

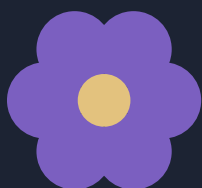
COOEE TOURS PRESENTS

Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers

Visitor Guide 2026 — the 77th Festival

18 September – 5 October 2026

Queensland's Garden City · 700 metres up · 90 minutes from Brisbane



Free festival gardens · Grand Central Floral Parade · FEASTival food program

Coach day tours from Brisbane, the Gold Coast & the Sunshine Coast — from \$89

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Family-owned and touring Queensland since 1974



WELCOME TO THE GARDEN CITY

Australia's biggest celebration of spring

Every September since 1949, Toowoomba — perched 700 metres up on the crest of the Great Dividing Range — throws Australia's longest-running floral festival. In 2026 the Carnival marks its 77th year: more than 80 events across three feature weekends, over 40 million petals planted through the city's parks, and its showpiece Grand Central Floral Parade rolling through the streets on the opening Saturday.

The best part is the price of admission: the feature floral displays in Queens Park and Laurel Bank Park are completely free, open daily for the entire festival. Add the champion private gardens, a serious food program, markets, live music and country hospitality, and you have far more than a flower show — you have a complete spring holiday, 90 minutes from Brisbane. This guide is the short version of everything we know after fifty years of bringing visitors up the Range.

THE 2026 FESTIVAL AT A GLANCE

Festival dates	Friday 18 September – Monday 5 October 2026
Grand Central Floral Parade	Saturday 19 September — Margaret Street, from morning
FEASTival food weekend	26–27 September — Queens Park precinct
Paw Parade	Sunday 4 October
Feature gardens	Queens Park & Laurel Bank Park — FREE, open daily
Getting there	Warrego Highway up the Toowoomba Range, approx 1.75 hrs from Brisbane
Coach day tours	From \$89 adult / \$69 child with Cooee Tours (see back pages)

One rule beats every other tip: arrive early. The gardens are at their best — and emptiest — before 10.30am, parking is findable, and the light is the kind photographers drive hours for. Every itinerary in this guide is built around that single fact.



THE ESSENTIAL GARDENS

Five places the festival is actually about

Queens Park

The festival's centrepiece: 26 heritage-listed hectares beside the CBD, with the famous themed annual beds at their absolute peak through the Carnival. Free, open daily, level paths throughout. Allow 60–90 minutes; mornings are magic.

Laurel Bank Park

Four and a half hectares of formal beds, the scented garden and croquet lawns, ten minutes' walk from town. Smaller, quieter and — locals whisper — the better-perfumed of the two. Allow 45 minutes.

Ju Raku En Japanese Garden

One of Australia's largest traditionally designed Japanese gardens, at the university campus. Not a Carnival venue so much as the perfect antidote to festival colour: green architecture, still water, resident ducks. Free.

Spring Bluff Railway Station

The heritage station on the old Main Range line, halfway down the Range, famous for its Carnival garden displays — the classic 'flowers and filigree ironwork' photograph. Check access arrangements for festival weekends.

The champion private gardens

Toowoomba's competitive gardeners open their prize-winning front yards through the festival — the city's oldest tradition and its most personal. Pick up the open-garden trail map when you arrive, or ask your Cooee driver-guide.

Parade day (Saturday 19 September). The Grand Central Floral Parade is the one day the city map changes: Margaret Street closes, crowds build from early, and the floats — built over months by schools, clubs and community sheds — roll through the heart of town. Claim a kerb spot by mid-morning or watch from a cafe table booked well ahead.



BEYOND THE FLOWERS

What fills the rest of a Toowoomba day

Picnic Point Lookout

The Range's grandstand: a hundred-kilometre view east over the Lockyer Valley, with a cafe terrace steps from the car park. Go in the morning for clarity — afternoon haze and the going-home queue are both real.

Cobb+Co Museum

The National Carriage Collection plus living heritage trades — blacksmiths, wheelwrights, sparks and steam — directly opposite Queens Park. The festival's best rain plan and its best crowd escape, in the same building.

The laneway street art

Toowoomba's CBD laneways carry one of regional Australia's great mural collections. It threads between the coffee stops without costing a minute — keep your eyes up between Margaret Street and the arcades.

Coffee & the food scene

The Garden City runs on serious espresso, country bakeries and a dining scene that has learned to feed festival crowds without losing its manners. During FEASTival weekend (26–27 September), the food becomes the festival.

The villages

Highfields, Hampton and Crows Nest string north along the ridge — galleries, tearooms and big-sky country lanes. The classic add-on for second visits and the heart of our 2-day and 3-day weekend tours.



THE PERFECT CARNIVAL DAY

Hour by hour — the itinerary that actually works

Fifty festival seasons of coach-window forensics, condensed to one clock. Run it in order: each hour hands the next a better version of you.

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 7.30am | Leave early — beat the Range traffic and spend the saved hour in the gardens. |
| 9.15am | Picnic Point Lookout first: the great eastern view is a morning performer, and it's the natural welcome to the city. |
| 10.00am | Queens Park in the golden window — the feature beds before the crowds, when the light and the scent are both at full strength. |
| 12.00pm | The free midday block: markets, festival stalls and lunch. Pick your lunch plan the night before — festival queues punish indecision. |
| 1.30pm | Laurel Bank Park — compact, scented and perfectly suited to post-lunch pace. The themed displays hold their colour all afternoon. |
| 3.00pm | Choose your closer: Cobb+Co Museum, the laneway murals with a coffee, or one more slow lap of the beds you liked best. |
| 4.15pm | The decorated homes and champion gardens on the way out — a seated, rolling finale that works better tired. |
| 6.00pm | Down the Range with the sunset behind you. Home by news time. |

On a Cooee day tour? This is broadly the day your driver-guide runs for you — morning tea at Picnic Point included, the gardens timed for the golden window, and about 90 minutes of free time for markets and lunch. You bring the camera; we bring the clock.



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Practical Toowoomba, honestly told

Weather at 700 metres

Toowoomba sits high on the Range: September days typically reach the low-to-mid 20s, but dawns can touch single digits and the breeze is honest. Dress in layers, bring a warm outer layer for morning and evening, and check the forecast the night before. Comfortable walking shoes are non-negotiable — a garden day is a 10,000-step day.

Parking & crowds

Festival weekends fill the streets around Queens Park by mid-morning; the parking sport turns professional on parade day. Arrive before 9.30am, park a few blocks out and walk in — or skip the whole problem on a coach.

Accessibility

The feature gardens run level, sealed main paths; Cobb+Co is step-free on one floor; Picnic Point serves its view from beside the car park. Our seniors departures plan flat walking only, with regular comfort stops.

With children

Queens Park pairs its flower beds with one of Queensland's great playgrounds, the museum across the road runs hands-on, and the parade is pure eight-year-old theatre. The family-tested rule: gardens in the morning, playground after lunch, everyone asleep by Gatton on the way home.

Booking beds

If you're staying over, book September accommodation the moment plans firm — Carnival weekends sell the city out months ahead. If the beds are gone, the day tour is the solution that requires no room key.



LEAVE THE DRIVING TO US

Cooee Tours Carnival departures, 2026

Family-owned and touring Queensland since 1974. Air-conditioned coaches, a local driver-guide who knows every shortcut and lunch spot on the Downs, morning tea at Picnic Point included, and the gardens timed for their best hours.

TOUR	DEPARTS	ADULT	CHILD
Carnival of Flowers Day Tour	Brisbane CBD & Chermside	\$89	\$69
Carnival of Flowers Day Tour	Gold Coast (Helensvale)	\$99	\$79
Carnival of Flowers Day Tour	Sunshine Coast (Maroochydore & Caboolture)	\$109	\$89
Deluxe Small-Group Day Tour · two-course lunch included	Brisbane	\$159	—
2-Day Toowoomba Weekend Tour	Brisbane	from \$595	—
3-Day Garden City & Villages Tour	Brisbane	from \$880	—

Add-ons: Spring Picnic Lunch \$22 · Premium Coach Seating (first four rows) \$5. Seniors and private group charters by arrangement.

Scan to check dates & book



Brisbane day tour — from \$89



Gold Coast day tour — from \$99



Sunshine Coast day tour — from \$109



Deluxe small-group day tour — \$159

Festival departures sell out — reserve seats online, or call 0409 661 342 and we'll help you pick the perfect date.



ABOUT COOEE TOURS

Fifty years of showing Queensland off

Cooee Tours is a family-owned Queensland touring company, on the road since 1974. We run day tours, weekend tours and private charters across South East Queensland — and every September, our favourite fortnight of the year, we point the coaches up the Range to the Carnival of Flowers.

Everything in this guide — and a great deal more — lives on our website: complete garden guides, itineraries, where to eat and stay, photography tips, and more than sixty in-depth Toowoomba pages written by people who make this trip every week of the festival.

PLAN YOUR CARNIVAL

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Scan for every Toowoomba guide, itinerary and tour on our website — including live 2026 departure dates and online booking.

Festival program details correct at publication and subject to change — confirm event dates at carnivalofflowers.com.au. Tour prices are 2026 season fares. © 1974–2026 Cooee Tours Pty Ltd.

