



Lava Tubes, Gems and Gorges Trail

Travel through the Australian outback, on a Savannah Way drive, to see the spectacular gorges, lava tubes and fossicking fields of the Etheridge Shire.

Highlights for a week-long journey

Drive times are approximate and can vary depending on the condition of dirt roads



Undara

275km (4 hours) from Cairns

Undara is an Aboriginal word for a long way and the Undara Lava Tubes, which stretch for 160km, are the longest lava tubes in the world. Ancient roof collapses have created deep impressions in the tubes allowing rainforest plants and animals to thrive in unique ecosystems. Savannah Guides conduct tours of the tubes and take you on a sunset tour to experience the wildlife. Undara Experience on the edge of the Undara Volcanic National Park has unique accommodation, camping and home-style meals. **Visit www.undara.com.au or call 1800 990 992 for more information.**

Mount Surprise

55km (30 minutes) from Undara

Mount Surprise is a centre for gem fossicking with topaz, quartz and garnet among the semi-precious gemstones which can be found at nearby O'Brien's Creek. Obtain advice and equipment as well as a hearty meal from Mount Surprise Gems before you head to the gem field. There you can get the feel for fossicking by sifting through a bucket of wash or use the faceting service when you return with your gems. **Visit www.thegemden.com.au for more information or phone (07) 4062 3055.** Mount Surprise has two caravan parks, a hotel and a camp ground and it is an overnight stop for the Savannahlander train. There is a blackwater dump site at the roadside toilet block.

Georgetown

92km (1 hour) from Mount Surprise

The administrative hub for Etheridge Shire, Georgetown owes its existence to the gold found there in 1870. Gold fossicking is still popular and you can see the town's major finds including the 858g Providence Nugget at the TerrEstrial Centre, a modern display of more than 4500 gemstones and minerals from around the world. The Centre is also the official Visitor Information Centre for the region. **Phone (07) 4062 1485 or visit www.etheridge.qld.gov.au/terrestrial.** Wander the town to see its historical buildings and follow the River Walk to go bird watching. There is a free barbecue, toilets and blackwater dump site at Heritage Park and free swimming at the public pool. Georgetown has two caravan parks and a hotel. Latara Motel has air conditioned rooms, a laundry and fully licensed restaurant and bar open 7 days. **Phone (07) 4062 1190 or visit www.georgetownaccommodation.com.**

Flat Creek Station

45km (1 hour) from Georgetown

Flat Creek Station is a family run beef cattle grazing property of 30,000 acres where travellers come to prospect for gold. Birdwatching is also popular with an array of native birds including the rare Gouldian finch. A shady campground, hot showers and flushing toilets make it a popular place for campers. **Call (07) 4062 5304 or visit www.flatcreekstation.com.au for more information.**

Forsayth

45km (1 hour) from Georgetown

The former gold mining town of Forsayth is now best known as the terminus for the Savannahlander train. Relics from the rich gold days, including a rail engine, can be seen in Caschafor Park where there are public toilets. There is a hotel and caravan park. Goldfield's Hotel and Finnigan's Rest have been renovated to create a one-stop shop combining the hotel, accommodation, mini-mart and postal agency all under the one roof. **Phone (07) 4062 5374.**

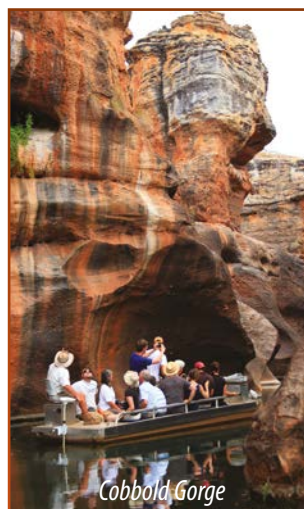


Savannahlander

Cobbold Gorge

45km (1 hour) from Forsayth

An electric boat tour beneath narrow 30m rugged sandstone cliffs is the highlight of staying at Cobbold Gorge. The Savannah Guide Enterprise is located on a privately owned family cattle property that has become an outback oasis for travellers. Cruise the gorge, explore ancient geological landforms and spot wildlife including freshwater crocodiles on the guided tours. Accommodation includes cabins and caravan/RV friendly camping. There is a pool, bar, coffee shop and laundry. **Visit www.cobboldgorge.com.au for more information or call 1800 669 922.**



Cobbold Gorge

Agate Creek

**70km (1.5 hours) from Forsayth,
37km (45 mins) from Cobbold Gorge**

The Agate Creek gem fields are famous for the world's most colourful agate, or thunder eggs as they are known. The agate is the result of the region's large number of volcanic banoiliths which are huge bodies of igneous rock that solidified beneath the earth and are now exposed. There are no facilities here and camping is not permitted in the fossicking area, but there is a campground nearby.



Cattlemen stop for a break

Gilberton Outback Retreat

56km (1 hour) for off-road vehicles and trailers only from Agate Creek. Conventional vehicles 160km (2.5 hours) from The Lynd Junction

The luxurious Gilberton Outback Retreat is a rustic retreat for couples wanting to get away in comfort. Gold fossicking, visiting the old gold mining township of Gilberton, seeing Aboriginal rock art, wildlife spotting, swimming, fishing and kayaking are among the activities offered.

Go to www.gilbertonoutbackretreat.com or phone (07) 4062 5329 for more information.

Einasleigh

72km (1 hour) from Forsayth

The former copper mining town of Einasleigh is set among flat-top hills known as mesas that rise out of the grasslands. The Savannahlander train stops right outside the pub so passengers can enjoy a beer in the outback and see the amazing collection of miniature antique furniture. It is a short walk to Copperfield Gorge where the river has cut through a lava fissure showing another aspect of the region's lava flow. There is a caravan park, a park with free barbecues and public toilets at the Town Hall in Baroota St.

The Lynd Junction

76km (1.15 hours) from Einasleigh

The junction of the Kennedy Developmental Road and the Gregory Developmental Road is the southern access point to the Gems and Gorges Trail. The Oasis Roadhouse is where you will find Australia's smallest bar. The outback roadhouse is a hub for the local cattle stations and a major truck stop. It has rooms, camp sites and home-cooked meals seven days a week. **Phone (07) 4062 5291.**

Events

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| Easter | — | Einasleigh Races and Rodeo |
| April | — | Outback Rock & Blues at Undara Experience |
| June | — | Oak Park Races, Mount Surprise Campdraft |
| July | — | Georgetown Rodeo |
| August | — | Forsayth Turnout |
| October | — | Opera in the Outback at Undara Experience |
| December | — | Einasleigh Horse Sports |

Contact the TerrEstrial Centre on (07) 4062 1485 for more information.

Road conditions

The roads are unsealed, but generally well graded.

Contact Etheridge Shire Council on (07) 4062 1233 or www.etheridge.qld.gov.au for more information.

Getting there and exploring further afield

- ◆ Drive from Cairns via the scenic Atherton Tablelands to Undara Experience
- ◆ Drive from Townsville and Charters Towers to The Lynd Junction
- ◆ Drive the unsealed Ootah Road from east of Mount Surprise to Almaden and Chillagoe
- ◆ From Georgetown continue west along the Savannah Way which is sealed to Karumba
- ◆ From Undara travel to Mount Garnet and follow the newly opened Kirrama Range Road to the Tropical Coast
- ◆ From The Lynd Junction continue on the Fossicking Trail to Moonstone Hill along the Kennedy Developmental Road

Experiences



Birdwatching

The Gulf Savannah is a world-class attraction for birdwatchers thanks to a diversity of habitats and seasonal weather patterns. The best time to see birds is late in the dry season (September to December) when many migratory birds arrive and animals congregate around the remaining rivers and waterholes, although there are plenty to be seen all year round. Cumberland Chimney, 20km from Georgetown, is a popular location to see a variety of birds. Ask for bird lists at each of your stops to learn more about the species you may see.

Fossicking

Fossicking for semi-precious gemstones, gold and the world's most colourful thunder eggs are a highlight of the Gems and Gorges Trail. O'Brien's Creek near Mount Surprise is known for topaz, quartz and garnet, while Flat Creek Station is a favourite with those wanting to prospect for gold. The Agate Creek gem fields are aptly named for the colourful thunder eggs found there.

A fossicking licence is required. Ask at Visitor Information Centres or Mount Surprise Gems.



Wildlife

Kangaroos, wallabies, emus, goannas, skinks, frogs and butterflies are among the Australian wildlife commonly seen in the Gulf Savannah. While driving, watch for magnificent wedge-tailed eagles which swoop from the sky looking for prey. At Undara Experience you can wait at the entrance to the lava tubes on dusk to see thousands of tiny micro-bats emerge to chase insects and witness pythons and Brown Tree Snakes hanging from the trees trying to capture the tiny bats for dinner.

Heritage

The history of this fascinating region revolves around mining and cattle stations. The restored buildings of Georgetown date back to the early 1900s and just 20km away is the Cumberland Chimney, the remains of an old gold crushing plant. The Einasleigh cemetery gives a vivid picture of the hardships faced by pioneers and Caschafor Park in Forsayth is where you can see an old rail engine. The Ted Elliott Mineral Collection at TerrEstrial in Georgetown has more than 4500 specimens and is rivalled only by the Geological Museum in Canberra.



Lava Tubes, Gems and Gorges Trail

Dramatic gorges, lava tubes and brilliant gemstones are the highlights of the **Lava Tubes, Gems and Gorges Trail** which loops from the Savannah Way through the Etheridge Shire. Experience the Australian outback and its wildlife on an adventure taking in the McBride Volcanic Province where eruptions millions of years ago formed a spectacular landscape and left behind a rich mineral heritage.

