

OUTBACK TOWNS

“When you know Bourke, you know Australia.” Henry Lawson

A UNIQUELY AUSTRALIAN INVITATION

Outback towns are the life-blood of the outback. They form the heart of outback communities and their social hub. They're also full of outback characters – like publicans, drovers, shearers, smithies and the aboriginal stockmen; along with the station owners and graziers who come to town to stock up on supplies.

It's here you'll get the opportunity to immerse yourself in the life of Outback locals and meet some real Aussie characters. Revel in the mateship, have a good belly laugh and join in some truly Aussie events such as fundraising events for the Royal Flying Doctor Service. Buy a ticket in a meat raffle, play 'Two-Up', or place a bet on a cane toad race.

You'll find our outback towns out past the spinifex of Inglewood, past the cactus near Goondiwindi, out beyond Moree where the galahs peck at the cotton seed by the side of the road. Way, way out where the fences and telegraph poles have ceased to be; where the horizon stretches out to touch a pale blue sky. The 'Outback' may be hard to define, but you'll know it when you see it.

Red dust roads across the country lead to shanty towns full of character and heritage, where the locals wear Akubra hats and riding boots. Our incredible history has been recorded in towns such as Longreach, Winton, Blackall and Barcaldine in central Queensland, and the NSW country towns of Warialda and Moree which, with their wooden and tin shopfront awnings, resemble Wild West towns from the 1800s.

Our sheep and wheat growing country is full of straightlaced retro towns such as Manilla, Condooblin, and Goondawindi which seem to have been preserved from the 1960s.

There are the iconic mining towns of Broken Hill, Silverton, Tennant Creek and Kalgoorlie, and the one-horse towns like William Creek, Halls Creek, Birdsville and Daly Waters, which are little more than a pub, a petrol pump and a few houses.

There's Birdsville, the tiny settlement on the edge of the Simpson Desert at the northern end of the notorious and dangerous Birdsville track. And Tenterfield, the birthplace of our nation and of Peter Allen, the 'Boy From Oz' who sang about the Tenterfield Saddler.

Then there's Bourke, the dry and dusty outback town in far North West NSW which provoked author Henry Lawson to write after his visit in 1893, "If you know Bourke, you know Australia". The Back o' Bourke is more than a geographic location; it's part of the Australian language and part of our folklore. So, pack up your swag and come out the back of beyond to the 'Back o' Bourke'.

Key outback town facts

- **Bourke** is a must visit on your outback adventure as it was once the world's largest wool-trading centre. The Carriers Arms in Bourke was once a Cobb & Co Inn and a temporary home to our legendary poets Banjo Patterson and Henry Lawson.
- **Coober Pedy** on the edge of South Australia's Great Victoria Desert in South Australia, produces 90 per cent of the world's opals. Its population is made up of more than 40 nationalities and, with year-round extremes in temperature, more than 50 per cent of the population live in below-ground 'dugouts'¹.
The best way to see **White Cliffs**, another remarkable opal mining town famous for its underground accommodation, is from the air. It looks like a strange moonscape pockmarked by an estimated 50,000 disused diggings.
- **Silverton**, once a thriving mining centre of 3,000, is now a virtual ghost town of about 50 inhabitants with a number of historic buildings, several art galleries and museums and a pub. Now a popular destination for movie makers, this typical outback town has been the backdrop for more than 140 films and commercials, such as Mad Max 2, Priscilla Queen of the Desert, Razorback, and Young Einstein.
- **Strahan** in Tasmania was named "The Best Little Town In The World" by the Chicago Tribune.²
Built on the wealth of silver mines, the Silver City, **Broken Hill**, has emerged as a major arts destination in western NSW. Famous outback painter Pro Hart, lived and worked here and painters and photographers talk about the 'amazing light'. Once the site of the world's richest deposit of silver, lead and zinc, today it's a vibrant mecca for artists and film-makers who draw inspiration from the surrounding landscape. Nearly 30 private galleries and studios are stacked with an eclectic mix of European and Aboriginal art.
- **Tamworth** in NSW is the home of Australian country music, while **Tenterfield** is known as the birthplace of our nation and houses the Tenterfield Saddlery, made famous by Peter Allen. Nearby Bald Rock, is our second largest rock after Uluru.
- The world's largest geographical city, the fascinating Outback mining town of **Mount Isa**, also hosts Australia's biggest rodeo.





Uniquely Australian

- Discover the outback towns of northwest NSW. This region is full of iconic towns like **Wilcannia**, with a population of only 750 and a large Aboriginal community. **Moree**, on the Gwydir River, is famous for its therapeutic Artesian Spa Baths, while the Art Gallery houses an extensive collection of Aboriginal art.
- At the Sapphire City of **Inverell** you can fossick for gemstones, visit the Inverell Transport Museum, the Art Museum, or the Draught Horse Centre.
- The cotton capital of Australia, **Narrabri** is covered mid-year with the “snow” of ripe cotton plants. The Australia Telescope is at Culgoora, just west of town.
- Famous for black opals, **Lightning Ridge** is the principle opal mining town in NSW.
- Visit **Cobar’s** Great Western Hotel, a reminder of its heyday, which claims its verandah, at over 100m, is the longest in Australia. The mining company’s office is now the Pastoral, Mining and Technological Museum.
- You’ll find true outback spirit at **Tennant Creek** in Australia’s Red Centre. Gateway to the Devils Marbles and the Davenport National Park, it’s an original frontier gold mining town. In 1874 an overland telegraph station was established at the original Tennant Creek, 11km to the north of the present town.
- **Daly Waters** in the Northern Territory is a tiny town with only a few houses, a population of 23, a legendary pub known far and wide for its quirky character and a rickety post office covered in outback paraphernalia such as stockwhips. The walls and ceiling of the pub are covered with relics from the past, bras and knickers, signed banknotes in every imaginable currency and drivers’ licences from around the world.
- **Kununurra** is the gateway to some of Western Australia’s remarkable natural attractions. The mighty Gibb River Road begins here. This red dirt track journeys through a landscape of gorges, waterfalls and cattle stations the size of small European countries. It’s easy to think you’re the first person to visit the area – that is until you stumble across ancient Aboriginal rock art.
- **Kalgoorlie** on Australia’s West coast is like walking on the set of a Wild West. Explore mines and museums, pan for gold or visit one of its historic pubs. Kalgoorlie’s wide streets and grand old buildings are full of people living the prospecting dream. If you’re lucky you might come across some ‘old timers’ playing bush ‘two-up’ – a traditional game where people bet on the toss of a coin.
- Gold fever also lingers at **Halls Creek**. Visit the old mud-brick post office, or swim in waterholes. See the China Wall – a long quartz vein – and the Wolfe Creek meteorite crater.
- Known as the Gateway to the Gorges, **Derby** sits on the edge of King Sound with the vastness of the Kimberley Ranges – spectacular gorges, waterfalls, rivers, water lily covered billabongs, sweeping plains and Aboriginal art sites – at its doorstep. It’s a perfect place to stock up on provisions and take in the local sights. Meet the locals on

a station stay. Visit Chamberlain Gorge with its Aboriginal paintings; Zebedee Springs featuring Livistonia Palms and thermal pools and Emma Gorge, renowned for its picturesque rock pools.

- The Australian outback is dotted with great little communities – from Australia’s smallest town of **William Creek** (population 16 at last count) to the opal mining frontiers of Coober Pedy and **Andamooka**; from **Birdsville** with its famous pub and annual horse races to the mining town of **Leigh Creek**, with its 2.85km coal train. Hire a plane out of William Creek to fly over Lake Eyre; it’s awesome with or without water. Lean on the dog fence outside Coober Pedy. It was built in the 1950s to keep dingoes out of the rich pastoral lands to the south. Visit the Aboriginal heritage museum in the Arabunna Aboriginal Community Centre in **Marree**.
- Experience the unforgettable thrill of reeling in a giant barramundi in the tropical waters off the tiny Outback town of **Burketown**, home of the World Barramundi Fishing Championships, where the locals love to share a fishing yarn or two with visitors.
- Meet and mingle with real life Outback characters trackside, as you cheer on the camels racing on the red dirt track at the famous **Boullia** Camel Races.
- **Bush races** are big events on the Outback calendar, even if the ‘locals’ have to drive for hours to get there. Head to Roma in Western Queensland, for the Roma Cup or Roma Picnic Races or join thousands of visitors who fly into the tiny Outback town of **Birdsville** for its annual race meeting.
- It is hard to imagine any place in Australia which evokes quite the sense of loneliness and isolation as that of **Birdsville**, on the edge of the Simpson Desert. It operates like some kind of mysterious magnet to people who want to go to the most isolated place on the continent.
- Settle into canvas chairs for old nostalgia movies under the Outback stars at the **Winton** outdoor cinema in central Outback Queensland. Enjoy old Movietone news reels and cartoons under the stars and a cup of tea afterwards.
- Try a round of golf Outback-style at the **Yowah** Golf Course, but be careful because chances are you’ll hit an opal instead of a golf ball. Tee off on a nine-hole course of sand greens and earth fairways.

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