

THE SAVANNAH WAY

CAIRNS TO GEORGETOWN

Duration: 12 days / 0 km

Explore five World Heritage areas on a journey through Queensland, the Northern Territory and Western Australia on Australia's adventure drive, the Savannah Way. This trek across the top of Australia starts in the tropical city of Cairns where you can visit the Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics rainforest, and takes you to Broome's spectacular Cable Beach. Diverse landscapes and incredible natural attractions can be found along the way on this 30 day drive.

Discover the world's longest lava tube, fossick for topaz, glide through gorges and go croc spotting in Queensland. Take a historical train ride, visit a gold mining ghost town and see where Burke and Wills set up camp in 1861. Gorges, natural springs and remarkable stone outcrops punctuate the scenery as you drive across the Northern Territory's top end. See the wetlands of World Heritage-listed Kakadu National Park, discover just how good the fishing can be around Borroloola and visit the Aboriginal art sites at Gregory National Park.

The Kimberley region of Western Australia is the country's last frontier with highlights including the World Heritage-listed Bungle Bungles and authentic Aboriginal cultural experiences. End your journey soaking up the outback atmosphere of Broome.

Experiences:



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Queensland Highlights

Day: 1

Start: **Cairns** End: **Cairns**

Travel from the reef through the rainforest to the outback beauty of the Gulf Savannah on the Queensland section of the Savannah Way. Starting in the tropical city of Cairns, you can explore the dual World Heritage areas of the Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics rainforest. This route includes the world's longest lava tube at Undara Volcanic National Park, Mount Surprise where you can fossick for topaz and Einasleigh where the Savannahlander train stops outside the pub. Enjoy the serene beauty of cruising Cobbold Gorge before admiring the amazing mineral collection at Georgetown and reliving the gold mining days as you explore the well preserved buildings of Croydon's historic precinct. Go croc spotting or fishing on Normanton's mighty river, then head to the coast for Karumba's famous sunsets and amazing fishing. Travel through grasslands rich with wildlife including an array of birds to Burketown where the Morning Glory cloud formation rolls across the Gulf of Carpentaria. Relax in the outback oasis of Adel's Grove before exploring the World Heritage-listed Riversleigh Fossil Fields, then be awestruck at Boodjamulla National Park's spectacular Lawn Hill Gorge. The Aboriginal community of Doomadgee is the last stop before the remote Hell's Gate Roadhouse.

Savannah Way Caravan Trail

Day: 2

Start: **Cairns** End: **Cairns**

Meet the friendly characters of the Savannah Way as you travel through pioneering outback towns and rugged landscapes with dramatic natural features. This route starts in the modern tropical city of Cairns where you can explore the dual World Heritage areas of the Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics rainforest. Leave the coast behind as you travel across the Atherton Tableland through Queensland's highest town, Ravenshoe at 920 metres, for the outback beauty of the Gulf Savannah. Undara Volcanic National Park is where you can explore the world's longest lava tube, enjoy a hearty bush breakfast and see diverse wildlife. Learn how to fossick for semi-precious stones at Mount Surprise before heading into Georgetown to see the incredible mineral collection. Croydon has a rich heritage landscape with mining machinery and buildings from the gold rush era. Its well preserved historic precinct showcases public buildings from the late 1800s. Normanton is better known for its colourful pubs and fishing in the mighty Norman River where you are sure to spot a crocodile. At the mouth of the river is Karumba, the centre of the Gulf's prawning and barramundi industries and the place to watch the sun sink into the ocean.

Fossicking Trail

Day: 3

Start: **Mount Surprise** End: **Mount Surprise**

Whether you enjoy digging dusty creek beds for sapphires or using a metal detector to uncover hidden treasure, there are fossicking locations galore on this gem of a trail. Mount Surprise is a gem fossicking centre with topaz, quartz, spinel, garnet, cairngorm and aquamarine to be found. Learn the techniques for sieving at Mount Surprise Gems where you can see how faceting is done. Head out to O'Brien's Creek Designated Fossicking Area, just 37 kilometres north of Mount Surprise, to try your hand digging for topaz in the creek bed. Georgetown's TerrEstrial Centre is a magnificent mineral display and nearby Flat Creek Station welcomes visitors with gold detectors. About 85 kilometres south of Forsyth, the Agate Creek Designated Fossicking Area is where you may find agate or thunder eggs in a range of rich colours. From Forsyth, where you can see the Goldfields Hotel display of agates and gold, head to Einasleigh to visit Copperfield Gorge before travelling to The Lynd Junction. About 90 kilometres south is Moonstone Hill where you can fossick for feldspar, known as moonstone for its silvery-white to blue sheen. Another 16 kilometres south, turn off to Chudleigh Park to look for gem-quality peridot

Fishing Trail

Day: 4

Start: **Croydon** End: **Croydon**

The Gulf Savannah is the land of legendary fishing spots where you can hook mighty barramundi, duel with queen fish or snag threadfin salmon. Fish the estuaries for grunter and fingermark or head offshore to troll for cobia and Spanish mackerel. Start at the largest body of fresh water in the Gulf Savannah, Lake Belmore near Croydon where you can catch red claw, barramundi, sooty grunter and black bream. Next stop is the mighty Norman River at Normanton, the barramundi capital of the Gulf of Carpentaria and host of the annual Barra Classic. Take a fishing tour or try the old bridge on the Karumba road - a king salmon and barramundi hot spot at night. Karumba at the mouth of the Norman River is the centre of the Gulf's prawning and barramundi industries. Cast your line off the beach or join a cruise to catch mud crabs or a variety of ocean fish. Visit the Barramundi Discovery Centre where barramundi are bred for release into the Gulf rivers and feed the 20 kilogram barra. Burketown hosts the World Barramundi Championships and has the Albert and Nicholson Rivers as great fishing locations. Offshore is Sweers Island, a popular fishing resort.

Bird Watching Trail

Day: 5

Start: **Atherton** End: **Atherton**

Diverse habitats including rainforest, swamps and savannah plains are home to extraordinary birdlife on this drive. Start on the Atherton Tablelands at the Mareeba Tropical Savannah and Wetland Reserve where 204 species of wetland and bushland birds live, including black-throated finches and the jabiru. Sarus cranes nest at Bromfield Swamp, while the two-storey bird hide at Hasties Swamp gives a clear view of resident and migratory birds. Wongabel State Forest has the remnants of endangered mabi forest, home to endemic Wet Tropics species including Victoria's riflebird. More upland rainforest birds are at Mount Hypipamee. Woodland and aquatic species are found at Millstream Falls National Park area while thousands of black swans flock to Wurruma Swamp, east of Mount Garnet. The Savannah Way is rich with birdlife especially at dams like the one near Cumberland Chimney, west of Georgetown. Flocks of pink and grey galahs live at Croydon, and diverse species can be seen from the bird hide at nearby Lake Belmore. Water birds including brolga, godwits, sandpipers and the near threatened Australian bustard are at Mutton Hole Wetlands on the way to Karumba where you can take a cruise early in the morning or at sunset to go bird watching.

Heritage Trail

Day: 6

Start: **Cairns** End: **Cairns**

Start the trail at the Cairns Museum to get a feel for Far Northern history from the early Indigenous inhabitants through to the influx of European and Chinese gold seekers and the pioneering cattlemen. Explore World War Two history on the Atherton Tablelands, Australia's largest military base during 1943 to 1945. Learn more at the Mareeba RSL or take a flight in an ex-military aircraft at Warbird Adventures. Listed on the National Heritage Register, Herberton is the Tablelands' oldest town and you can explore Australiana at the Herberton Historic Village. Stay in a restored railway carriage at Undara Experience or travel on the historic Sava ahlander to the outback towns of Mount Surprise, Einasleigh and Forsayth. Visit a working cattle station at nearby Cobbold Gorge before heading to Georgetown to see gold and other treasures that lured prospectors to the region. Croydon's historic precinct is a snapshot of life in the 1800s and where you can board the Gulflander Train to Normanton's Victorian railway station. Visit the site of Burke and Wills' camp of 1861 on the way to Burketown where the cemetery - thought to be Australia's largest mass grave - reveals how 'Gulf Fever' killed much of the population.

Cairns Gulf Savannah 3 Day

Day: 7

Start: **Cairns** End: **Cairns**

Starting in Cairns, the gateway to the Great Barrier Reef, you can drive through the Wet Tropics rainforest to visit Barron Falls and browse the markets in the rainforest village of Kuranda. Continue on to Mareeba, set amidst orchards, coffee plantations and sugar cane fields, and explore the Atherton Tablelands with its rainforest walks, mountain bike trails and waterfalls. Visit Atherton's century-old Chinese temple, a bird watching hide or a volcanic crater lake. Drive into the sava ah grasslands and stop to soak in the therapeutic mineral waters of I ot Hot Springs. Tour the world's longest lava tube system in Undara Volcanic National Park and enjoy campfire entertainment at the Lava Lodge. Start the day with a hearty bush breakfast and spot kangaroos, wallabies and birds on your morning walk. Drive to Mount Surprise where you can learn how to fossick for gems and continue on to the stunning mineral collection at Georgetown's TerrEstrial Centre. Take a good unsealed road to Cobbold Gorge, a working cattle station with a picturesque gorge cruise. Glide past sandstone cliffs to see freshwater crocodiles basking in the sun and darter birds drying their wings after they dive underwater to spear fish with their sharp beaks.

Townsville Gulf Savannah 3 Day

Day: 8

Start: **Townsville** End: **Townsville**

Start in Townsville where you can experience the laid back lifestyle of the tropics at The Strand, a 2.5 kilometre stretch of inner-city beach and playgrounds. Head towards the Outback over Herveys Range through Thorntons Gap, following the route of the prospectors trekking to the remote western gold mining camps. Here you can see one of the oldest buildings in North Queensland, a split log cabin circa 1865. Take the Gregory Developmental Road to The Lynd to have a beer at the Oasis Roadhouse, said to be the smallest bar in Australia as it holds just two thirsty travellers. Next stop is Einasleigh to see Copperfield Gorge and then Forsayth where relics of the Etheridge Goldfields including a rail engine are displayed. Cobbold Gorge can keep you busy for days whether it is gliding on a boat between the sandstone cliffs of the narrow gorge, bushwalking to spot crocodiles, fishing for barramundi or seeing a working cattle station in action. End the journey at another natural wonder, the world's longest lava tubes at Undara Volcanic National Park. Explore the tubes with a guide, see the rim of the volcano and watch micro bats emerge from the tubes at dark.

Hughenden to Georgetown

Day: 9

Start: **Hughenden** End: **Hughenden**

Hughenden is where the first entire dinosaur skeleton was found in Australia and today you can see a life-size replica of Hughie the Muttaborrasaurus at the Flinders Discovery Centre. Take the Kennedy Developmental Road to Porcupine Gorge National Park which features 500 million years of layered rock formations known as Australia's 'Little Grand Canyon'. Admire the gorge from the lookout before walking to the base for a swim in the cool water. Drive through Blackbraes National Park where basalt outcrops and ironbark woodlands are home to grey kangaroos and abundant birdlife. Stop at The Lynd to have a beer at the Oasis Roadhouse, said to be the smallest bar in Australia as it holds just two thirsty travellers. Head to Einasleigh to see Copperfield Gorge and then Forsayth where relics of the Etheridge Goldfields including a rail engine are displayed. Cobbold Gorge can keep you busy for days whether it is gliding on a boat between the sandstone cliffs of the narrow gorge, bushwalking to spot crocodiles, fishing for barramundi or seeing a working cattle station in action. End your journey at Georgetown and admire the TerrEstrial Centre's extensive mineral collection from around the world.

Northern Matilda Highway

Day: 10

Start: **Cloncurry** End: **Cloncurry**

Tour the northern section of the Matilda Highway from Cloncurry, the birthplace of the Royal Flying Doctor Service and the landing place of the first Qantas flight. Stop for fuel or a meal at the Burke and Wills Roadhouse, then turn on to the Wills Developmental Road to Gregory Downs on the tranquil Gregory River where you can canoe and bushwalk. Stay at the outback oasis, Adel's Grove, a haven for wildlife which was once a botanical garden. Boodjamulla (Lawn Hill) National Park is where you can canoe through emerald creeks past sandstone cliffs and see Waanyi rock art. Follow the Wild Dog Dreaming path, take in panoramic views over the Constance Range and see freshwater crocodiles and unique birdlife. Tours to the nearby Riversleigh Fossil Fields interpret this World Heritage-listed treasure trove of clearly visible bones revealing the history of Australia's mammal species. From the Aboriginal community of Doomadgee travel through grasslands rich with birdlife to Burketown where the Morning Glory cloud formation rolls across the Gulf of Carpentaria. End your journey at Normanton at the very top of the Matilda Highway where you can pose with Krys, the life-size replica of the largest crocodile ever captured (8.64 metres).

Kirrama Range Road

Day: 11

Start: **Cardwell** End: **Cardwell**

Drive from the dry savannah plains to Cardwell on the coast, taking in the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and a former logging trail, considered to be one of Queensland's great engineering feats. Start at Undara National Park to see the world's longest lava tube and travel along the Keady Highway, turning right into Guawarra Road, just four kilometres before Mount Garnet. Take Kirrama-Cashmere Road to Blencoe Falls which drop 90 metres into a pool before cascading a further 230 metres into Herbert River Gorge. From the camping area, the five kilometre Jabali walk goes to Blencoe Falls and Herbert River Gorge lookouts. Nearby is The Wet Tropics Great Walk, a multi-day hike following the Herbert River. The Kirrama Range Road in Giringun National Park has a long Indigenous and pioneering history, and features bridged creek crossings, a roadside waterfall and wide elevated views of the valleys. At Tuckers and Murray Valley Lookouts are signs detailing the history of the road. A boardwalk at Society Flat in Kirrama National Park takes you past kauri pines and rose gums which were logged in the area, showing the difference between open woodland and dense rainforest as well as logged and unlogged areas.

Lava Tubes, Gems and Gorges Trail

Day: 12

Start: **Georgetown** End: **Georgetown**

Discover dramatic gorges, lava tubes and brilliant gemstones on the Lava Tubes, Gems and Gorges Trail which loops from the Sava ah Way through the Etheridge Shire. Here you will experience the Australian outback and its wildlife on an adventure taking in the McBride Volcanic Province where eruptions millions of years ago formed a spectacular landscape and left behind a rich mineral heritage. Explore the longest lava tubes in the world at Undara Volcanic National Park, learn about fossicking at Mount Surprise and look for topaz at O'Brien's Creek. Georgetown's TerrEstrial Centre is where you can see more than 4,500 gemstones and minerals from around the world. Flat Creek Station is home to the rare Gouldian finch and popular for gold prospecting. Cruise through the narrow sandstone cliffs of Cobbold Gorge and visit the Agate Creek gem fields which are famous for the world's most colourful thunder eggs. Four wheel-drive vehicles can continue on to Gilberton Outback Retreat while conventional vehicles and caravans must travel via the Lynd Junction where you can stop for a coldie in Australia's smallest bar.
