



Laura Hotel, ca. 1900. (John Oxley Library Manuscripts - M282, Public domain, via [Wikimedia Commons](#))

Laura

Sources:

- **Ang-Gnarra Aboriginal Corporation**
- **Aussie Towns: Laura, Queensland**
- **Quinkan & Regional Cultural Centre**
- **Wikipedia: Laura, Queensland**

Located on Kuku-Warra country 224 kilometres northwest of Cairns and 104 kilometres west of Cooktown on the Peninsula Developmental Road in the Cook Shire, the township of Laura is the centre for the heritage-listed Quinkan Country. The surrounding area contains one of the world's largest collections of prehistoric rock art galleries on the escarpments where the local people took shelter during the wet season each year.

The town takes its name from the nearby Laura River, named after his wife by surveyor Archibald Campbell Macmillan, who established a road from the Endeavour River to the newly discovered Palmer goldfield in November 1873. James Earl brought cattle into the area the following year.

Travellers passing between Cooktown and the Palmer crossed the Laura River around the site where a Native Mounted Police camp was established to protect them from attacks from the local Aboriginal clans.

Modern-day Laura developed after the Cooktown railway line reached the river in 1888. But that's where the line stopped. Its precise destination was disputed among two or three of the Palmer goldfields' decaying mining towns. A substantial bridge was built over the Laura River in 1891, but a change of government in Brisbane saw work on the line abandoned after a single train crossed the bridge as a test.



Railway employees and passengers on the platform of the Laura Railway Station, 1896. (John Oxley Library/State Library of Queensland Public domain, via [Wikimedia Commons](#))

Still, while Laura became the line's terminus, in its early days as many as twenty thousand passengers used the line, which continued to operate until 1961.

Airline pilot Percy Trezise reported the Quinkan rock art galleries, identifying likely sites from the air and later walking in to investigate them.

Visitors can book guided tours to Mushroom Rock, Giant Horse Gallery and the Quinkan galleries through the Quinkan & Regional Cultural Centre on the town's southern entrance. The centre also provides information on the area's history and indigenous culture.

Apart from tourism associated with the rock art galleries and the biennial three-day Laura Quinkan Dance Festival, the local economy is based around grazing on native vegetation.