

LANDMARK POSTCODE

4807

Burning Sugar Cane
Image courtesy of Tourism Queensland. Photographer Peter Lik

LOCATION: Ayr and Home Hill
1 hour south of Townsville

POPULATION: Ayr 9000; Home Hill 3,000

INDUSTRIES: Sugar cane, agriculture, horticulture, manufacturing, retail

CLIMATE: Tropical
Summer: 22.7°C – 31.8°C
Winter: 11.5°C – 25.1°C
Rainfall: 931.6mm

The twin towns of Ayr and Home Hill, in the Burdekin region of tropical North Queensland, are a paradise built on the riches of “liquid gold” – water.

While much of Australia feels the pressure of our worst-ever drought, this region boasts bountiful, year-round water supplies.

The Burdekin River is one of Queensland’s biggest river systems and supplies the massive Burdekin Falls Dam with a capacity five times that of Sydney Harbour.

“Then there’s the underground aquifer,” says Landmark’s John Mottin. “It holds around 20 million megalitres and is just 10-120 feet below the surface. You can operate multiple bores side-by-side and in the past 169 years, it has never run dry.”

The unlimited water supply renders this one of Australia’s most productive agricultural regions, contributing a quarter of the national sugar production.

“Sugar cane is the big player here,” confirms John. “We can yield 110-200 tonnes of cane per

hectare and above, compared to the average 100 tonnes per hectare. We’re seeing sugar prices on the rise again, and by 2011 we expect to have had three to four consecutive years of good prices.”

The water, along with the Burdekin’s fertile, well-drained soils, supports a multi-million dollar small crops industry including cotton, maize, mangoes, melons, capsicums, zucchinis, pumpkins, tomatoes and eggplants.

One third of Australia’s mango harvest originates here and there is a fast-developing base for value-added industries leveraging from the agricultural strength. The local economy is considered resilient and versatile, with plenty of opportunities to diversify.

“There are four CSR sugar cane mills within close proximity and a growing manufacturing sector,” says John. “New industrial land is being developed and released in the district to attract more manufacturing and investment. Lifestyle popularity and attractive opportunities are keeping the regional property market steady, despite the general lack of confidence in the global economy.”

Ayr and Home Hill are relaxed, rural and friendly. The workforce is primarily trade-skilled and each year is boosted with an injection of seasonal labour – the backpackers and tourists who come from around the world for the horticultural harvest. They add a dynamism and vibrancy to the lifestyle, helping to keep the service businesses buoyant.

Both permanent and “moving-through” populations are well-serviced with hospitals,

aged care facilities, health services, schools, cultural/arts spaces, swimming pools, playgrounds and a burgeoning retail trade. Cafes, restaurants, free parking and an absence of traffic lights make this a delightful place to explore.

The Burdekin offers eco-tourists a plethora of nature-based attractions including 300 days a year of sunshine, world-class wetlands, unspoilt beaches and creeks for excellent fishing and crabbing, pristine bushland, significant indigenous cultural sites and the Great Barrier Reef – a World Heritage Site to-dive-for.

John adds, “For anglers there’s the lure of the famous Burdekin Barramundi and for those seeking something unique, it’s hard not to be awestruck by the sight of a sugar cane fire.”

Fittingly, the Burdekin’s most-recognised landmark is the “Silverlink”, Queensland’s longest bridge, spanning the rich delta precinct of the Burdekin River... the region’s lifeblood.

CONTACT:

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PROPERTY GUIDE:

Residential: Three-four bedroom level \$350,000

Farm acreages: \$6,500 – \$11,500 per acre