

NATURAL SCIENCES LOOP

CHARLEVILLE TO CHARLEVILLE

Duration: 6 days / 993 km

It has it all; birds, opals, fossicking, fossils, starry night skies, rivers, geology, lakes, billabongs, artesian waters, bilbies and the famous Dig Tree. It's natural history and heritage all rolled into one.

Stand on the bitumen or get off the beaten track to explore. Discover Outback Queensland's natural and manmade heritage, outback towns, outback people, big sky, big country, wildlife habitat [now and prehistoric], rainbow rocks, starry nights and more... go on explore the loop.

Experiences:



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Charleville

Day: 1

Start: **Charleville** End: **Charleville**

Welcome to Charleville and the start of the Natural Sciences Loop. This is a mind-boggling itinerary packed with some of our most intriguing natural science phenomenon. What better place to begin our journey uncovering the mysteries of natural science than the Cosmos Centre? By day you can view the Sun, our most important star, through the Hydrogen Alpha Sun Telescope. Bring your smart phone to capture your own Sun image. On the Night Observatory Tour, the entire roof of the Observatory rolls off to reveal stars, planets and the Milky Way shimmering with incredible clarity against dark night skies. Fancy a rain dance? The Vortex Rainmaker guns in the Graham Andrews Parklands have definitely made an impact on the town. Trialled in Charleville in September 1902, the six guns were fired at two-minute intervals. It was hoped that the vibration caused by the discharge of gas in the clouds would cause rain. Sadly no. But it's an interesting story. If you are keen to learn more about our weather patterns, you might visit the Charleville Bureau of Meteorology and watch the release of a weather balloon. Find out why you should join the Easter 'bilbies not bu ies' campaign on a visit to the Bilby Experience. The work carried out by volunteers to save the Bilby from extinction is nothing short of inspirational. Be prepared to be impressed on a guided tour of the facility with an experienced Bilby Keeper. Stay 2 nights in Charleville

Charleville to Cunnamulla

Day: 2

Start: **Charleville** End: **Cunnamulla**

If you would like to know more about the world's largest underground river, then Cunnamulla is a good place to start. The Great Artesian Basin covers one fifth of Australia and is the life blood of our rural communities. A novel way to learn the story is at The Artesian Time Tunnel in the Cunnamulla Fella Centre. Step inside the simulated old mine lift and hit the button and you'll literally feel the earth shake as you travel back in time - some 100 million years. Discover the link between the Artesian Basin, Australia's largest dinosaurs and the Eromanga Inland Sea. It's a good story! Continuing the water theme put on your walking shoes and follow the 2.5km River Walk at sunset to capture the last colours of the day from the viewing deck. Alternatively, you may like to hire a kayak or take a guided kayak tour of this natural wonderland. Overnight Cunnamulla

Cunnamulla to Thargomindah

Day: 3

Start: **Cunnamulla** End: **Thargomindah**

The Artesian water story turns a bit muddier a further 68 kilometres west in Eulo. Enormous underground pressure from the Great Artesian Basin has forced century old mud through fissures in the ground resulting in Eulo's Artesian Mud Springs. An enterprising local has turned this ancient mud into a modern-day beauty therapy at the Artesian Mud Baths. Speaking of the earth's gems, do you like opals? Spend time exploring Yowah's 'living gallery' with its distinctive opal galleries dotted around town. The main attraction for this area is the unique Yowah Nut. If you're feeling lucky, try your hand at fossicking while in town then continue your drive to Thargomindah. 'Thargo' as the locals call it, was the first town in Australia, and third in the world, to produce hydro-electric power for street lighting. A 'smart cookie' came up with the idea to use the water pressure from the Artesian Basin. You can discover the story for yourself courtesy of a self-tour Code Card from the Visitor Information Centre. This nifty card will give you access to the Hydro Power Plant, Old Hospital and Leahy House. Once inside the attractions, use the card to activate some really interesting videos and life-like holograms - you really feel as though you are part of the story. Overnight Thargomindah

Thargomindah to Eromanga

Day: 4

Start: **Thargomindah** End: **Eromanga**

You'll travel to Eromanga, reputedly Australia's furthest town from the sea. It's located on the edge of the ancient Eromanga Inland Sea. The Eromanga Basin has been explored and developed for petroleum production with the area producing an astonishing 1.5 million barrels of oil each year. Learn more about Eromanga's geological history at the unma ed living History Centre. Simply sign out the key from the Royal Hotel and enjoy wandering the display and watching the informative film in the theatre. Another ancient discovery in Eromanga is dinosaurs. See skeletal remains from one of the largest animals to have walked the earth at the Eromanga Natural History Museum. Picture a large plant-eating sauropod dinosaur, 30 metres long and 6.5 metres high and you're getting the idea. On the guided Australian Dinosaur Giants tour you can touch a 95 million-year-old dinosaur bone, watch fossil preparation in action, see the incredible Eulo megafauna fossils and experience the new theatrette. There are also a number of scheduled dinosaur and megafauna digs open to visitors at selected times throughout the year. Overnight Eromanga

Eromanga to Quilpie

Day: 5

Start: **Eromanga** End: **Quilpie**

Travel east along the fully sealed Cooper Developmental Road to Quilpie. On arrival, make your first stop the Visitor Information Centre, Museum and Gallery. Quilpie is home to the exquisite boulder opal. While in town you can try your luck in the free opal fossicking area and see the stunning Opal Altar at St Finbarr's Church. Quench your thirst and enjoy a great pub meal at the Imperial Hotel. Late this afternoon, drive about 7.4 kilometres from Quilpie to take in a spectacular sunset from Baldy Top, a magnificent boulder formation, millions of years old. The relatively easy ten-minute climb to the top will reward you with breathtaking panoramic vistas, the perfect sunset photo stop. Stay 2 nights in Quilpie DAY 7 Quilpie Uncover the geological mysteries of Hell Hole Gorge National Park with its rugged cliff-lines, deep gorges and rockpools. It's a 2.5-hour drive from Quilpie, so you'll need to start early. There are a number of unsealed roads, so a 4wd is essential. Take a break in Adavale along the way and be sure to check road conditions before visiting the National Park.

Quilpie to Charleville

Day: 6

Start: **Quilpie** End: **Charleville**

Today you'll visit one of the smallest towns in Australia to retain its own postcode. Cooladdi, taking its name from an Aboriginal term for 'black duck', was once home to 270 residents. Now only four remain. Call in to the only business in town, the Fox Trap, a pub, post office, restaurant and motel rolled into one. Continue east along State Route 14 to Charleville. Your Natural Sciences Loop concludes here today.
