AUSTRALIA'S COUNTRY WAY

SYDNEY TO ROCKHAMPTON

Duration: 8 days / 0 km

Australia's Country Way guides you to the delights and treasures that pepper the countryside of the Great Dividing Range. From Sydney to Rockhampton the holiday is as much about savouring the journey as reaching the destination. Winding roads reveal sweeping vistas, seasonal produce and welcoming hospitality.

Kilometres of crops and grazing stock flank the road, interrupted by stunning natural formations and welcoming towns. Accommodation ranges from friendly roadside motels to holiday parks, cosy cabins, romantic bed and breakfasts, luxury retreats and farm stays. Like a giant smorgasbord, Australia's Country Way uncovers the true blue producers and there's no shortage of ways to enjoy the country harvest. Each region has its claim to culinary fame and restaurants, cafes, cellar doors and deli's harness these assets along the route.

Explore wine regions of the Hunter Valley, Tamworth, New England, Granite Belt and South Burnett regions. Uncover the bountiful citrus, beef and grain growing districts of the Darling Downs, South and North Burnett, Sandstone Wonders and Rockhampton. Enjoy the fruit and vegetables of Stanthorpe and Warwick in Queensland's high country or drop a line for fresh fish in the rivers, dams and lakes dotted along the highway.

Experiences: Family Friendly

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Sydney to Tamworth

Day: 1

Start: **Sydney** End: **Tamworth**

Head north out of Sydney towards Newcastle swinging inland through Cessnock in the Hunter Valley's hinterland wine country. Take a pit stop to enjoy award wi ing wines, olives, seasonal fruit, local cheeses and perhaps overnighting in a cosy cottage amongst the vineyards. Singleton is next, a laidback atmosphere awaits in this town which is conveniently bordered by the Broke Fordwich wine region. The centres of Broke and Muswellbrook are surrounded by national parks and steeped in the heritage of Australian bush lore. Into the Upper Hunter the fertile river flats house award wi ing wineries, horse studs, quaint lane ways and country roads winding through rolling hills. Big Sky Country signals you are half way to Toowoomba and a long way from the daily grind. The landscape shifts to the famous Australian grazing country and gorge country.

Tamworth to Armidale

Day: 2

Start: **Tamworth** End: **Armidale**

The Golden Guitar stands as a pere ial monument to a true blue country heart, celebrated in earnest at the Tamworth Country Music Festival - attracting over 50,000 visitors from over the world, while about 800 artists make up 2,500 acts in 120 different venues. rnrnTamworth is the capital of the New England North West region of New South Wales. Accordingly, the centre of the town has grown into a leafy hub of paved walkways, seating, palm trees and cafes offering a friendly and fuss-free city for all to enjoy. There's a wealth of accommodation options including bed and breakfasts, farm stays, caravan parks, five star and premium hotels. Tamworth offers ready access to Warrabah National Park - where the upper Namoi River flows through gorges and camping and fishing grounds. rnrnTravelling north, Australia's Country Way traverses the stunning tablelands around Armidale. Buffered against the escarpment of the Great Dividing Range rugged terrain gives way to the beautiful natural settings of the New England National Parks, Cathedral Rock and Oxley Wild Rivers. Armidale offers the finely tuned combination of sophisticated amenities, beautiful produce and dining in a welcoming country ambience.

Armidale to Tenterfield

Day: 3

Start: **Armidale** End: **Tenterfield**

Guyra, on top of the range, is an attractive town with a diverse blend of attractions. Renowned for their natural beauty the New England Tablelands are distinct from one season to the next. The Glen I es region is known as Celtic Country, an identity proudly taken on by locals and physically manifested by the Standing Stones. The town's lively spirit is also evidenced in the range of festivals and events. There's also a generous allocation of World Heritage National Parks including the Gibraltar Range and Washpool. Some of the region's other great assets actually have a price on them - sapphires, emeralds and topaz of the gem and mineral fields. rnrnWest of Glen I es and off Australia's Country Way, in the heart of gemstone country lies Inverell, an ideal place to try your hand at fossicking. Further north along Australia's Country Way is Tenterfield where the famous saddlery still stands. Throughout the town there is nostalgia for forgotten eras preserved in landmark buildings commemorating citizens such as Sir Henry Parkes, Father of Federation. Take a trip out to the stunning Bald Rock and Boonoo Boonoo Falls National Parks. rnrnThen it's a short journey to the state border with Queensland.

Tenterfield to Warwick

Day: 4

Start: **Tenterfield** End: **Warwick**

The high altitude granite country signals the entry into Queensland and the Granite Belt. The Southern Downs is a land of contrasts from the stark high country around Stanthorpe to the rolling downs of Warwick and beyond. The weather, well-drained soil and viticultural expertise have transformed the region's once fledgling wine community into a burgeoning industry based around Stanthorpe. Boutique businesses offer fine dining, cellar doors, food and wine packages and tours making this special part of Queensland easy to access and enjoy. Stock up at roadside stalls and cellar doors and sample fresh fruit and berries straight from the grower. rnrnLocal festivals celebrate the harvest seasons and country life, they include the Small Winemakers Show, Opera in the Vineyard and the Apple and Grape Harvest Festival in Stanthorpe. National Parks abound with Girraween and Sundown being must sees. As you descend to the rolling downs, the town of Warwick is your next stop. It boasts some of Queensland's finest sandstone buildings, a living reminder of our historical past. The Warwick Rodeo and Campdraft are famous across Australia and seasonal differences are celebrated at the Jumpers and Jazz Festival in July.

Warwick to Toowoomba

Day: 5

Start: **Warwick** End: **Toowoomba**

Driving north from Warwick takes you to a major intersection. Those heading to Brisbane and the Gold Coast head east through Cu ingham's Gap, take a break here to admire the views from the Main Range National Park. Australia's Country Way continues north through the small township of Allora, you can gain a sense of the history of the Darling Downs by visiting Glengallan Historic Homestead or head into the Goomburra Valley for a bush adventure. Author Steel Rudd lived near Nobby and wrote of the country life in 'On Our Selection' which formed the basis of the Dad and Dave radio series. rnrnThe rolling Darling Downs are fertile farmlands for grain, sunflowers, olives, cattle and gourmet delights. Toowoomba is the largest inland city in Australia, it is known as the Garden City for its parks, gardens, flowers and the Carnival of Flowers which takes place every September. It is at the junction of highways which head east to Brisbane and west to Queensland's Outback. Toowoomba is a modern city thriving on the agricultural and resource industries with many attractions to keep you in town a few days.

Toowoomba to Kingaroy

Day: 6

Start: **Toowoomba** End: **Kingaroy**

Australia's Country Way runs along the Great Dividing Range with cool mountain National Parks such as Crows Nest, Ravensbourne and The Palms. Small towns boast art and craft stores and places to taste the region's food and wine. Local historical societies give you a taste of times past in their museums and fossick through the antique shops for that special memento of the area. Dams provide great freshwater fishing opportunities. At Yarraman there is a road that co ects to the north of Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast. Australia's Country Way continues through the hilly forests of the South Burnett through Nanango, learn about forestry at Wondai's South Burnett Tourism Industry Museum. Kingaroy is well known as peanut country, make sure you pick some up on your visit. A side road takes you to the scenic Bunya Mountains, so named after the Bunya Pines which were coveted by the Aborigines for their nuts. Spend some time in this area to taste the local produce, olives and wine. Accommodation includes bed and breakfasts, cabins, caravan parks, hotels, motel and camping. The South Burnett is prime wine country so make time to visit some cellar doors to taste and buy the local product.

Kingaroy to Monto

Day: 7

Start: **Kingaroy** End: **Monto**

Travelling north, Australia's Country Way heads towards the North Burnett towns of Gayndah and Mundubbera, a citrus growing area that produces most of Australia's mandarins. A major intersection at Ban Ban Springs gives access to Bundaberg, Biggenden and Childers. Gayndah straddles the Burnett River and you have an opportunity to sample and buy local produce at the roadside stalls. Mundubbera is just off the highway at the junction of the Rural Getaway. Picnic by the river and buy local citrus and stone fruit in season. rnrnThe Auburn River National Park is west of here. The Burnett River is famous for the Ceratodus or Lungfish, a relic of some 380 million years. These are a protected species but try your luck for freshwater fish in the lakes and rivers. Take in the local history at museums in Gayndah and Eidsvold. RM Williams lived in the Eidsvold area for many years and his life is celebrated in the RM Williams Australian Bush Learning Centre on the south side of the town. Monto is the gateway to Cania Gorge, a spectacular sandstone national park. Lake Cania provides a great venue for fishing and boating while there are many walks for keen bushwalkers.

Monto to Rockhampton

Day: 8

Start: **Monto** End: **Rockhampton**

The country is drier, with sandstone outcrops and more cattle in Sandstone Wonders. Camp at Kroombit Tops National Park and wake to incredible views from the sandstone cliffs. Listen out for musical notes chimed out by Mount Scoria's six sided basalt peaks or go fishing for Barramundi, Golden Perch or Red Claw at Lake Callide, just 12 kilometres east of Biloela en route to Gladstone. Other natural wonders not to be missed in the Sandstone Wdoners include Isla Gorge and Expedition National Park. While in Biloela visit the Queensland Heritage Park to enjoy the heritage displays which celebrate the our nation's glorious past. Once you have headed out of the Sandstone Wonders to the highway's end in Rockhampton, you pass by the once great mining town of Mount Morgan. The gold mine operated from 1882 for 99 years and has left its mark on the area. Spend some time in town and visit the many historical reminders of that era. Rockhampton is well known as the Beef Capital of Australia and now the resources industry and education are making their mark. Look out for the bull statues situated throughout the city celebrating the breeds grown in the area.