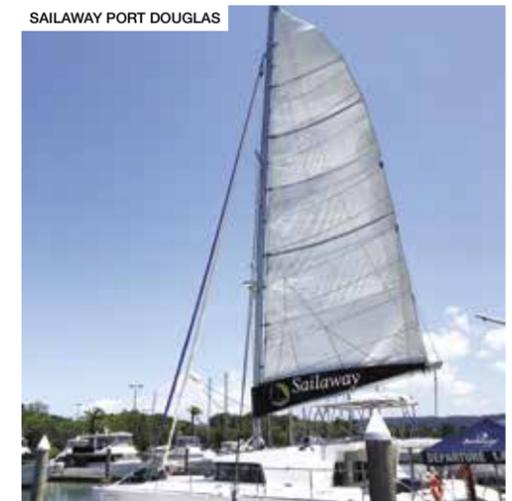
## SUNDAY

It's our final day in paradise and whilst I'm devastated to be leaving, we have one final destination before we jet back to Brisbane and back to reality. We head up to The Daintree where we spend the morning zip-lining through the canopies and exploring the wonder of the oldest continually surviving tropical rainforest in the world. It's an incredible experience and the perfect way to finish three days in paradise.

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ST MARY'S BY THE SEA



SAILAWAY PORT DOUGLAS