



Central West Queensland national parks



Contents

- Parks at a glance (facilities and activities) 2
- Welcome 3
- Map of Central West Queensland 4
- Choose your escape 5
- Experience the Outback 6
- Discover a land of boom and bust 8
- Idalia National Park 10
- Welford National Park 12
- Lochern National Park 14
- Forest Den National Park 15
- Bladensburg National Park 16
- Combo Waterhole Conservation Park 18
- Lark Quarry Conservation Park 19
- Diamantina National Park 20
- Warracoota Circuit Drive 22
- Elizabeth Springs Conservation Park 23
- Munga-Thirri National Park 24
- Travelling tips, packing checklist, Be prepared, Be safe 26
- Further information 28

Parks at a glance

	Toilets (non-flushing)	Camping	Day-use area	Ranger Base	Short walks	2WD access	Scenic drive (4WD essential)	Mountain biking	Kayaking/ Canoeing	Scenic viewpoint
Bladensburg NP	✓	✓		✓		✓*	✓	✓		✓
Combo Waterhole CP	✓		✓		✓	✓				
Lark Quarry CP	✓		✓		✓	✓*				✓
Diamantina NP	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Elizabeth Springs CP					✓					
Munga-Thirri NP (Simpson Desert)		✓		✓			✓			
Lochern NP		✓		✓		✓*	✓	✓	✓	
Forest Den NP		✓				✓*		✓		
Idalia NP	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
Welford NP	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓*	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note: *2WD to park entry and/or specific campsite only, and only during dry weather. 4WD recommended.

Welcome to Central West Queensland national parks

Be adventurous!

Savour

sunlit plains extended, wildflowers blossoming after rain and the freedom of sleeping out under a blanket of never-ending stars.



A

Journey

off the beaten track over dusty roads or desert dunes into Queensland's dry, but far from lifeless, heart.



B

Follow

the footsteps of superbly adapted arid-zone creatures and long-departed dinosaurs. Traverse ancient Aboriginal trading routes and the tracks of hardy explorers and resilient stockmen.



E

Relax

under a shady gum tree on the banks of a river. Boil a billy, throw in a line and watch for wildlife taking refuge from the dry.



C



D

Capture

the essence of the real Australia—harsh but fragile, vivid yet subtle, as dangerous as it is beautiful. Pen a poem, paint a sunset, capture it on camera or simply spin a yarn!



F

Revel

in the romance and stories of this wide brown land and its people. Catch a glimpse of hardships overcome to survive vast distances and unpredictable cycles of boom and bust!

 (A) Peter Scott © Qld Govt; (B) © Karen Smith; (C) Chris Mitchell © Qld Govt; (D) © Robert Ashdown; (E) © Qld Govt; (F) Karen Smith © Qld Govt.

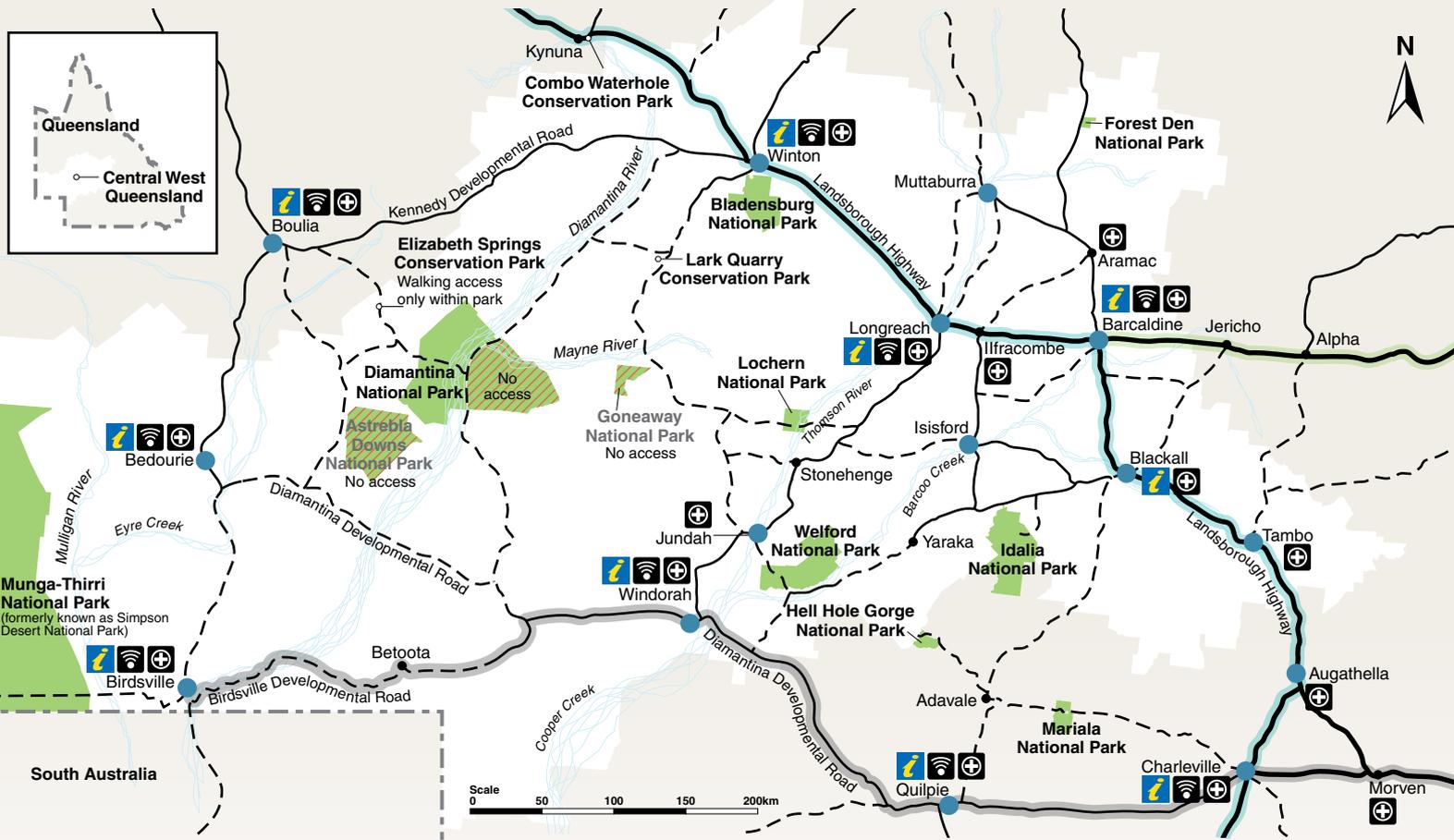
“ Welcome to some of the most isolated national parks in Queensland. Climb 30m high sand dunes, explore rocky gorges, spot endangered wildlife, travel to the one of the world's most famous dinosaur trackways. Remember to be self-sufficient—supplies and help can often be hundreds of kilometres away.

Gary Jorgensen, Senior Ranger
On behalf of rangers living and working in the west.



Discover shifting sand dunes stretching towards the horizon.

Photo: © John Augusteyn



Some parks require a 4WD to access, please see individual park maps within this guide for more detail.

Legend for publication

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|--|---------------------------------|
| National park | State boundary | Visitor information centre | Sheltered picnic area | 4WD access |
| Conservation park | Town with fuel and accommodation | Wi-Fi access (visitor information centre) | Natural viewpoint with no built structure or handrails | Mountain biking |
| Restricted access area do not enter | Town with fuel, mechanical repairs, accommodation and a dump point for chemical toilet waste | Ranger station | Refreshments | Canoeing/kayaking |
| Creek/river | Point of interest | Information | Walking track | Fishing |
| Waterway | | Parking | Self-guided walking track | Camping |
| Highway | | Disabled access | Wildlife spotting | Caravan (high clearance) |
| Sealed road | Drive Queensland Routes | Toilets/pit toilets | Cultural heritage site | Camper trailer (high clearance) |
| Unsealed road | Warrego Way | Hospital or medical services | Car access | |
| 4WD road | Matilda Way | | | |
| | Capricorn Way | | | |

Choose your escape

Head west into the sunset, where distance travelled is measured in days or the number of 'roos, emus or flocks of wild budgies seen. Savour wide blue skies contrasting against rich red earth and wildflowers blossoming in a kaleidoscope of colours amid spindly spinifex after rain. Like the dust that seeps into your boots, the vividness and spirit of this timeless land will be forever etched in your memory.

Embrace vast horizons yet to be explored! Be sure to include a visit to some of Queensland's largest national parks in your itinerary.



 (Above): Enjoying the vivid colours and contours of the Spinifex circuit at Lark Quarry.
© Karen Smith

(Below): Savouring the sunset at Welford National Park.
© Shane Hume



Short trips from an Outback town

(half to one day)

- Bladensburg National Park (follow The Route of the River Gum from Winton or take Scrammy Drive)
- Lark Quarry dinosaur trackways
- Combo Waterhole near Kynuna
- Big Red west of Birdsville (on the way to Munga-Thirri National Park)

Taste of the Outback journeys

(several days to a week)

- Dinosaurs and Drovers (Bladensburg—Lark Quarry—Combo Waterhole)
- Cooper Catchment (Idalia—Welford—Lochern; just one or a combination)
- Forest Den National Park
- Diamantina National Park

Extended 4WD expeditions

(one to two weeks)

- Dusty Diamantina (Bladensburg—Combo Waterhole—Lark Quarry—Diamantina—Elizabeth Springs)
- Munga-Thirri National Park (Simpson Desert) (adds at least one week to any itinerary)

Suggested itineraries

Dinosaurs and drovers

Radiate out from your overnight base at Winton or Bladensburg National Park, venturing north-west along the highway across the Mitchell grass plains to legendary Combo Waterhole, or south on rough unsealed roads into the eroded sandstone ranges of Bladensburg and Lark Quarry. Take a series of day trips, visiting other local heritage sites in and around Winton using self-guided drive brochures available from the visitor information centre. 4WD vehicles are not essential, but are recommended. (Minimum 600km if you visit all parks mentioned.)

Cooper catchment

Drive direct or make a week-long loop (minimum 500km) starting from Blackall, Windorah or Longreach along minor byways and unsealed roads to Idalia, Welford or Lochern national parks. Discover waterholes of the Thomson or Barcoo rivers at Lochern and Welford, and on leisurely walks and nature drives at towns of Jundah, Stonehenge, Longreach and Isisford. Relax beside Cooper Creek at Windorah. Stop for scenic views near Yaraka, and between Jundah and Stonehenge where you can also see Aboriginal wells. Step back in time at local museums and heritage sites (Windorah, Jundah, Isisford, Emmet) and learn about the Outback's pastoral history at major heritage tourism attractions at Blackall, Barcardine and Longreach.

Dusty Diamantina

Touch the upper reaches of this mighty river system near its source when you visit Combo Waterhole (just off the highway near Kynuna) or seasonal feeder creeks at Bladensburg National Park or Lark Quarry south of Winton. If well-prepared for a true 4WD challenge, follow the river downstream to Diamantina National Park along dusty, rough roads, stopping for scenic views across steep-sided plateau (mesa) country and to relive the past at remains of Old Cork Station and the Mayne Hotel. After spending a few days relaxing by waterholes and exploring sandhill country, return home past Elizabeth Springs and back to Winton via Middleton (a minimum 1,000km loop), or head west to Boulia and Bedourie; or downstream to Birdsville. Diamantina National Park can also be accessed from Windorah.



Nomadic budgerigars are regularly on the move searching for grass seeds.

Photo: Alicia Whittington © Qld Govt

Experience the Outback

In Central West Queensland you'll visit some of the hottest and driest places in Australia. You'll get dust in your eyes, flies in your face, perhaps grit between your teeth—or even be stuck in some mud! Wear a grin as wide as the landscape and capture memories lasting a lifetime.

Best time to go

The cooler months (April to September) are the best time to visit Central West Queensland to avoid extreme summer daytime temperatures of over 45°C and the risk of rainfall events and flooding.

Rain can fall at any time of the year. Many outback roads are unsealed and impassable after even a small amount of rain. Flooding can occur suddenly—even weeks after rain in catchments upstream. No park has all weather access. **Munga-Thirri National Park (Simpson Desert) is closed from 1 December to 15 March.**

Stop along the way

Remote national parks might be your destination, but don't just drive past local towns. Stop in for fuel and food, see local sights, have a meal at the pub or stay the night. Even most small towns have the basics and you'll receive warm, country hospitality and helpful advice.

Add local flavour

Add one of the region's fun-loving events or tourist attractions to your journey. Whether at races for horses, camels or yabbies; a showcase of livestock or rural prowess; an annual festival or a world-famous museum—the Outback spirit is alive and well and waiting for you to join in. Meet local characters, try a new skill, spin a yarn and savour the experience. Find out more at outbackqueensland.com.au

Guide yourself or go with a local

Plan your own epic tour from an outback town into the mulga scrub, down a river or into the desert. Seek nature, find solitude or let history fill you with wonder. If you prefer someone else to do the planning, driving or to supply the equipment, you can join tours with experienced guides—for just a day or overnight. Visit outbackqueensland.com.au



 Experience heading off the beaten track.
© Tourism & Events Qld
(Above right): Enjoy spotting woodland birds in mulga scrub or among the eucalypts.
Fiona Leverington © Qld Govt



Welford National Park's spinifex-clad sand dunes hint of the Simpson Desert in Munga-Thirri, while its open mulga on red soil contrasts with the dense mulga of Idalia's rocky ranges.

Many parks have Mitchell grasslands. Walk through them at Lochern, Forest Den, Diamantina and Combo Waterhole or look over them from a higher vantage point at Bladensburg.



Waterbirds and honeyeaters stay within reach of the tree-lined river channels and waterholes of Diamantina, Lochern and Welford national parks.



Channel country dominates at Diamantina National Park which has extensive wetlands of national significance.

Nestled amid Lark Quarry's spinifex-clad jump-ups, you'll find footprints left by dinosaurs 100 million years ago.



Best parks to...

Walk on marked tracks—

Idalia, Welford, Lark Quarry and Combo Waterhole.

Camp by a waterhole—

Diamantina, Welford, Lochern and Bladensburg.

Throw in a line, or take a quiet

paddle on a waterhole—

Welford, Lochern, Bladensburg and Diamantina.

Take a scenic drive—

Idalia, Welford, Lochern, Bladensburg and Diamantina.

Mountain bike on bush roads—

Idalia, Diamantina, Welford and Lochern.

Relive the past—

Idalia, Welford, Lochern, Bladensburg, Combo Waterhole and Diamantina.

Discover dinosaurs—

Lark Quarry.

Capture the magic of the last rays

of sunset from a cliff overlooking

mulga at Idalia and Welford, across open plains at Diamantina or Bladensburg, or from the top of a sand dune at Welford, Diamantina or Munga-Thirri.

Snap a picture-perfect scene

where dinosaurs walked (Lark Quarry), under a coolabah tree (Combo Waterhole), or overlooking the mighty Diamantina Gates (Diamantina).

Encounter wildlife!

Tick kangaroos and wallabies off

your list at Idalia, Welford, Lochern and Bladensburg.

Watch birds flock to watering holes

at Diamantina, Welford, Idalia, Combo Waterhole and Forest Den.

 (Top to bottom):
© John Augusteyn; © Qld Govt;
© Qld Govt; © Qld Govt;
Peter Lik © Tourism and Events Qld



Tiny thorny devils in Munga-Thirri wear fearsome camouflage.

Photo: © Robert Ashdown

Discover a land of boom and bust

There's much more happening in the Outback than evident at first glance. Be thrilled by discovering superbly camouflaged wildlife, a perfectly adapted plant, an anomaly in the landscape or relics of times long gone.

Life in the dry

Humans, plants and animals all depend on unpredictable flood cycles of the world's most variable watercourses—Cooper Creek and Diamantina River.

First Nations people thrived on the secret bounty of these arid and semi-arid lands, trading along rivers and finding food in unlikely places. Artefacts, stories and connections remain and Aboriginal traditions and heritage are still alive today.

Explorers, miners and pastoralists sought their fortunes. Many died, some barely survived, but others adapted to establish the towns, pastoral holdings and the parks and reserves of today.

 (Below): Rivers flood out over flat channel country.
© Rob Murphy

(Right): Scrammy Gorge.
Rosemary Millward © Qld Govt

(Far right): Mulga trees.
© Robert Ashdown

Landscapes worn by time

Craggy escarpments and deep gullies tell of a land alternately shaped by, then starved of, water. Sea floors and lakebeds of 65–140 million years ago form the base of the landscape, encasing fossils from shellfish to dinosaurs, now exposed by the passage of time.



Arid environments

Mitchell grass downs

Natural grasslands, named for the dominant native Mitchell grass, support the region's grazing industry. Unlike trees, grasses can anchor in dark clay soils that expand when moist and crack deeply when dry.

Mulga lands

Growing in almost pure stands, or interspersed with grasslands and eucalypt-acacia woodlands, mulga trees dominate slightly moister, higher country in the east of the region. Each mulga tree (pictured below) directs rain to its deep tap root, allowing survival in a dry climate.



Channel country

Mighty inland rivers disperse across gently sloping land into braided channels, creating waterholes, wetlands and floodplains tens of kilometres wide. Coolabah woodlands, sand plains and vast dunefields are adapted to infrequent rains that fall in short but massive deluges that flood watercourses then evaporate in the parching heat.



Memorable mammals

In the heat of the day mammals rest in a shady spot, or hide in soil cracks and crevices or down a burrow. Keep watch in the late afternoon or at night.

Brilliant birds

Be surprised by the variety and numbers of birds in the dry inland. Admire soaring birds of prey and colourful parrots, babblers in the mulga and honeyeaters along creeklines. Waterbirds seek refuge at waterholes or breed opportunistically after floods.



Resilient reptiles

Encounter reptiles when it is warm or see tracks where they have been. Arid lands are home to a diverse range of superbly adapted lizards, dragons, skinks, geckos and snakes.

Fantastic fish, turtles and frogs

Where there is water there is life. More than a dozen fish are found in the region. Many, like the Cooper Creek catfish (at Lochern) and the unique Lake Eyre basin yellow-belly are not found anywhere outside these catchments.

What wildlife where?

Go birdwatching

Spot birds along creeks and waterholes at Idalia, Forest Den, Combo Waterhole, Welford, and at Surprise Creek and in the spinifex grasslands at Bladensburg. Hunters Gorge and Lake Constance at Diamantina, Boomerang Waterhole at Welford and Broadwater Lagoon at Lochern are great for watching waterbirds.

Spot lizards and snakes

See yellow-spotted monitors at Bladensburg, Idalia, Lochern and Diamantina. Ring-tailed dragons are found by day at Lark Quarry and spiny-tailed geckos hunt at night at Bladensburg. Gilbert's dragons live in woodlands and river margins, waving their legs in turn to cool their feet.

Discover mammals

Both red and grey kangaroos graze open plains while common wallaroos prefer the slopes of ranges. Black-striped wallabies inhabit thicker vegetation, and at Idalia, swamp wallabies live along creek beds. Spot echidnas and possums at Idalia, Lochern, Bladensburg and Welford; gliders and insect-eating bats can be seen at Idalia and Forest Den. Of the ground-dwelling mammals, stripe-faced dunnarts and fat-tailed dunnarts are widespread; unlike the endangered bilbies and kowaris seen rarely at Diamantina. In scrubby sand country you might spy a tiny kultarr bounding gracefully in search of cockroaches and other bugs.

 (Clockwise from top left): Ornate burrowing frogs (pictured) and water holding frogs are widespread, hidden away waiting until it rains again. Robert Ashdown © Qld Govt

Black-headed pythons stretch out across roads at night in a range of habitats. © Shane Hume

Colourful mulga parrots favour a diet of seeds. © Shane Hume

From huge wedge-tailed eagles (left) soaring high on upswept wings, to swift, streamlined falcons and kites that seem to hang in mid-air, birds of prey are always on the lookout for their next meal. © John Augusteyn

Central netted dragons can be seen at Lochern. © Shane Hume

Watch wildlife, don't hit it!

Vehicles share the road with wildlife. Minimise your chance of collision by travelling at or below the speed limit, and avoid driving at dusk or dawn.



Rugged ranges provide panoramic views.

Photo: Fiona Leverington © Qld Govt

Idalia National Park

Must dos

- Tick 6 species of kangaroos and wallabies off your 'must see' list.
- Gaze from craggy escarpments over mulga-covered ridges to distant plains beyond. Trees line waterways that stretch from rocks to river channels.
- Imagine stories behind the rusty iron and splintered bush timber of old stockyards, huts and pastoral-era relics at Old Idalia.
- Camp hidden in thick mulga scrub near Monks Tank and awaken to the morning chorus of outback birds.

Getting there

Idalia National Park is 113km south-west of Blackall in the Gowan Ranges. To access the park, a 4WD is recommended. From Blackall, head west along the Isisford Road for 44km, then turn left onto Blackall–Emmet Road. After 25km turn left again at the Idalia National Park sign and follow the road for 44km to the entrance of the park. It is a further 33km to Monks Tank camping area.

Fuel and supplies are available from Blackall (113km) and Isisford (120km).

Did you know?

Yellow-footed rock-wallabies *Petrogale xanthopus celeris* are well-camouflaged in the safety of the rocky outcrops, leaving only to drink and graze at the base of cliffs. They are vulnerable to extinction and threatened by foxes and competitors such as goats and sheep. Please do not disturb them by climbing down among the rocks.

Emerge from thick mulga scrub to lofty escarpments and rocky gorges where elusive yellow-footed rock-wallabies hide and views surprise. Be captivated by colourful sunsets over distant plains and explore heritage sites for an insight into the hardships faced by those living here in years gone by.

Mulga scrub covers much of 144,000ha Idalia, and mature mulga has good leaf litter cover and fallen logs that make ideal fauna habitat. Dawson gums and mountain yapunyah trees break the expanse of mulga green on upper slopes; while river red gums and poplar box grow on sandy flats beside the usually dry Bulloo River.

Things to do

Driving and mountain biking

Most driving tracks are suitable for keen mountain bikers experienced in arid and remote terrain. It's 47km from the park entrance to Emmet Pocket lookout, with several side branches and walks along the way.

Wildlife spotting

Spot yellow-footed rock-wallabies at Emmet Pocket lookout and Bullock Gorge. Discover red and grey kangaroos in open areas, but on slopes and in the forest keep a lookout for wallaroos, swamp wallabies and black-striped wallabies typical of inland areas.

Watch at night for kultarrs (tiny mammals) searching for cockroaches and bugs.

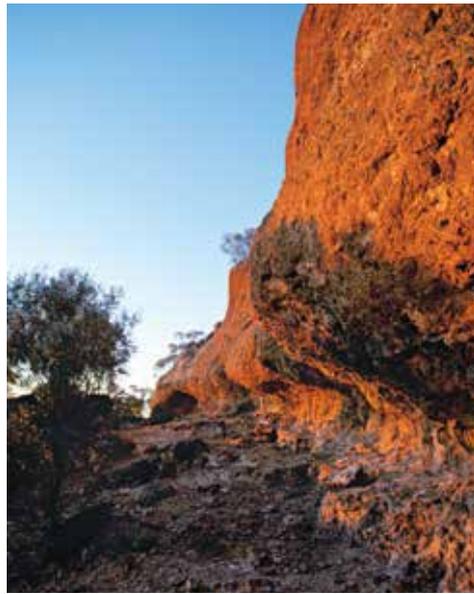
See Hall's babbler, colourful Australian ring-necks, crested bellbirds and plum-headed finches. Keep an eye out at the camping area for white-plumed honeyeaters and eastern yellow robins at the far western limit of their known habitat.



 (Above): Emmet Pocket lookout is a perfect spot to enjoy the view.
Fiona Leverington © Qld Govt

(Left): Yellow-footed rock-wallabies inhabit high rocky escarpments.
© Qld Govt

“ Be up early to see the first rays of the sun creeping across the slopes and plains; or end the day with a stunning sunset walk (remember to take a torch).
Ranger Peter



Places to camp

Monks Tank



4WD recommended.

Peaceful bush camp hidden in mulga woodlands 33km from the park entrance. Not suitable for large caravans.

(Top): Wave Rock
 (Above left): Stake fenceline
 John Augusteyn © Qld Govt
 (Above): Native fuschia
 © Shane Hume

Places to go

1 Old Idalia
(Allow 30 minutes to explore).
Grade: easy.

Wander through remains of a musterers' hut. Pass a wagon and an old ship's tank where a natural spring supplied stock water.

2 Wave Rock walk
1.2km return (30min).
Grade: moderate.

Walk from Old Idalia to a wave-shaped cliff where wind, sun and time are nature's carving tool and sunset is the paintbrush.

3 Stake stockyards
 Visit innovative stockyards constructed between the 1920s and 1950s. Lengths of saplings and twisted wire held up to 300 cattle during muster.

4 Junction Hole
 Watch for birds and kangaroos at this roadside waterhole.

5 Rainbow Gorge walk
200m return (15min).
Grade: easy.
 Admire white, red and yellow-tinted sandstone 14km north of the Old Idalia turn-off.

6 Murphys Rockhole
 See animals watering at a gorge shaded by river red gums. Look for koalas in eucalypt trees near water—you won't find them much further inland.

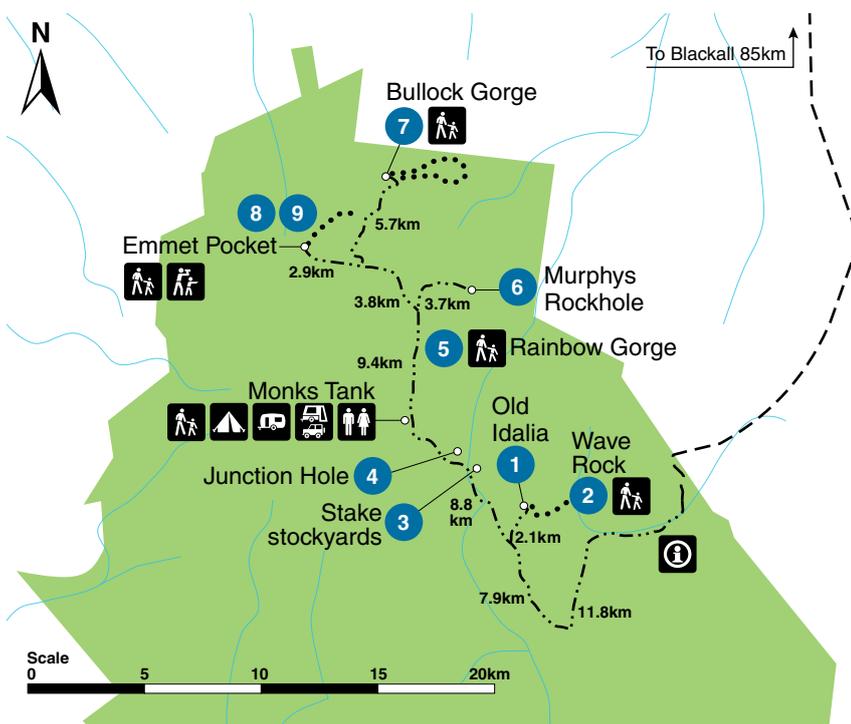
7 Bullock Gorge walk
2.7km return (1hr).
Grade: easy.
 Rock markers show the way through bendee shrubland along a ridge top. Take care here as there are steep gorges on either side.

8 Emmet Pocket lookout
 Gaze from the escarpment over the park's northern end. If quiet you might spy yellow-footed rock-wallabies hiding among the rocks below.

9 Emmet Pocket walk
4.4km return (2–3hr).
Grade: difficult.
 A steep track leads into the gorge where plains lie before you like a map. Take drinking water.



Take care near cliff edges.
Supervise children closely.





Admire patterns and animal tracks in shifting wind-blown sands.

Photo: John Augusteyn © Qld Govt

Welford National Park

Must dos

- Enjoy the ebb and flow of life on the Barcoo River. Camp, take it easy, paddle or throw in a line.
- Capture a sunset and the contrasting colours of ghost gums and wildflowers on red desert dunes.
- Navigate along the river, through the mulga scrub or across sand plains, taking in the stunning scenery and spotting wildlife.
- Delve into the past at heritage sites that reveal how the landscape has sustained people for generations.

Getting there

Welford is 260km south-west of Longreach and 50km south of Jundah. You enter the park via unsealed Jundah-Quilpie Road.

From Blackall (257km) drive south-west to Yaraka then continue on the Yaraka-Retreat Road, or from Quilpie (270km) and Windorah (110km) take the Diamantina Development Road, connecting with the Jundah-Quilpie Road and entering the park from the south.

4WDs are recommended. All roads within the park are impassable in wet weather. The nearest fuel and supplies are at Jundah (50km) and Windorah (110km).

Enjoy almost every outback experience in one amazing park. Birdwatch, fish or camp at a billabong; see spinifex on red desert sand dunes; delve into the past at historical sites and 4WD to rugged rocky scarps where secretive yellow-footed rock-wallabies hide.

At Welford's southern boundary, the Barcoo River cuts a green and brown swathe west from rugged, rocky mulga-clad ranges towards Mitchell grass plains and some of the most easterly red sand dunes in Australia. Seek contrasting landscapes, varied wildlife and the shade and tranquility of majestic river red gums and coolabahs along river channels that bring life-giving water to thirsty country.

Aboriginal cultural sites are scattered across the 124,000ha park. Welford's pisé (rammed earth) homestead built in 1882 is one of only a few still occupied in Queensland—but is not open to the public.

Things to do

Wildlife spotting

See emus on grassy plains and Major Mitchell's cockatoos, red-winged parrots and mulga parrots in mulga woodlands and along the river. Look for brushtail possums in eucalypt trees at night. Birding is brilliant around waterholes—glimpse pelicans, brolgas, black swans, whistling kites and freckled ducks. Water rats hunt for fish and frogs and gather mussels along the river, while spangled perch, yellow-belly and Cooper Creek catfish are found in permanent waterholes.

 (Right): Rugged rocky escarpments are a contrast to sandy plains.
John Augusteyn © Qld Govt

(Far right): Lily-covered Trafalgar Waterhole.
© Peter Hogan



Fishing and canoeing

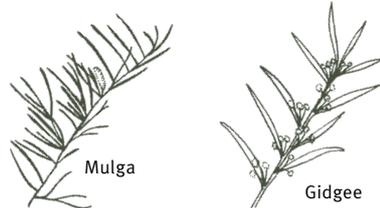
Although its banks are steep and slippery, Little Boomerang Waterhole is a great spot for fishing, canoeing and kayaking.

Driving and mountain biking

Follow a bush track exploring dunes, rocky outcrops, plains, channels and billabongs. Early morning or late afternoon is best for wildlife. Travel slowly and be careful of other road users and wildlife.

Did you know?

Cattle find mulga *Acacia aneura* tasty but ignore gidgee *Acacia cambagei* trees. Welford National Park and others are now destocked of cattle and protect such mulga woodlands.



 Go birdwatching along the river and in the ranges.
© John Augusteyn

“Our little-known sand dune is Welford’s most photographed feature and is magic to visit at sunset.
Ranger Sophia



Places to camp

 **Little Boomerang Waterhole**
10km west of Jundah–Quilpie Road.
4WD recommended.

Camp near shady river red gums and tea-trees on the banks of the Barcoo River.

Places to go

 **Desert Drive**
22km one way (allow at least 3hr).
4WD only.

North-west of Little Boomerang Waterhole is thirsty country of colourful sand plains and dunes. Visit a life-sustaining waterhole **1**. Climb soft sand to the dune and capture desert colours on camera (take care not to disturb fragile plants) **2**. See a bore drilled to bring oil from 1,800m below ground **3** and where a windmill once pumped precious water to troughs for stock **4**.

 **River Drive**
12.3km one way (allow 1.5hr).
4WD recommended.

Travel along the banks of the river where river red gums line steep-banked channels. Usually dry with the occasional billabong, debris high in trees is a reminder that swirling floodwaters can sweep down the river washing away vegetation and wildlife. Birdwatch at ‘The Jetty’ **5**, a natural rock bar protruding into the water.

 **Mulga Drive**
71km return (allow 4hr).
4WD only.

Venture east past the stockyards, (stopping for glimpses of the old rammed earth homestead) then onto scenic waterholes **6** and **7**. Journey over river flats and up into rough mulga country dissected by stony escarpments and gullies towards a viewpoint **8** and Sawyers Creek **9**.

7 **Trafalgar Waterhole**
18km east of Jundah–Quilpie Road.
4WD required.

Perfect picnic spot beneath coolabah trees.

8 **Sawyers Creek viewpoint**
1.2km return walk (allow 30min).
Grade: moderate.

Enjoy panoramic views of exposed rocky outcrops, slopes and spidery networks of channel country below.

Watch for mulga parrots and at dusk for yellow-footed rock-wallabies.



The mighty Thomson River is a ribbon of life in the dry.

Photo: © Peter Scott

Lochern National Park

Must dos

- Admire Australian bustards strutting across rolling Mitchell grass plains.
- See flood marks on tree trunks where floodwaters of the Thomson River have reached.
- Take Lochern tourist drive and contemplate how wildlife and people adapt to cycles of wet and dry.
- Relax at Broadwater Lagoon, keeping an eye out for Emmott's short-neck turtles, pelicans, spoonbills, black swans, sandpipers and stints.

Getting there

Turn off the Longreach-Jundah Road at the Lochern signpost 100km south of Longreach or 45km north of Stonehenge, and take the unsealed road for 40km to the Thomson River and the park boundary.

The road from Winton (330km) via Lark Quarry can be very rough and takes 4–5 hours to drive. Watch for bulldust—very fine dust—and for road trains.

4WDs are recommended. Roads are impassable in wet weather. The nearest fuel and supplies are at Longreach (140km) and Stonehenge (85km).

Travel to the heart of 'boom and bust' country where devastating droughts are followed by flooding rains that nourish the plains and transform parched channels into wetlands teeming with life.

With a 20km frontage to the Thomson River, 24,300ha Lochern National Park's many lagoons and waterholes provide refuge for birds and other wildlife. Wander through gidgee or mulga woodlands and drive across rolling Mitchell grass plains trying to distinguish between the four different species of Mitchell grass—hoop, curl, barley and bull. See pastoral-era relics including winged dams (known locally as tanks).

Places to camp

  **Broadwater Waterhole**
4WD recommended.

Camp by a permanent waterhole in the shade of coolabah trees.

Accessible by conventional vehicle only in dry weather. There are no facilities.

Things to do

  **Fishing and canoeing**

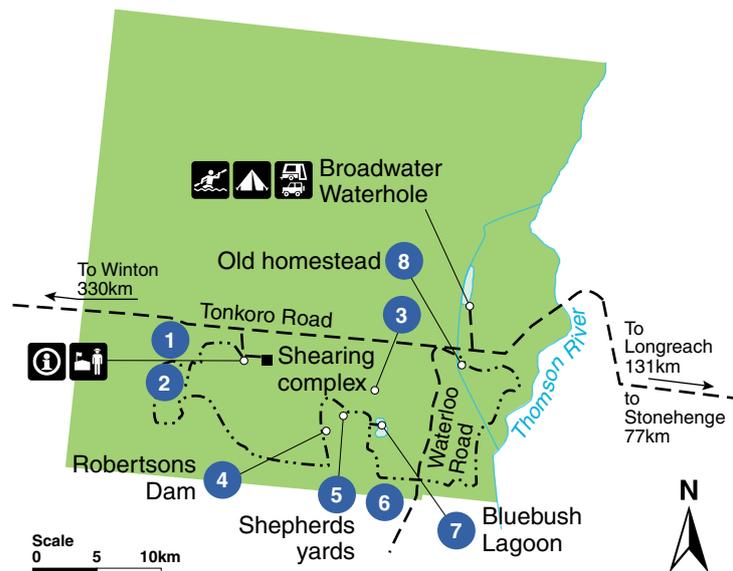
Throw a line in at any waterhole. Canoe or kayak at Broadwater Waterhole.

  **Walking and mountain biking**

Wander around the river and waterholes, or along the habitat drive. The park has no walking tracks but it is quiet with gentle terrain. Watch for vehicles.

 **Lochern tourist drive**
40km return (2–4hr). 4WD only.

Drive through the woodlands **1**, past gidgee swamps **2** and gaze across open plains **3**. Visit Robertsons Dam **4**. See where gidgee logs were stacked in 1910 to form yards **5** and an old netting fence **6** was constructed to protect sheep from dingoes. Walk 100m to the edge of shallow Bluebush Lagoon **7** to spy waterbirds. Wander around the old homestead complex **8** on the flood-prone banks of the Thomson River.



Torrens Creek is a shady wildlife haven.

Forest Den National Park

Must dos

- Spy squatter pigeons hiding in the grass and blue-winged kookaburras nesting by waterholes.
- Spot sugar gliders and brushtail possums in river-side trees at night.

Getting there

Forest Den is 100km north of Aramac, via Torrens Creek Road. Turn east at the 'Corinda' signpost and travel 5km before heading 4.5km north to Four Mile Waterhole camping area.

Although accessible in a conventional vehicle in dry weather, a 4WD vehicle is recommended as small amounts of rain can make roads impassable. Fuel and supplies are available at Aramac (100km).

Immerse yourself in a bird-watcher's paradise where creek channels lined with magnificent river red gums meander across grassy plains and intermittent waterholes provide refuge for humans and wildlife alike.

Established to conserve black gidgee woodlands at their western limit, this 5,890ha park has a diverse range of plants and fascinating wildlife. Reid River box, ironwood, beefwood, bauhinia and other woodland trees occur on the sandy 'patchy plains' in the park's western sections.

Although used as grazing land for more than 100 years, little remains of this era apart from a few pastoral relics—fences, gateways and a derelict round timber bridge over Torrens Creek.

Things to do

Wildlife spotting

Watch birds and other animals coming to drink from waterholes at dawn and dusk. See whistling kites, white ibis, spoonbills and egrets. Rufous-throated honeyeaters nest by the waterholes. Look at night for Beccari's freetail bats skimming over water.

Places to camp

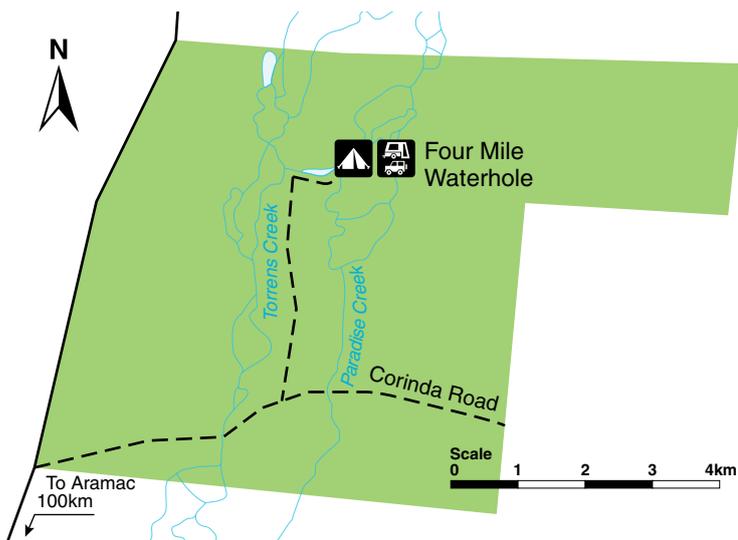
Four Mile Waterhole 4WD recommended.

Camp in solitude near the banks of Torrens Creek under the shade of coolabah trees and river red gums.

There are no facilities.

 (Below): Brown falcon keeping watch for unsuspecting prey.
© John Augusteyn

(Bottom): Acacia woodlands are great for birdwatching.
© John Augusteyn





Hard, rocky ranges rise above open grassy plains.

Photo: Michael O'Connor © Qld Govt

Bladensburg National Park

Must dos

- Picnic or camp at a waterhole not far from an outback town.
- Ponder life, and death, on a station in this harsh, hot land.
- Admire gnarled ghost gums on rugged tablelands and the curly red bark of mineritchie (red mulga) in dry creek beds.
- Take a rough track up a ‘jump up’ to gaze over almost tree-less plains stretching toward the horizon.

Getting there

From Winton head south towards Jundah, turning left after 8km along the Route of the River Gum. At the junction 7km further on, turn left to Bladensburg homestead (5km) and Scrammy Drive, or right to Bough Shed Hole camping area (12km).

Conventional vehicles can access the Route of the River Gum, the camping area and homestead in dry weather.

Leave open plains behind to refresh at unexpected waterholes, delve into the park’s rich history and venture up impressive flat-topped plateaus to Scrammy Gorge and views over vast expanses of grasslands.

Sense the significance of a cultural landscape and aging reminders of the past. Bladensburg is the traditional country of the Koa People and was once a busy outback station.

See river red gums along watercourses, drive past scattered patches of gidgee trees then grassy spinifex and termite mounds on higher sandy slopes. Erosion-resistant mesa (plateau) tops are hard and dry with a sparse covering of stunted vegetation—mostly acacias such as lancewood, bende and mulga.



Things to do

 **Scenic driving**
Route of the River Gum
72km return (half day) from Winton.

Pick up a self-guided drive brochure at Winton’s visitor information centre, set your trip meter to 0km and head off to discover 15 places of interest including waterholes along mostly-dry Surprise Creek.

 **Scrammy Drive**
40km return (2–4 hr).

At Scrammy Lookout **8** at the edge of an impressive flat-topped mesa you see amazing views over the grassy plains and river flats—especially at sunset.

Only accessible to high-clearance vehicles in dry weather. 4WD recommended.



 (Top): Take a self-guided walk through the original homestead complex and visit other heritage sites on this former grazing property.
 © Qld Govt

(Left): You can get great photos of local wildlife at Scrammy Waterhole and, if the weather is warm enough, you can swim.
 © Dan Witten

(Far left): Red kangaroos are seen on the plains.
 © Qld Govt

Did you know?

Scrammy Jack was a boundary rider who lived alone in a simple, remote hut. After his hand was crushed by a wagon wheel he gained the name 'scrammy'—an old English term meaning 'left-handed'.

Wildlife spotting

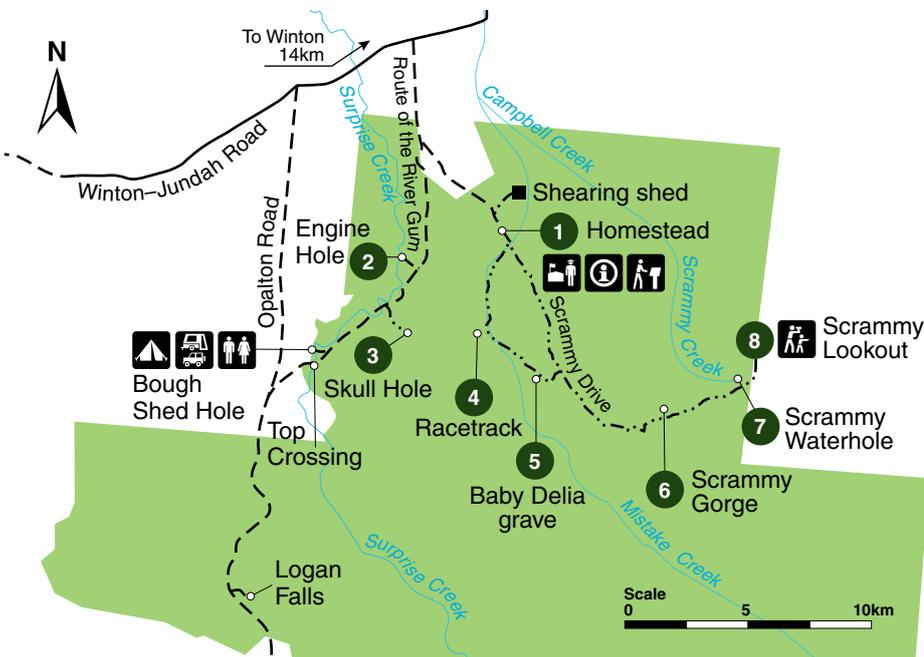
Mitchell grass plains are a great spot to see red kangaroos. They are also ideal habitat for the largest known population of endangered Julia Creek dunnarts, as well as planigales (native marsupial mice) that sleep by day in the cracks of heavy black soil but are active at night.

Bladensburg is home to a wonderful diversity of birds, including emus, Australian bustards, Hall's babbler, spotted bowerbirds and singing bushlarks. Discover painted firetails and rufous-crowned emu-wrens flitting among the spinifex, and painted honeyeaters or black honeyeaters in trees along creek lines.



(Above): The greatest threats to this tiny Julia Creek dunnart *Sminthopsis douglasi* are feral cats (which prey on them) and prickly acacia trees—a weed that alters the plain habitat.

Greg Mifsud © Qld Govt
(Top): Spinifex pigeon
Rosemary Millward © Qld Govt



Gaze over vast plains from Scrammy Lookout.

© Karen Smith



Places to camp

Bough Shed Hole



4WD recommended.

See wallaroos and red kangaroos from your camp beside Surprise Creek, 12km south of the park boundary along the Route of the River Gum tourist drive. 4WD recommended, but accessible to high clearance 2WD vehicles in dry weather.

Places to go

1 Bladensburg homestead

Imagine outback station life on a visit to the restored homestead (now an information centre and ranger office) and nearby staff quarters, meat house and store.

2 Engine Hole

Picnic or swim at a horseshoe-shaped waterhole lined with stunning, white river red gums.

3 Skull Hole

Sense the significance of a dry-country waterhole filled by a waterfall in the wet season. This is believed to be the site of a tragic and violent massacre of Aboriginal people in the late 1800s.

4 Racetrack remnants

White stakes one furlong (200m) apart mark the Old Bladensburg racetrack, where race carnivals were once held to raise funds for returning WWII servicemen.

5 Grave of baby Delia Dalrymple

Imagine the hardships of a time before antibiotics, when babies sometimes died of simple infections.

6 Scrammy Gorge

Water coursing through cracks and crevices of the hard-topped plateau undermines the softer sandstone layer beneath, until eventually large blocks tumble into the gorge. Admire the gnarled 'Octopus Tree' (a ghost gum), rock figs and lancewood clinging to life in rugged conditions. Stay well back, cliff edges are unstable.

7 Scrammy Waterhole

This rock-bottomed waterhole is 2m deep and rarely dries up.



Cliff edges are unstable. Keep well back from the edge and supervise children closely.



Carefully constructed overshots help hold water between infrequent storms.

Photo: © Jodie Kurpeishoek

Combo Waterhole Conservation Park

Must dos

- Picnic in the shade of a coolabah tree, pondering tales of the past.
- Birdwatch along the river—a ribbon of life in the dry.

Getting there

Turn off the Landsborough Highway 132km north-west of Winton (13km south of Kynuna) and drive 8km to the picnic area. The access is sealed and suitable for 2WD vehicles.



 Rainbow bee-eater.
© Alistair Hartley

Did the jolly swagman camp by Combo Waterhole? It's easy to imagine this infamous spot might have inspired *Waltzing Matilda*. Feel history come alive at coolabah-lined waterholes near a station visited by renowned Australian poet AB 'Banjo' Paterson.

Rivers provide both life-force and connections across the dry inland. Explore a series of waterholes surrounded by vast Mitchell grass plains.

The Koa People were the first to follow the Diamantina River, pioneering paths of trade and travel along its braided channels. Explorers followed, settlers then brought sheep and cattle and established a stock route. Cobb and Co teams trotted close behind and it is believed that there was a changing station at Combo Waterhole. See historic stone-pitched overshots (crossings) along the coach route traversing the Diamantina River's braided channels.

Things to do

 **Picnic** at a small day-use area near the car park, or near the waterhole.

 **Wildlife spotting**

Birdwatching is particularly good here. Admire the colours of rainbow bee-eaters and sacred kingfishers, and the low-gliding flight of spotted harriers. Listen for the far-carrying call of a tiny weebill and glimpse long-legged Australian pratincoles in open country where they feed and nest.

Places to stay

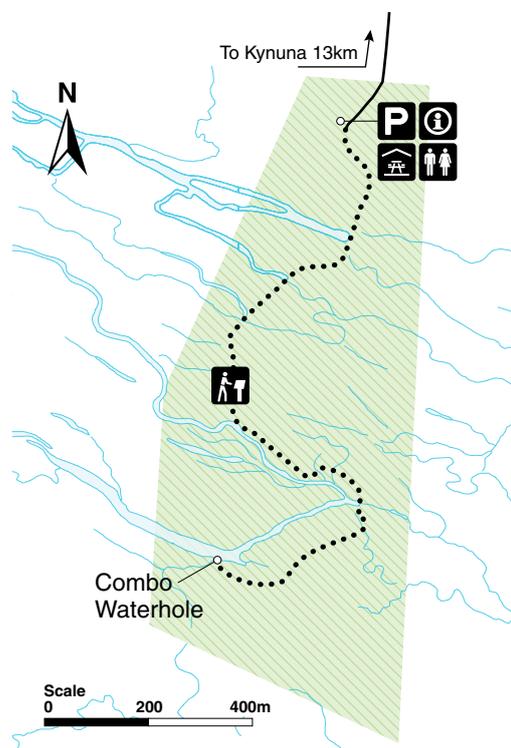
 **Camping is not permitted.**
Stay overnight in Kynuna nearby.

Places to go

 **Combo Waterhole walk**
2.6km return (1hr).
Grade: easy.

Discover the story of *Waltzing Matilda* on a self-guided walk to Combo Waterhole.

The track floods after rain—never attempt to cross the flooded creek.



Dinosaur trackways.

Lark Quarry Conservation Park

Must dos

- Step back into the age of dinosaurs on a guided tour of the dinosaur trackways **1**.
- Stroll through spinifex and climb broken escarpments to gaze east over Mitchell grass plains and west to the channel country in the distance.
- Spy ring-tailed dragons, lizards or snakes basking on sun-baked rocks.

Getting there

Stop in Winton for directions, fuel and the latest road conditions, before making the drive 110km south-west via rough, partially sealed roads. A 4WD is not essential, but is recommended.

Entry to the park, its walking tracks and the orientation centre is free. But access to Lark Quarry's dinosaur trackways is by guided tour only and fees apply. For details of tours and bookings visit dinosaurtrackways.com.au or the Winton Visitor Information Centre.

 **Camping is not permitted.**

Wonder wide-eyed at more than 4,000 muddy footprints left by pre-historic creatures on the shores of a lake 100 million years ago.

In a striking landscape of ancient mesas, gullies and broken escarpments rising above the spinifex, one of the world's most important dinosaur sites has been uncovered. Preserved in rock formed from mud, these footprints from the past were discovered in the early 1960s and are now protected inside an ecologically-sustainable, climate-controlled building with information centre.

Things to do

Wildlife spotting

Spot spinifex pigeons, painted firetails, crimson chats, singing honeyeaters and little woodswallows. Watch for wallaroos snoozing under cliffs, look for lizards and see snakes (including death adders) in sunny spots.

Places to go

2 Spinifex circuit

500m return (30min).

Grade: easy-moderate.

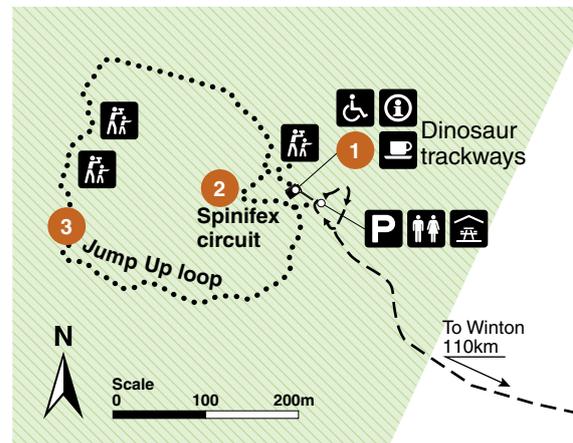
Walk from the trackways building to a lookout for amazing views both east and west. The track is steep in places and care must be taken at the lookout's edges.

3 Jump Up loop

3.5km return (1.5hr).

Grade: difficult.

Experienced, well-prepared walkers will enjoy this unformed cross-country track. It skirts several gullies, climbs along the western escarpment then re-joins the Spinifex circuit.



 Light refreshments and guided tours are available in the wheelchair-accessible trackways building.

© John Augusteyn

“It’s not just the trackways that amaze. Take a walk to enjoy spectacular views and wildlife of the rugged spinifex-clad landscape. Be sure to carry drinking water.
Ranger Sue



Welcome to Maiawali Country

“Maiawali People have lived on this land for thousands of years, with Dreaming stories being shared by Maiawali Elders for many generations. We cherish our connection to country and ask that you also respect and care for our traditional land.”

Mitchell grass plains stretch to the horizon.

Photo: © Qld Govt

Diamantina National Park

Must dos

- Visit Janets Leap for a bird’s-eye view of Diamantina Gates where converging channels of the Diamantina River push through a narrow gap in the Goyder and Hamilton ranges.
- Relax, canoe or birdwatch at beautiful seasonal lakes or permanent waterholes.
- Follow the Warracoota Circuit Drive to explore pastoral relics and learn about the landscapes of the channel country.
- Get your camera snapping to capture desert colours, amazing wildflowers, diverse wildlife and stunning sunsets across the plains.

Getting there

Head south from Winton (306km) or south-east from Boulia (183km), north from Windorah (350km) or east from Bedourie (275km) and follow the signs. Fill up before leaving town and take extra fuel. The drive is slow and dusty, and a 4WD vehicle is needed because roads are unsealed for 200–300km and wheel ruts can be deep. Even small amounts of rain make roads impassable.

Visit in the cooler months between April and September.

Stretch your gaze across vast, treeless plains, over sand dunes and along river channels towards eroded low ranges on the horizon. Camp in the shade of a coolabah tree, dreaming at night under endless starry skies of the Maiawali People and travellers along the mighty Diamantina River long ago.

Captured in song and spoken about with reverence, Diamantina is the subject of folklore and a spectacularly variable landscape offering a unique near-desert experience. At 500,700ha Diamantina is one of Queensland’s largest national parks.

First Nations people understood this landscape—using the Diamantina River as a trading route and finding food in its grasslands, sand dunes and sandstone ranges. Then came explorers ahead of pastoralists, stockmen and drovers grazing livestock in good seasons on Diamantina’s Mitchell grass plains. See tracks and traces of mammals and reptiles that have stood the test of time in this harsh environment. Experience its infinite beauty, replenishing waters and shimmering mirages for yourself.

According to Maiawali tradition ‘Dust stirred by the winds is the Spirit of the Old People: to remember them’—Legend of the sandhill.

© John Augusteyn



“ Walk up onto the plateau or sand dunes near Gum Hole to see the grasslands and sandhills at closer range.

Ranger Chris

Things to do

Wildlife spotting

Birdwatch at waterholes and wetlands. See flocks of waterbirds and screeching bands of budgerigars, corellas and galahs wheeling in unison. Look for resident and migratory birds breeding at Lake Constance and Hunters Gorge. Out on the plains enjoy spotting bushlarks, chats, emus and bustards, ground-dwelling Australian pratincoles and birds of prey.

Get caught up in a population boom of native long-haired rats in channel country after good rains or floods. In response, the rat's predators, such as inland taipans, kites, falcons and barn owls also increase dramatically in numbers.

Fishing and canoeing

Throw a line into the river at Hunters Gorge, or paddle peacefully on permanent waterholes and seasonal lakes.

Discover cultural heritage

Immerse yourself in heritage at the visitor information room at the ranger base, Mayne Hotel ruins at the park's northern boundary, ruins at Warracoota Waterhole and at several grave sites. Diamantina National Park is particularly rich in evidence of First Nations people's life here.



 (Above): Australian bustards walk slowly, picking at seeds, leaves, fruit, lizards and insects.

© Karen Smith

(Right): At Janets Leap.
Fiona Leverington © Qld Govt

Take a scenic drive

4WD only.

Take 90km Warracoota Circuit Drive to marvel at permanent lakes, parallel sand dunes, claypans that appear as shimmering lakes in the heat and vast plains clothed in gibbers or grass.

Walk or ride to be closer to nature

Ride a mountain bike along the park's roads and vehicle tracks to experience the wild—and often windy—nature of Diamantina, but be sure to have emergency contacts organised and carry water. Watch for vehicles.



Places to camp

Hunters Gorge

4WD only.

Although shade trees are few and it can be windy here, the scenery and sunsets are stunning. Camp in an open area beside Mundewerra Waterhole, 13.5km from the ranger base via Springvale Road.

Gum Hole (Nandibargoola)

4WD only.

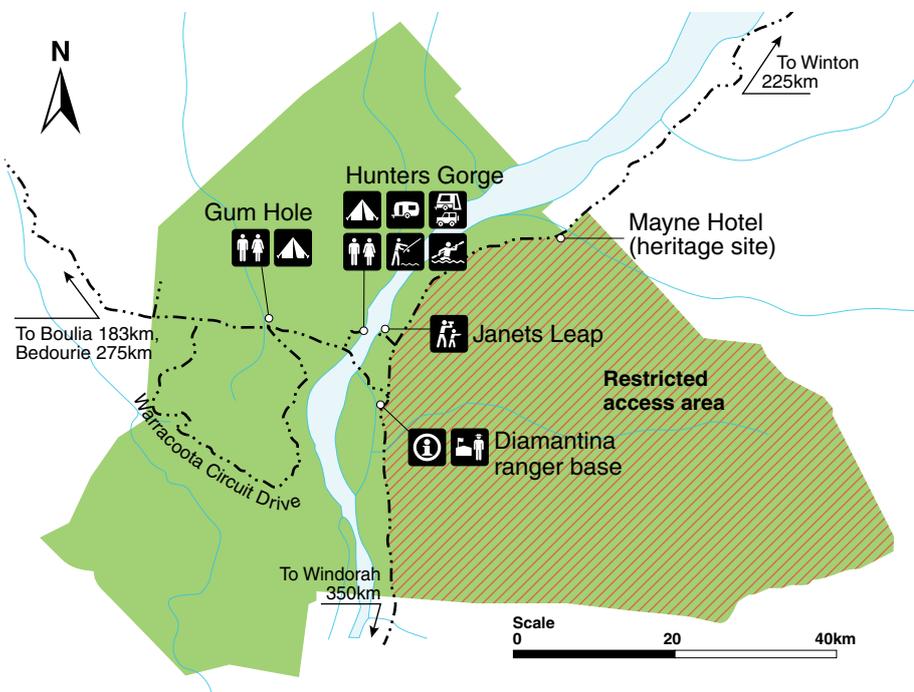
Relax in the shade of coolabah and bauhinia trees at separate sites along Whistling Duck Creek 19.5km from the ranger base.

Note: Hunters Gorge provides higher ground, but both camping areas are subject to flooding in wet weather.

Places to go

Janets Leap

Look out over river channels that constrict together to pass through a narrow gap in the ranges. See Mount Mary (an island in the middle) and Moses Cone.



Plan well ahead

Isolation, hot weather, unexpected rain and the potential for vehicle breakdowns require you to carry extra fuel, communication equipment, vehicle spares and sufficient food, water and medical supplies to last an extra 2 weeks. Pack for hot and cold conditions and ALWAYS carry plenty of drinking water.

Warracoota Circuit Drive

Diamantina National Park

90km return (allow 4–5hr).

Set your trip meter to 0km near Gum Hole. Ensure you have enough fuel and drinking water, keep to the track and leave all sites as you find them.

- 1 These **steel yards (0km)** built in the 1980s by previous owners are still used by drovers moving stock along the Springvale Road stock route.
- 2 Admire **sand dunes (1.5km)** formed parallel to prevailing winds during the last 30,000 years.
- 3 **Claypans (7.5km)** appear as shimmering lakes in the heat. Lake Constance further on is one of the largest on the park.
- 4 **Gibber plains (15.5km)** are covered by small stones (gibbers) polished smooth by windblown sand. Maiawalia people used them for chipping flakes to make stone tools.

- 5 **Grasslands (19km)** of Flinders grass and 4 species of Mitchell grass grow across vast plains. See wildflowers here after early spring rain.
- 6 **Bronco yards (21.5km)** were designed to withstand restless cattle that were branded, tagged, castrated or dehorned here.
- 7 **Lake Constance (24km)**
See waterbirds at this semi-permanent wetland of national significance, as well as budgerigars, corellas and honeyeaters in the surrounding coolabah trees.
- 8 **Flinders grass (29.5km)** is common in low-lying areas where floods occur.
- 9 **Floodout (33km)** areas on heavy clay soils between sand dunes become swampy in wet years. Bluebush, spindly-looking lignum and sesbania pea grow here.



Maxime Coquard © Tourism and Events Qld

Turn left at the T intersection

- 10 **Warracoota Waterhole (44km)**
Linger at an especially deep, long and narrow waterhole that has never been known to run dry. A special place for the Maiawalia, its importance to stockmen as a base camp resulted in conflict over competing use. Leave artefacts as you find them.
- 11 **Warracoota Ruins (47km)**
Several stone-walled structures atop a ridge (pictured above) are thought to have been built by early pioneers. Access is via an easy 400m return walk.



Return to main track

- 12 A series of parallel **sand dunes (69km)** reach up from the lower country along the floodplain and up onto higher plains.
- 13 **Mitchell grass plateau (72km)**
Named after explorer Sir Thomas Mitchell, Mitchell grasses are invaluable to the cattle and sheep industry of western Queensland. National parks are some of the few places you can see ungrazed Mitchell grass.

Turn right at Springvale Road (74.2km) Turn right onto side-track at sign (82km)

- 14 **Gum Hole yards (84km)** were made entirely of post and rails from durable gidgee and coolabah timber by skilled Aboriginal people and pastoralists working side-by-side.
- 15 **Stock camp (85km)**
An old shed and discarded items are all that remain of a makeshift camp where stockmen ate and slept after a hard day mustering and yarding livestock.

Return to Springvale Road

Did you know?

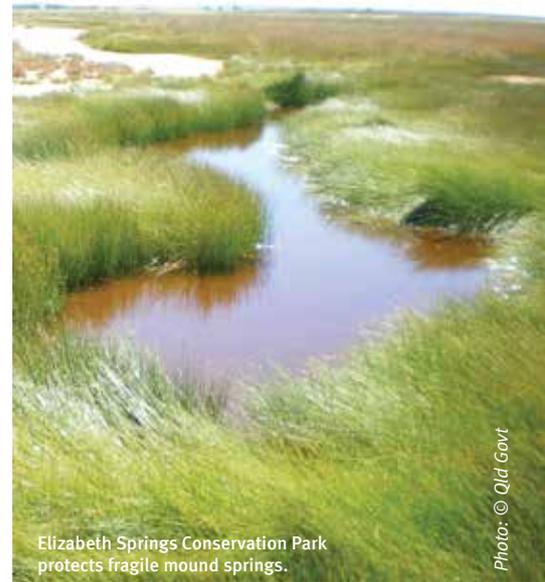
The Diamantina River provided a natural route for Aboriginal trade—a network of tracks running north–south that became their commerce road. Maiawali People traded boomerangs, shields, pituri (a plant with stimulant properties), and later government blankets, in exchange for yellow ochre, rocks for tools, flat-tipped single-piece spears, white shells and shirts.



 Hunters Gorge is a large waterhole on the Diamantina River.
(Above): © John Augusteyn
(Top): © Karen Smith

Boom or bust, water or dust

As isolated as it is dusty, at times you can be cut off at Diamantina by overflowing claypans or flood waters spilling out from multiple river channels. Fed by rainfall in the north and draining towards Lake Eyre in South Australia, multiple river channels stretch several kilometres across in an impressive coolabah and lignum-lined river that defies the desert landscape with brilliant green. After an influx of water, herbs and grasses burst forth across vast plains, followed by a boom in populations of insects and small mammals, and in turn more reptiles and birds of prey.



Elizabeth Springs Conservation Park protects fragile mound springs.

Photo: © Qld Govt

Elizabeth Springs Conservation Park

Venture north-west of Diamantina to a small (101ha) park protecting endangered mound spring habitats. The endangered Elizabeth Springs goby fish and companion aquatic snails live exclusively in this small, restricted and very fragile ecosystem.

Explore Elizabeth Springs from a signed 700m walk off Springvale Road (103km south-east of Boulia). You cannot drive into the park.

 **Camping is not permitted.**

Did you know?

The Elizabeth Springs goby (fish) and aquatic snails living here can tolerate water that is 17 times saltier than seawater and at temperatures reaching 41.5°C.



Take extreme care not to walk on the sensitive mounds or adjacent wetlands. The mounds can be very dangerous as bogs are not visible under the thin, dry crust.



Admire the windswept crests of shifting dunes.

Photo: John Augusteyn © Qld Govt

Munga-Thirri National Park

Must dos

- Stop on the way to the park and snap a photo atop Big Red to mark the start of your desert adventure.
- Feel the excitement of climbing over sand dunes. Count them as you go.
- Track a thorny devil, perentie or spinifex hopping mouse by footprints across red sand.
- Leave the tent packed. Simply roll out your swag beneath brilliantly clear, starry skies.
- Spot a white-winged fairy-wren or Eyrean grasswren flitting between clumps of sandhill canegrass.

Getting there

From Birdsville take the graded road 35km west to Big Red sand dune at the edge of the Simpson Desert. From here on you must have a high-clearance 4WD. The remaining 130km to Poeppel Corner traverses loose-sand dunes and is impassable when wet.

If continuing beyond Queensland and into South Australia, you will need to purchase a Desert Parks Pass. Visit environment.sa.gov.au or phone (08) 8648 5328 for details.

Munga-Thirri National Park is closed from 1 December to 15 March due to extreme summer temperatures. Wet weather may cause temporary closures at other times.

Experience the contrasting colours and isolation of an ultimate 4WD adventure traversing the bare, windswept crests of iconic Simpson Desert’s huge red sand dunes. After rain, the desert is a vivid riot of wildflowers.

This is the ancestral home of Wangkangurru, Yarluyandi and Wangkamahdla people. Parallel, wind-blown sand dunes, each up to 30m high and about 1km apart, extend up to 200km in a north-west to south-south-east direction. At 1 million hectares this is Queensland’s largest national park.

The Simpson Desert is Australia’s driest place, but is far from lifeless. Be captivated by a vegetated ‘green desert’ where animal tracks disappear into canegrass securing sandy slopes, or under the spinifex on dunes. Shrublands of acacias, hakeas and grevilleas grow on the sandplains and gibber-ironstone flats that alternate with claypans and salt pans between dunes. Smell the pungent aroma of Georgina gidgee after rain.

Places to go

Poeppel Corner

4WD only.

Marvel at the large salt lakes where Queensland, South Australia and Northern Territory meet. Charles Sturt was the first European to enter the desert (in 1844) but it was South Australian surveyor Augustus Poeppel who, in 1880, conducted the first official survey of the South Australia/Queensland border and located the Northern Territory intersect.

Keep to the QAA line—a track made by surveyors searching for gas and oil during the 1960s and 1970s. It takes 5–6 hours to drive one way, so allow for an overnight stay.



 (Left): A perentie (Australia’s largest monitor) struts through desert wildflowers.

© Bruce Thomson

(Above): Marker post at Poeppel Corner.

© John Augusteyn

Things to do

Wildlife spotting

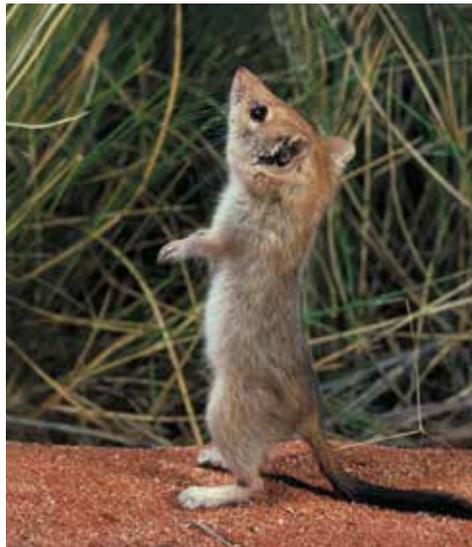
Delight in discovering plants and animals adapted to this harsh and unpredictable place. More than 180 species of bird live here. Watercourses have a richer array of birds than the dunefields, and you might even see waterbirds or catch glimpses of colourful parrots and chats.

Spy lizards hiding from predators in spiky, rounded clumps of spinifex and watch birds of prey soaring overhead scanning the ground for a tasty meal.

Mammals hide to escape the heat of the day. Spinifex hopping mice and sandy inland mice might be seen but you'd be lucky to catch sight of a tiny mulgara.

Places to camp

Bush camp within 100m of the QAA line. There are no campgrounds or facilities.



 (Above): Mulgaras, small carnivorous marsupials with a distinctive crest of short black hairs on their tail, live in burrows and come out at night to catch insects and other small creatures.

© Bruce Thomson

(Right): Ranger Don Rowlands.

© Qld Govt

“ My Wangkangurru ancestors lived here, tracking, hunting and finding bush tucker in good seasons and falling back to mikiris (wells) in dry times. I love the isolation, the silence balanced with the sounds of nature's creatures. Take your time and truly appreciate all that the desert has to offer.
Ranger Don ”



Warning

Only well-equipped visitors experienced in desert and remote area travel should enter the Simpson Desert. Travel with another vehicle and be self-sufficient in food, water and fuel, vehicle spare parts, recovery equipment, medical supplies and communications. UHF or HF radio and satellite phones are essential. Personal locator beacons (PLBs) are recommended. Munga-Thirri is very remote and help can be days away. Stay with your vehicle—no matter what! You must be well-prepared to cope with hot days and freezing nights in Australia's driest place.

Did you know?

You can add to your desert adventure by discovering sights around Birdsville and towns along the way. See ancient waddy trees north of Birdsville or explore Pelican lagoon. Visit diamantina.qld.gov.au or stop in at the Warrari Visitor Information Centre in Birdsville for more information.

Sand driving tips

- Engage locking hubs and 4WD. Only tow a camper trailer if experienced with sand dune driving.
- Approach dune crests with caution. Cross dunes carefully—shifting sand creates steep drops, depressions and humps.
- Attach a high visibility flag to your vehicle with the top of the flag a minimum 3.5m from the ground. The flag should be at least 300mm x 290mm in size and made of fluorescent materials, red-orange or lime-yellow in colour.
- Always assume there is an oncoming vehicle. Monitor UHF channel 10 and call occasionally to alert other travellers. There is a call point marker every 5km along the QAA line between Big Red and Pooppel Corner.
- If you choose to reduce tyre pressure to improve traction in soft sand, check manufacturer's recommendations, consider weight and load, reduce speed, avoid sudden turns and drive to suit conditions. Reinflate tyres immediately to manufacturer's recommendations once conditions improve.
- Cross dunes when the sand is cool. Early morning and late afternoon is best for easier access.
- Stop driving if visibility is poor. Gusty winds create dust storms with little warning. Wait in your vehicle until conditions improve.
- Keep to the marked track and avoid hazards. Saltpans may look solid but beneath their thin, loamy crust is soft, black, sticky mud.
- Carry extra fuel, a second spare tyre and spare tubes. Driving in soft sand increases fuel consumption and punctures are highly likely.



“Two vehicles travelling west on QAA call point 1”



Outback roads are long and dusty.

Photo: John Augusteyn © Qld Govt

Challenge yourself to be self-sufficient and out of phone contact. But take all sensible precautions to stay safe and come prepared 'just in case'. The Outback is not an environment to take for granted.

Be prepared

- **Pack for hot and cold conditions... and flies!** Outback Queensland can be very hot during the day and very cold (to below freezing) overnight. Bring fly veils, insect repellent and insect-proof camping gear.
- **Expect rough, slow, dusty and/or boggy roads**, far from help should something go wrong. Access to most parks (or areas within parks) is suitable only for 4WD vehicles.
- **Choose your destination carefully.** Are you, your vehicle and equipment up to it? Ensure someone in your group has remote travel experience and sound mechanical knowledge of your vehicle.
- **Fuel up regularly.** Fuel stops are few and far between and national park bases are not service stations.
- **Plan for emergencies.** Pack extra supplies and leave an itinerary (including travel routes and/or check-in points) with a friend or relative.
- **Avoid rushing.** Relax! Slow down, take your time to appreciate the landscape and its wildlife, and to allow for delays.

 Campers must be self-sufficient.
John Augusteyn © Qld Govt

Packing checklist

- Adequate water, food and emergency supplies.** Carry at least 7L of water per person per day (for drinking, cooking and limited washing) plus an extra emergency supply.
- Portable stove and/or clean, weed-free firewood.**
- Complete first-aid kit.** Include sun and insect protection and medications.
- Detailed road map** showing travel routes and distances. A GPS may be useful.
- Communication equipment** and list of emergency contacts.
- Extra fuel, vehicle spares and repair equipment.** Frequent low gear and 4WD travel will use fuel more quickly. Use maps to calculate fuel requirements and plan refuelling stops. Bring vehicle repair tools, recovery equipment and spares; include 2 spare tyres, an air compressor for inflating tyres, oil and engine coolant. Be familiar with equipment.
- Reliable camping gear** in good working order.
- Sturdy rubbish bags and sealable, animal-proof containers.**

Communication

Mobile phone coverage is generally not available, although some networks may have service in major towns. Carry a satellite phone or UHF radio. These can be used to contact RACQ, The Royal Flying Doctor Service, local rangers or police should the need arise. A Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) is also advisable.

The free Emergency+ smartphone app has GPS functionality that can provide critical location details to emergency services. Consider downloading before you leave home at emergencyapp.triplezero.gov.au

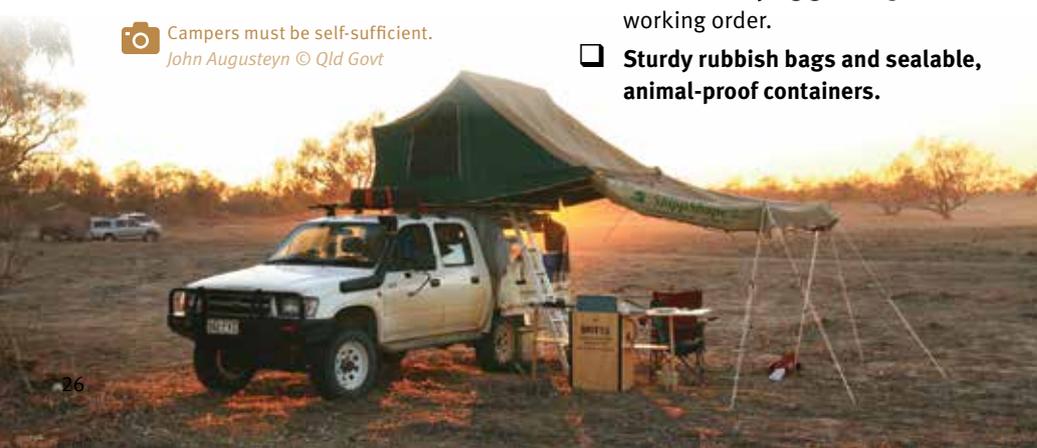
Camping in parks

To camp in national parks you need to book your camp sites and purchase camping permits before you arrive. Not all parks allow camping so visit qld.gov.au/camping to check arrangements.

To book your camping permit:

- book online at qld.gov.au/camping using a payment card or camping credit
- visit an over-the-counter permit booking office accepting cash, eftpos and payment cards. Visit qld.gov.au/recreation/activities/camping/booking-locations for details
- phone 13 QGOV (13 74 68) and use a payment card or camping credit. Mobile phone charges may apply.

For accommodation options outside national parks visit Outback Tourism at outbackqueensland.com.au. For local advice stop into a friendly visitor information centre along the way. Many offer free Wi-Fi for visitors.



Drive safely

- Drive according to local conditions, watch out for animals and avoid risks at washouts and flooded crossings. Move off the road for trucks.
- Keep to designated roads to help prevent erosion and the confusion of multiple tracks. Plants are slow to regrow in the arid zone.
- Be considerate of other road users and local landholders. Leave gates as you find them and never drive on private property without permission. Some maps show roads that are private and not open to the public. Many locations marked on maps are station houses not towns—don't expect fuel, supplies or public telephones.
- Never drive on rain-affected roads. Even if you make it through, the road surface will be damaged and dangerous for other road users.
- Travel with another vehicle and make sure someone reliable knows your itinerary.
- If you break down, **ALWAYS stay with your vehicle** until help arrives.

Fishing

Fishing is permitted at Welford, Lochern, Bladensburg and Diamantina national parks. Fishing regulations (including size and bag limits) apply, for details visit fisheries.qld.gov.au

Never use frogs or other live bait. Invasive species may escape and establish a pest population.

Be responsible

- Avoid disturbing animals and plants, cultural artefacts and historic sites.
- Leave your pets at home.
- Don't feed wildlife or leave food or scraps around camp sites or day-use areas.
- Pack your rubbish in sealed containers for dumping at off-park waste disposal sites. Never bury rubbish as animals will dig it up.
- Avoid the spread of weeds by checking clothing and equipment regularly for seeds.
- Use vehicle wash-down facilities in local towns to help prevent the spread of weeds in vehicle tyres.
- Don't use firearms, chainsaws or unregistered quad bikes or motor cycles in protected areas.
- Camp only in the sites provided. Please set up camp away from animal nests and/or burrows.
- Collecting firewood in national parks is not permitted. Use a portable stove, or your own clean, weed-free firewood. Use fire rings where provided.
- Never tie ropes to trees or drape things over vegetation. Arid-zone plants are slow to recover.
- Never place rubbish or contents of chemical toilet tanks into pit toilets.
- Minimise your use of soaps and detergents and wash at least 50m away from waterbodies.
- Where toilets are not provided, bury human waste and toilet paper at least 15cm deep and 100m away from camp sites, tracks and watercourses.
- Keep noise to a minimum.

Look after yourself

- Always carry drinking water, whether driving or walking. Boil, filter or treat water from any stream, river or waterhole.
- Wear protective clothing. Put on a hat, sunscreen, insect repellent and sturdy footwear (not thongs).
- Watch your step and stay away from escarpment edges. They might be unstable.
- Never jump or dive into water. It may be shallow or hide submerged objects.
- Be aware of your surroundings at all times and on the lookout for animals that could scratch, sting or bite.
- Flood waters can flow down watercourses from hundreds of kilometres away. Check flood warnings even if there has been no local rain.

Pre-departure checks

- Book camping permits (see details previous page).
- Check current park conditions. Visit qld.gov.au/ParkAlerts for the latest information on access, closures and conditions.
- Check weather forecasts. Contact the Bureau of Meteorology at bom.gov.au and listen to updates on the local ABC radio station.
- Check road conditions at qldtraffic.qld.gov.au or at local council offices (see back page).

Further information

 qld.gov.au/NationalParks

 qld.gov.au/Camping

 qld.gov.au/ParkAlerts
(access, closures and conditions)

 [qldnationalparks](https://www.facebook.com/qldnationalparks)

 [@QldParks](https://www.instagram.com/QldParks); [#QldParks](https://www.instagram.com/QldParks)

This brochure is also available online
at qld.gov.au/ParkBrochures



Useful contacts

Local information on roads, waste disposal sites and local services:

Barcaldine Region phone (07) 4651 5600
barcaldinerc.qld.gov.au

Barcoo Shire phone (07) 4658 6900
barcoo.qld.gov.au

Blackall-Tambo Region
phone (07) 4621 6600
btrc.qld.gov.au

Diamantina Shire phone 1300 794 257
thediamantina.com.au
diamantina.qld.gov.au

Longreach Region phone (07) 4658 4141
longreachtourism.com.au

Winton Shire phone 1300 665 115
experiencewinton.com.au

Emergencies:

Call Triple Zero (000) from a digital or satellite mobile phone. If hearing impaired, call 106. Mobile phone coverage is extremely limited.

You can also try to make contact via these most commonly used UHF radio channels and scan for people using other channels while you are driving.

Bladensburg – UHF Channel 1 (duplex)

Diamantina – UHF Channel 2 (duplex)

Idalia – UHF Channel 24 or
Channel 6 (duplex)

Lochern – UHF Channel 2 (simplex)

Munga-Thirri – UHF Channel 10

Welford – UHF Channel 29 or
Channel 3 (duplex)

Road conditions:

Visit the Department of Transport and Main Roads at qldtraffic.qld.gov.au or phone 13 19 40.

Tourist information:

outbackqueensland.com.au

Dump points:

Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia cmca.net.au