FAR WEST ADVENTURE DRIVE

LONGREACH TO MOUNT ISA

Duration: 10 days / 1856 km

The Far West Adventure is a self drive tour which begins in the Central West heartland town of Longreach, passes through the Far West shires of Barcoo, Diamantina and Boulia, and finally finishes in the North West town of Mount Isa. Allow at least one week for this 1394 kilometre adventure loop where you'll discover historic and remote outback towns, meet local characters and hear their stories. Experience the magnificent Welford National Park with its red river gum and coolabah lined waters. Visit the ghost town of Betoota and explore Aboriginal cultural attractions. Take in an amazing sunset atop Big Red sand hill on the edge of the Simpson Desert, learn about Boulia's mysterious Min Min Light then drive through ever-changing landscapes to Mount Isa.

Experiences: Major Drive Routes

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Longreach

Day: 1

Start: **Longreach** End: **Longreach**

Begin your Far West Adventure drive in Longreach - the heartland of Outback Queensland. While in Longreach, soak up the history and heritage with visits to the Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame, Qantas Founders Museum and Powerhouse Museum. Step aboard the 'Thomson Belle' paddle wheeler or the M.V. Longreach Explorer and enjoy a cruise on the Thomson River complete with sunset nibbles, di er and entertainment. Take a tour though one of the largest classrooms in the world at the School of Distance Education or experience the thrill of a Cobb and Co. ride. rnrnLongreach offers a range of motel and camping accommodation. Daily flights from Brisbane are scheduled with QantasLink and twice weekly rail services on the Spirit of the Outback. Hire car facilities are also available.

Longreach to Stonehenge

Day: 2

Start: **Longreach** End: **Stonehendge**

From Longreach, drive south to the remote town of Stonehenge. Less than six kilometres from Stonehenge and completely unexpected are a series of magnificent rock holes framed with ghostly white gum trees. About two kilometres from the Stonehenge turnoff, you can sign the visitor's book - Stonehenge style! This involves writing your town name with stones - a quirky tradition started years ago by the then mailman. Take some time to read through the many town names that can be seen embossed in stone. You'll also pass XXXX Hill, a scenic vantage point with breathtaking 360-degree views of the Thomson River flood plains and surrounding Johnstone Ranges. Call into the Stonehenge Visitor Information Centre for great coffee, friendly service, access to Telstra Mobile 3G and free Wi-Fi or have a chat with the locals at the Stonehenge Hotel. A caravan park and free bush campsites are available in Stonehenge.

Stonehenge to Jundah

Day: 3

Start: **Stonehenge** End: **Jundah**

Departing Stonehenge, follow the top loop road to the Longreach-Jundah Road then travel around eight kilometres to the John Egan Pioneer Drive entrance (4WD vehicles only). Discover magnificent landscapes sculptured by nature over millions of years into amazing rock formations. Halfway between Stonehenge and Jundah on the Johnstone Range, is Swanvale Lookout, which provides stunning views, particularly at sunset. Approaching Jundah, watch for the sign posted Native Well - once a valuable source of water for Indigenous people. Learn how these stone wells were manually created. rnrnIn Jundah, visit the Barcoo Shire Museum offering a window into the early pioneering times of the district or take the Settler's Nature Drive along the Thomson River featuring sign-posted descriptions of native plants. Unique 'Welcome Signs' to the town replicate the historic shop front still seen in Jundah's main street. Each sign is linked together by a walking trail, and contains different information giving an insight into the town's early years. Jundah is the closest town to Welford National Park. Enjoy outback hospitality at the Jundah Hotel, offering for meals and accommodation. A caravan park and free bush campsites are available. Jundah Information Centre and Library offers free Wi-Fi.

Jundah to Welford National Park

Day: 4

Start: **Jundah** End: **Welford National Park**

Lying on the Barcoo River Welford National Park's northern boundary is 30 kilometres south east of Jundah. Welford is a land of contrasts where coolabah lined waters and the Barcoo River's grey alluvial cha els slice a brown and green swathe through Mitchell grass plains and arid mulga woodlands. Golden-green spinifex and white-barked ghost gums grow atop a vivid backdrop of red sand dunes. Majestic river red gums line the Barcoo River, the southern boundary of the 124,000 hectare park. Varied habitats create vital refuges for wildlife, including rare yellow-footed rock-wallabies and mulga parrots.rnrnRemnants of Aboriginal heritage and use, including water wells and stone arrangements, are found throughout the park. You can see a rare (rammed earth) homestead built on this former grazing property in 1882. Listed by the National Trust, the homestead is one of only two pisu00e9 constructions still occupied in Queensland and is not open to the public as it is staff quarters.rnAccess roads are unsealed and a 4WD vehicle is recommended. Welford National Park is open all year, however wet weather may cause temporary closures, especially during the wet season from December to March. Camping is permitted at Little Boomerang Waterhole. More information: http://parks. prsr.qld.gov.au/permits

Welford National Park to Windorah

Day: 5

Start: **Welford national park** End: **Windorah**

From Welford National Park, drive across the Cooper Creek into Windorah, the heart of the Cha el Country. Windorah, which is Aboriginal for 'Big Fish', is 35 kilometres south of where the Thomson and Barcoo Rivers join to form the multi-cha elled Cooper Creek. Follow the 12 kilometre Nature Drive through a diverse range of landscapes between Windorah and Cooper Creek. The waterholes offer great fishing and the smaller cha els are ideal for catching yabbies - the inspiration for the Windorah International Yabby Race held a ually in August. The magnificent red sand hills found ten kilometres west of Windorah are definitely worth visiting as the colours change continually throughout the day, especially at sunset. Visit the original slab hut in Windorah, which was relocated from its original site on the Whitula Creek banks and tells an interesting historical story of the town and its people. Windorah Solar Farm is the first solar farm trial by Ergon Energy with five mirrored dishes that generate enough power from the sun to supply most of Windorah's energy requirements. 80 kilometres west of Windorah lies the JC Pub Ruins, once part of the township site of Canterbury. Windorah offers cabins, hotel, caravan and campsites.

Windorah to Betoota

Day: 6

Start: **Windorah** End: **Betoota**

On the drive from Windorah to Betoota, you will see Tulley grave, an old Stocky's grave located under a big Coolibah Tree, and JC Hotel Ruins, the remains of the small town of Canterbury, which was established in 1884. Drive over a 'Jump Up' - where one catchment area rises to the next, and then pass by oil and gas fields. Enjoy a picnic lunch with fabulous views at the elevated Deon's Lookout before passing through the ghost town of Betoota. rnThe town of Betoota was originally set up as a customs post to collect tolls for stock as they travelled to South Australia. It was also a Cobb & Co change station. The last standing hotel was closed in 1997 and the town now stands lonely on a vast gibber plain. While Betoota is mainly a ghost town, it comes alive twice a year with two a ual events - the Horse and Motorbike Gymkhana (first weekend of Queensland's Easter School holidays) and the Betoota Races, which kick off the Simpson Desert Racing Carnival in the last weekend in August. There is a popular camping area at Browns Creek near the Betoota Hotel.

Betoota to Birdsville

Day: 7

Start: **Betoota** End: **Birdsville**

Driving west from Betoota to Birdsville, visit the Dreamtime Serpent - an Aboriginal work of art representing a series of pathways travelled through Country to co ect the river systems in the Cha el Country. The Serpent was created using gravel and gibbers found throughout the shire. rnAt the end of the famous Birdsville Track is the isolated frontier town of Birdsville situated between the Simpson Desert, Sturt's Stony Desert to the south and rich Cha el Country to the north. Visit the Wirrarri Visitor Information Centre and gallery to view local artists' work. rnrnWhilst in Birdsville, enjoy a sunset from Big Red sand hill, a 40-metre-high sand dune on the Simpson Desert's eastern edge, in your own 4WD or on a tour with Desert Edge Tours. Birdsville Billabong also offers great sunsets and is popular for walking, kayaking, swimming or fishing.rnrnTake a short drive to the Birdsville Racetrack, which hosts the famous Birdsville Races on the first weekend in September. Visit the historic Birdsville hotel for hearty meals, cold beer and accommodation. For a great pie and some tall stories, a visit to the quirky Birdsville Bakery is a must do..... along with a camel pie!

Birdsville to Bedourie

Day: 8

Start: **Birdsville** End: **Bedourie**

En route to Bedourie, see the rare and endangered Waddi Trees, considered to be 500-1000 years old, and the unusual 'Shoe Tree', a true testament to the Australian humour! Further on is Mooney's Grave - a strange and sad story of a local ringer's early demise. Continue your drive to Carcoory Ruins, remnants of an early 1900s homestead. The Cuttaburra Crossing wetlands is next where you can view amazing birdlife. Pass historic Glengyle Station, one of the original Sydney Kidman properties and Cookawinchika Waterhole, once an Afghan cameleer's overnight stop. In Bedourie, see The Dust Storm Sculpture representing the dust storm and whirly winds, believed to be the way spirits travelled. Visit the Mud Hut, Bedourie's most historical building dating back to the 1880s, and hear of its many lives. Ease your tired muscles in the 22-person therapeutic spa and cool off in the 25-metre swimming pool at the Artesian Spa and Aquatic Centre. The crystal-clear water comes directly from Bedourie's artesian bore. The Bedourie Race Course comes alive on the second weekend of September for the Bedourie Races, part of the Simpson Desert Racing Carnival, and the Bedourie Camel Races are held on the second weekend in July.

Bedourie to Boulia

Day: 9

Start: **Bedourie** End: **Boulia**

As you travel the Diamantina Developmental Road north to Boulia, take in the changing landscapes from desert sands to the treeless Mitchell Grass country. Keep an eye out for amazing birdlife along the way such as flocks of Budgerigars, Corellas and Galahs. Half way between Bedourie and Boulia observe stunning views from Vaughan Johnson Lookout, where there are toilet and picnic shelter facilities, and interpretation panels providing good information on early pastoralism and transportation. rnrnIn Boulia, visit the Min Min Encounter for a unique theatrical experience based around the famed Min Min Light phenomenon. Call into the well-preserved Stonehouse Museum which is also home to a Marine Reptile Fossil exhibit - evidence that Boulia was part of an Inland Sea 100 million years ago. See the last recognised Corroboree tree of the Pitta Pitta tribe - a distinctive Waddi tree - located near the Boulia Sports and Aquatic Centre.rnrnDrive approximately 25 kilometres out of town to the Old Police Barracks site (1875-1884). The campsite at this natural waterhole had great spiritual significance to the local people. The Boulia Rodeo, Races and Campdraft is a major event at Easter, and the famous Boulia Camel Races are held the in July.

Boulia to Mount Isa

Day: 10

Start: **Boulia** End: **Mount Isa**

Boulia to Mount Isa is via the sealed Diamantina Development Road. View the ever-changing landscapes where long stretches of grazing land are broken by rugged rocky outcrops. En route you may spot a variety of local birdlife. Also keep an eye out for the quirky 'Bicycle Tree,' an example of the outback sense of humour! Arriving into Mount Isa, take in the ochre-red colours of the Selwyn Ranges and the imposing Mount Isa Mine - the World's largest single producer of copper, silver, lead and zinc. Visit the Outback at Isa attraction to get 'hands on' on the Hard Times Mine Tour, explore Australia's ancient past in the Riversleigh Fossil Centre, discover Mount Isa's pioneering history in the Isa Experience and utilise the helpful onsite Visitor Information Centre service. Hear amazing stories of the region's i ovative pioneers on a guided tour of the completely restored Underground Hospital and National Trust Tent House. Drive out to Lake Moondarra for great swimming and fishing. The a ual Mount Isa Rodeo event is held in August. Mount Isa is easily accessed by air with direct flights to and from Brisbane, Townsville, Cairns, Gold Coast and Darwin. Hire car facilities are available.