



- TV
- Property
- Travel
- Pets
- Experts
- Videos
- Forum
- Win
- More

LifeStyle Channel » Travel » Travel Tips » 6 Reasons to Visit Outback NSW



6 Reasons to Visit Outback NSW

by Fiona Harper



Print +1 Tweet

Apply to be on our TV shows!

Facebook Twitter Community

Like us on Facebook

Calculators

- Property Calculators
- Health Calculators
- Home and Garden Calculators

Internet Archive Wayback Machine http://www.lifestyle.com.au/travel/6-reasons-to-visit-outback-nsw.aspx 16 captures 18 Mar 2015 - 15 Mar 2021

you know Bourke, you know Australia: What he failed to mention is that Bourke is a heck of a long way from anywhere. Travel Writer Fiona Harper explores the great Aussie outback of NSW.

The phrase 'back o' Bourke', meaning the middle of nowhere or the back of beyond, is classic Aussie slang. So where exactly is Bourke? And what is to be found out the back of the place once you've found it? Wide open spaces and endless blue skies, as it turns out.

About 750 km northwest of Sydney, in Outback NSW roads barely deviate from dead straight, careering across vast plains occasionally broken by cattle grazing on saltbush. Windmills lethargically pump moisture from weathered red earth. Road trains come in colossal lengths. It's hot. Real hot.

1. Bourke

Rolling into Bourke's main street, which is mostly bereft of people, the charms of this former vital trading post are not immediately evident. Wide tree-lined streets are lined with shopfronts concealed behind security shutters. The Darling River, which once accommodated almost 100 riverboats carrying wool for shipping overseas from Adelaide is little more than a coffee-coloured stream. A couple of historic pubs, where larger than life characters have always featured, ply travellers and locals with cold beer. Many of those characters never left town.

2. Bourke Cemetery

Epitaphs document tales of tragedy in a cemetery that has been the scene of two of Australia's most famous funerals. Headstones dispel any romantic notions of bush life: 'perished in the bush', 'found hanging in the bush', 'killed by lightning', 'shot dead by Police', 'poisoned himself', or, sadly, simply 'murdered'.

Inspired by melancholy, Henry Lawson penned one of his best known stories *The Union Buries its Dead* after attending the funeral of an unknown stockman who drowned in a billabong near Bourke.

By far the most remarkable memorial, a mammoth carved plinth of granite, belongs to surgeon Professor Fred Hollows, the eye surgeon known worldwide for his ambition to restore the sight of people going needlessly blind. Named Australian of the Year three years before his death in 1993, Hollows' motto was 'that all the world may see'. His state funeral was followed by his return to the red dirt of Bourke where he had formed deep friendships with the local community.

3. Cobar

Mining is big business around Cobar. In fact, the towns' name means the 'colour of copper' in a local Aboriginal language. Probably one of the most comprehensive museums this side of the black stump, the Cobar Heritage Centre is worth a visit even if you 'don't do museums'. An extraordinary collection of artefacts are housed in the former administration building of the Great Cobar Copper Mine.

Nearby, the Fort Burke lookout provides a bird's eye view into the open cut pit of a copper mine. A viewing platform is perched on the upper lip of the mine, while far below enormous dump trucks hauling rocks appear to be no larger than matchbox-sized toys.



4. Bogans beware!

I kid you not, there is actually a Bogan Shire. There's also a Bogan River, Bogan shops and of course there's a Bogan pub. Naturally, traders do a brisk trade in Bogan-themed t-shirts, thongs and stubbie coolers.

Not for the numerically challenged, Beancounters House is a super friendly boutique hotel in the heart of downtown Nyngan. The former headquarters of the Bank of NSW, Westpac now occupies the ground floor while upstairs has been converted into gorgeous heritage-style guest quarters. Equipped with one of the most comfortable beds this writer has ever slept in (and just quietly, that's a lot!), it's almost worth the long drive to Bogan-ville just to collapse into their beds.

Across the road in the old railway station, the Nyngan Museum is easily spotted by the Army helicopter mounted high on a pillar which signifies the 1990 floods when most Nyngan residents were evacuated.

5. Gundabooka National Park

Amid a sun-seared landscape that wobbles in rivulets of heat rays that distort the horizon, Mt Gunderbooka rises 500 metres above a featureless plain. With weathered red soils and cobalt blue skies, **Gundabooka National Park** is about 50 km south of Bourke. Traditional lands of the Ngemba and Paakandji people, a striking rock art gallery overhangs an eucalypt-lined creek. Ancient motifs depict dancers, hand stencils, hunting tools and animals etched into 385 million year old sandstone. Plop onto an ancient sandstone relic and absorb the sounds of the bush and long-standing history of this significant Aboriginal site.

6. Mt Grenfell Historic Site

Peaceful and remote (70km northwest of Cobar), Mt Grenfell Historic site contains another significant rock art gallery in Ngiyampaa Country. Set on a rocky ridge above a semi permanent waterhole, subjects include human figures, kangaroos, birds, lizards and hand stencils. Other designs are more abstract, with paintings layered upon each other creating a depth of artworks with the most recent easily distinguished. The sheer volume of paintings is extraordinary with over 1,300 images documented.

Linger over the picnic area near the rock art site to gain a sense of Aboriginal culture where paintings were created with ceremonial significance. You can almost feel the history oozing from rocks underfoot.

For more information, go to **Visit Outback NSW** visitoutbacknsw.com

Fiona Harper is a travel writer specialising in cruising, active and soft adventures. Follow her at travelboatinglifestyle.com

Print +1 Tweet

Join the Conversation

Please note, LifeStyle would respond to all comments posted in our comments. If you have a comment or query you cannot like LifeStyle to comment to, please use our feedback form.

0 comments

Please login to comment



Win 1 of 10 \$500 Gift Cards

TV Guide

LifeStyle FOOD HOME YOU

Location, Location, Location
Lincoln & Leeds Revisited

Now: 11:25pm

Grand Designs Australia
Brookfield Spotted Gum House

Next: 12:25am