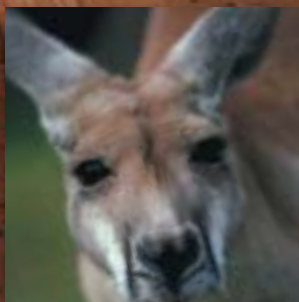


Outback Queensland



Survive
the drive



Queensland Government
Department of Main Roads



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Kangaroos, cattle, torrential rain and the occasional ten-car-long road train - these are just some of the things you might encounter on Queensland outback roads. It's a jungle out there. Well, up in the far north it is. Meanwhile, if you head inland, you'll find some of the driest and flattest outback on earth.

This is the beauty of Queensland - there's so much diversity within the one state. But within that diversity lies unexpected challenges for drivers from the city or other parts. You never know for sure what's just around the next bend.



Out here, the trains run on dirt tracks

In this booklet we explain how to pass a road train and what to do so you don't hit an animal. You'll get timely tips on preparing your vehicle, planning your trip and surviving the drive. An overview of Australian road rules is also included - essential reading for drivers from overseas.

For the safety of you and your passengers we encourage you to read this booklet before you head off - then keep it in your glove box for reference once you hit the road.

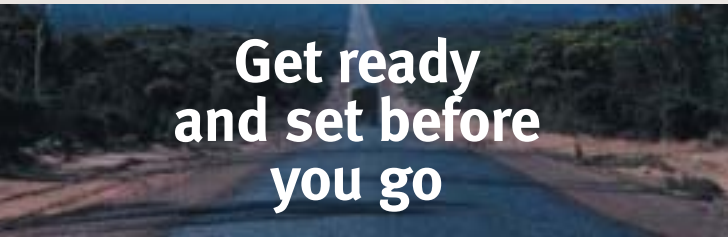
Overseas driver?

Before you set off, please refer to the road rules refresher course section at the back of this booklet. For more comprehensive information about driving in Queensland we encourage you to obtain the booklet 'Your keys to driving in Queensland' available from your nearest Queensland Transport Customer Service Centre.





Queensland is the second largest state in Australia and many travellers underestimate the distances involved. Did you know, for instance, that it's nearly as far from Brisbane to Cairns as it is from Brisbane to Melbourne? Detailed maps are available from your state motoring organisation and most bookshops and service stations. Main Roads' free 'Guide to Queensland Roads' map is recommended. Main Roads website (www.mainroads.qld.gov.au, under Traffic and Roads, Guide to Queensland Roads) has information about distances between key destinations and rest area information to help you better plan your trip.



Get ready and set before you go

Determine all the stops along the way where fuel, food and water can be obtained and plan your itinerary around these. RACQ's website (www.racq.com.au, under Travel, Road Touring, Travel Planner) has a Travel Calculator to help you work out travelling times and distances between towns in Queensland.

TIP Be realistic about how many kilometres you can drive in a day. Allow for meal breaks, 15 minute rest stops every two hours, scenic detours, re-fuelling, and toilet stops. If you try to drive too far in one trip you'll get tired and seriously increase your chances of crashing.

Will your vehicle go the distance?

It's a good idea to put your vehicle in for a service and tune before you leave. Double check your tyres, lights, windscreen wipers, battery, coolant levels, hoses, oil levels and fuel lines. Have a wheel balance and alignment done if necessary. Make sure you carry the tools required to change a flat tyre and make running repairs. Stock up with bottles of

fresh drinking water - especially important in the summer months.

Road-side assistance services offered by vehicle manufacturers, repairers and motoring associations don't always cover all of Queensland. In many places there isn't a service station 'just down the road' so any breakdown can involve a costly towing bill and major delays in your planned trip.

Going Outback?

Your 'standard equipment' should include:

- First aid kit
- Water (20 litres for emergency use, plus four litres per person per day)
- Food in case you are delayed by accident or breakdown
- Fire extinguisher
- Tool kit including jack, winder, wheel brace, spanners and screw drivers
- Tow rope
- Shovel (you'll need it if you get bogged)
- Toilet paper
- Spare fan belt, hoses and fuses
- Two spare wheels (if possible)
- Detailed maps of the area you're heading into
- A compass (or GPS - Global Positioning System if possible)
- Tarpaulin
- Portable fridge or cooler
- Rubbish bags (to bring back everything you take out)
- Matches or lighter
- Appropriate communication equipment (remember mobile telephones may not work in the outback).

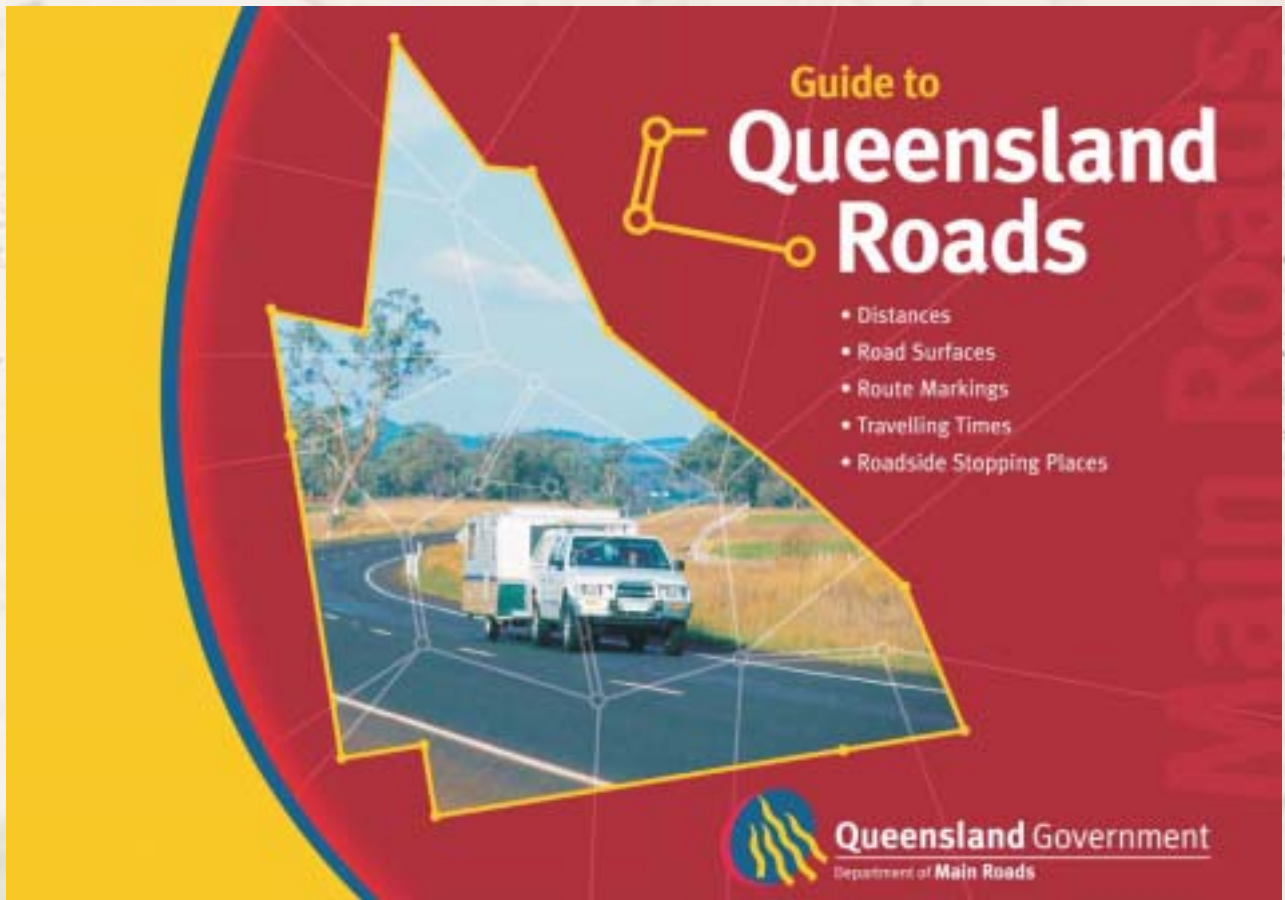
Note the coverage of the CDMA network is much broader than the GSM. Obtain coverage from your service provider.





A good place
to start is with
a good map

The Queensland Department of Main Roads produces the Guide to Queensland Roads and provides it free of charge. You can order a printed copy by sending an email to: www.corporateaffairs@mainroads.qld.gov.au or by calling 1800 060 475 during business hours.





TIP If travelling to remote areas, satellite telephones or HF/UHF radio sets are recommended. A list of the Repeater Network Stations can be obtained from the Australian Communication Authority (ACA). Further information can be obtained by ringing 07 4920 3222. Other information can be obtained from the local Information Centre in each town.

Using a Four Wheel Drive?

First and foremost, make sure you know how to drive a 4WD. They handle quite differently to 'city' cars and you need an additional range of skills to deal with both the vehicle and with off road conditions. Make sure your 4WD is in excellent mechanical order.

Ensure you are able to operate all the vehicle functions (e.g. engaging four wheel drive capability, using a winch, changing to a sub-fuel tank).

Keep to defined tracks, so you don't get lost or damage wildlife habitat.

OFF ROAD TIP If you plan to drive on unsealed roads, your vehicle may need to have high ground clearance. Fuel tanks must be large enough for an extra reserve of fuel. Jerry cans should be avoided because of the potential fume hazards inside the cabin.

Towing a van or trailer?

It's a lot different to everyday driving. If you've never towed before, practice in a quiet area to get a feel for the additional time it takes to accelerate and slow down. Make allowances for the extra length and width of what's behind you. Practice braking and steering smoothly and gently to avoid swaying. Remember to use a lower gear when travelling downhill. When you're towing you're actually in control of two vehicles at the same time, so take extra care.



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MORE TOWING TIPS

- Make sure the towing vehicle is powerful enough to tow the weight of the loaded trailer or van
- Check your vehicle's handbook for towing capacity
- Make sure that your trailer or van is in good mechanical order, paying particular attention to light fittings, couplings, safety chains, tyres and braking systems
- For ball couplings, ensure the socket and ball are matching size – for other couplings, check that all parts fit and function properly
- Look to see that there is good visibility in your vehicle's side mirrors
- Ensure that all doors, hatches and covers are properly secured
- Limit the weight in the boot or luggage space of the towing vehicle – if you're taking a trailer, ensure that your load is properly restrained.

The night before you go

Make sure that you get plenty of sleep and preferably don't drink any alcohol. If you're heading through a remote area, let friends, neighbours or the police know the details. Charge your mobile phone (CDMA phones will work in most regional centres but usually not in the areas in between). Pack plenty of toys and games if you're taking children – it'll make the trip more fun for them and less of a distraction for whoever is driving. Get a current weather report. Some roads may be impassable due to flooding.

TRIP TIP Driving long distances in heavy rain is unpleasant. It also increases your risk of having a crash. Consider putting your trip off for a couple of days if sustained rain is forecast.

Current road condition information

Just before you begin your journey it's wise to have up to date information on the condition of the roads you intend to use, especially if you're planning to drive on unsealed roads.

This information can be obtained from:

- The RACQ - telephone 1300 130 595 or website www.racq.com.au
- Shire councils in the intended area of travel
- Local police stations

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Queensland has some of the best roads in Australia, with excellent motorways connecting Brisbane to the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast. Further afield the conditions vary from bitumen to gravel and dirt. In places, the roads can be narrow, with soft shoulders, narrow bridges and changing surfaces.

Commonsense will go a long way towards keeping you on track on our minor and unsealed roads. However, there are some things you should know. The following tips - some of them learned the hard way - should make your trip safer and more enjoyable.

Hitting the road without hitting a problem



Don't tangle with a road train

These heavyweights can be up to 55 metres long (the length of 10 cars). Make sure you have plenty of room before you overtake these vehicles and be prepared for them to sway from side-to-side as you pass, especially the last trailer. Expect road trains and large vehicles to stay on the bitumen when you're overtaking or passing them.

Motorists can share the roads with road trains more safely by following these simple rules.

Meeting oncoming road trains on narrow roads

- Slow down, pull on to the shoulder of the road and stop, if necessary, until the road train has passed.



Overtaking road trains on narrow roads

- Flash your lights to warn the driver that you plan to overtake
- Allow at least one kilometre of clear road ahead and be prepared for them to sway a little from side to side
- Beware of soft shoulders, guide posts and wildlife on the roadside as you overtake.

OTHER TIPS FOR SAFE TRAVELLING WITH LARGE VEHICLES

- Don't cut in front of a large vehicle as you will reduce the driver's braking distance
- Maintain a consistent speed when being overtaken by a large vehicle
- If you cannot see the driver in a large vehicle's side mirrors, the driver cannot see you
- Recognise that large vehicles accelerate and brake slowly and make allowances for this
- When a large vehicle is turning, keep back from the intersection as the vehicle will require more road space to make the turn
- If a vehicle displays the sign DO NOT OVERTAKE TURNING VEHICLE it is legally allowed to take up more than one lane to turn
- If you're towing a caravan or trailer and a large vehicle wants to overtake you on a narrow road, look for opportunities to safely pull onto the shoulder of the road - you'll need to choose a location at which the truck driver has good visibility of oncoming vehicles.



Take care on unsealed roads

It's easy to lose control of your vehicle on a dirt road, even when you are travelling at a relatively low speed. So slow down and be aware that there



may be an oncoming vehicle at every turn. Keep a lookout for sand, loose gravel, potholes and mud patches (very slippery). Drive slowly through corrugated sections. Turn your vehicle's headlights on when visibility is poor. Consider stopping and waiting if dust in the air means you can't see the road in front of you.

Don't fall asleep at the wheel

Long distances between towns and vast stretches of unchanging landscape makes driver fatigue a real problem in outback Queensland. Stop for a break if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- Sore or 'heavy' eyes
- Dim or fuzzy vision
- Day dreaming or hallucinations
- Droning or humming in your ears
- General tiredness, stiffness or cramps
- Aches or pains
- Delayed reactions
- Wandering across the road.

How to prevent driving tired

- Take regular breaks from the wheel - at least 15 minutes every two hours is recommended
- Pull into rest areas, tourist spots and Driver Reviver stops frequently
- Avoid alcohol before and during the trip
- Check medications with your doctor (in case they make you drowsy)
- Eat properly - not too little, not too much



- Get plenty of sleep before your trip
- Don't drive for more than ten hours per day
- Fresh air - don't keep your air-conditioning on all the time, wind down your window every now and then to get some fresh air
- Share the driving
- Plan ahead - arrange stops and rest overnight
- As soon as you feel tired, or your attention is wandering, stop and rest.

Don't make the mistake of starting your trip in the early hours of the morning. Many travellers plan to get an early start, however your body clock isn't prepared for driving at this hour. Statistics show you are six times more likely to crash due to fatigue if you depart before dawn.



Look out for Driver Reviver signs on the highway, with the distinctive coffee cup logo. Driver Reviver sites operate over busy holiday periods. They provide free tea and coffee for drivers and their passengers and are a good opportunity to get out of the car and stretch your legs. Also look out for rest areas along the way.

60m between caravans please

Caravanning is a great way to see Queensland and travelling with other van owners can add to the enjoyment of your trip. But caravans driving too close together can be a safety hazard. Motorists frustrated by a caravan 'convoy' may take risks to overtake, endangering lives. This can be a real problem, especially in central and western Queensland where single-lane roads carry many



large vehicles. To avoid dangerous situations, the law requires caravans and other large vehicles to leave at least 60 metres 'breathing space' when travelling outside built-up areas (or 200 metres in a road train area), except on multi-lane roads.



STOP AND CHECK Soon after you head off it's wise to stop in a safe place and look over your vehicle and van. Make sure your brakes and wheel bearings aren't overheating. Check that your tyres are still correctly inflated and not rubbing on anything. Make sure your luggage is secure. Check couplings, safety chains and brake and light connectors.

Plan not to drive at sunrise and sunset

Many outback roads have an east-west orientation. Driving when the sun is low in the sky makes clear vision impossible and you're more likely to run into animals crossing roads in search of food. Plan to reach your destination by 4.00pm-5.00pm (especially if you're driving in a westerly direction) and leave after 7.00am to lessen the risks.

At night, animals can be hypnotised by the glare of your headlights. If an animal is on the road be prepared to brake, sound your horn and flash your headlights.

TIP As much as we love our furry friends, don't swerve off the road and risk rolling your vehicle to avoid hitting one. Gently brake and steer towards the direction from which the animal came. Of course, it's better if there's no accident at all, so keep to the speed limit and be alert for the unexpected.

Cattle crossing?

From time to time you might also encounter cattle and sheep being moved across the road by farmers. Stop if necessary, be patient, and enjoy this genuine 'outback' experience. Watch out for livestock like sheep and cattle grazing on the roadside at other times, too. Cattle are curious and may stop right in the middle of the road to watch you approach. When you see a cattle crossing ahead of you, always slow down and be prepared to stop, even if there appears to be plenty of time.



Wet weather warning

When passing or overtaking in wet conditions, reduce speed before nearing the edge of the road. Be aware of slippery conditions and unstable road edges. Try to keep one wheel on the bitumen, if at all possible, and if it is safe to do so. This will reduce the likelihood of a crash. Road shoulders on outback roads may be soft soil that may not support your vehicle's weight after rain.

When driving in wet weather:

- Keep your windscreen and lights clean
- Keep headlights on low beam - in foggy conditions, it's actually easier to see on low beam
- Use your air-conditioner or demister to keep the windscreen clear of condensation
- Turn your lights on when there is reduced visibility
- Decrease your speed - remember, the signed speed limit is the maximum safe speed in good driving conditions, so drive more slowly in poor conditions



- Double your following distance to allow for greater reaction and stopping time
- After going through deep water, drive slowly with your foot on the brake pedal for a short distance - this helps the brakes dry out.

WET WEATHER ALERT Sometimes roads can be closed due to their fragile state after wet weather or because they are blocked by flooding. Travellers should always obey signs closing roads to traffic for their own safety. Ignoring road signs may not only endanger lives, but you could find yourself facing a substantial fine.

Don't cross flooded roads

Try to avoid crossing a road covered in water. Wait until the water level drops or use an alternative route. Roads may be covered in water that appears shallow, but has a very strong force (enough to sweep your vehicle away).



Keep your cool in hot weather

Heat stress and dehydration can occur after spending extended periods in high temperatures or in direct sunlight. Be aware of the effects that temperature changes can have, especially when going from an air-conditioned vehicle at about 21°C (70°F) to a 40°C (104°F) outside temperature. These effects can be dramatic and immediate.

Signs of heat stress include:

- Feeling hot, exhausted and weak
- Headaches, fatigue and nausea
- Feeling and looking flushed
- Dryness of the mouth.

Prevent over exposure to heat by:

- Avoiding long periods in direct sunlight
- Wearing sunscreen
- Wearing comfortable, long-sleeved clothing, effective sunglasses and a broad brimmed hat
- Increasing your intake of water.

Soft drinks can actually make you thirstier and you may consume more fluids. This could cause you to use up valuable water supplies more quickly than you normally would.



Road closures

RACQ's website (www.racq.com.au under motoring) provides information on road conditions due to flooding. Telephone advice is also available by phoning 1300 130 595.

Changing tyres

In Queensland outback areas it's often a long way to the nearest service station. If you get a flat tyre:

- Park on firm, level ground
- Leave manual vehicles in gear
- Apply the hand brake
- Know and use the correct lifting points under the vehicle when using a jack
- When tightening the wheel nuts, do so by tightening one nut, miss the next, tighten the third nut and so on
- Continue like this until all wheel nuts have been fully tightened



- Slowly lower the vehicle to the ground
- Check the tightness of all wheel nuts
- Place the equipment back in your vehicle.



If you crash

In the event of a crash follow these steps:

- Stay calm
- Check for injury to yourself and others before taking action
- Call for assistance as soon as possible
- Never leave your vehicle
- Always wait for help to arrive
- Call the Flying Doctor/Emergency Service (Fire, Ambulance, Police) on 000 or UHF radio.

In case of an injury

- Never move an injured person unless it is to prevent further injury, and only if it's safe to do so
- Apply first-aid (stop bleeding, apply bandages)
- Call for assistance, giving full details of injuries and location
- If injury prevents safe operation of the vehicle, wait for help.

Shattered windscreen?

Stones thrown up by passing vehicles can result in cracked and shattered windscreens. If all the glass shatters and you can't see:

- View the road ahead by looking out the window or door

- Brake slowly, and if safe, pull off to the side of the road
- Fill the demister vents with paper or cloth - this stops pieces of glass getting into the vents
- Remove shattered windscreen
- Wind up the other windows
- Drive on at a slower speed.

If the windscreen is only cracked and there is no obvious danger, leave it in place and drive at a reduced speed with all windows wound up. Replace your windscreen as soon as possible.



Action if you are lost or your vehicle breaks down

- Don't panic
- STAY WITH THE VEHICLE
- Flag down or phone for help
- Ensure your vehicle is visible
- Conserve food, water and energy
- Make yourself as comfortable as possible
- Wait for assistance
- If you become mobile again, be sure to advise the people you contacted for assistance.





Seat belts

In Australia seat belts and child restraints must be worn where available in passenger vehicles. Seat belts reduce the risk of injury in a crash significantly. There are heavy fines for not wearing a seat belt or restraint.

If you're riding a motorcycle, moped, motor scooter or bicycle, you must wear a crash helmet at all times. The pillion and side-car passengers must also wear a helmet.



Keep left

In Australia, you must drive on the left side of two-way roads. Ask passengers to remind you each time you set off - it could save your life. When walking across the road, remember to look right, left and right again for traffic.

Speed

Speed is a major cause of road crashes in Australia, so make sure you drive no faster than the signed maximum speed limit or the speed safe for the conditions. Speed limits are enforced. Slow down and avoid heavy fines. All Australian road signs are in metric - the following table will give you an idea of the conversions:

50km/h: 31 mph

60km/h: 37 mph

100km/h: 62 mph

Some roads and streets don't have speed limit signs. If this is the case, you should generally observe the following:

- 50 or 60km/h on urban streets in built-up areas (building/houses alongside roads or street lights)

Look out for signs which advise the safest maximum speed you should drive under the conditions.

Road markings

Where arrows are painted on the road, you must only drive in the direction they indicate.

A continuous white centre line may only be crossed to enter or leave a property - you must not overtake.

Where the centre marking on the road is a single broken line, vehicles on either side of the line may overtake where it is safe to do so.

Where the centre marking on the road is two continuous lines, vehicles must not cross them for any reason. These lines are placed in areas where it would be dangerous to overtake.

Where the centre marking is a continuous line with a broken line beside it, vehicles on the side of the broken line may overtake only when it is safe to do so. You may cross this line to enter or leave the road. The vehicle on the side of the continuous line must not overtake.

Drink driving

Driving after you have consumed alcohol is dangerous. Australia has strict laws on 'drink driving' and police actively enforce them through random breath testing programs. If you have a normal driver's licence, you must not drive if your blood alcohol level is 0.05% or higher. Lesser amounts apply in certain states depending on the type of licence you hold. At 0.05% blood alcohol content, your risk of being involved in a crash doubles.





While you enjoy your outback trip, make sure that you don't leave your rubbish behind. Remove your rubbish from remote areas and dispose of it in legitimate bins or dumps near town.



Respect the environment

Also, take great care with fire. Fire bans apply in many areas between November and April each year. Fires in grazing areas can spell disaster for the property owners. In many areas fires are allowed to burn out of control because of a lack of resources to fight them. Get caught in one of these wildfires and the consequences could well be fatal. So if you become aware of a wildfire be prepared to evacuate the area immediately.

Contact details for more information

For further information on driving in the outback, Main Roads has a free brochure called 'Guide to Queensland Roads'. This is available through the Main Roads contact details listed below:

Main Roads

General Enquiries
Ph: 07 3834 2011

Website addresses

[Main Roads](http://www.mainroads.qld.gov.au)
www.mainroads.qld.gov.au
[RACQ](http://www.racq.com.au)
www.racq.com.au
[Queensland Transport](http://www.roadssafety.qld.gov.au)
www.roadssafety.qld.gov.au
[Outback Queensland](http://www.outbackqueensland.com.au)
[Tourism Authority](http://www.outbackqueensland.com.au)
www.outbackholidays.info
[Tourism Queensland](http://www.outbackqueensland.com.au)
www.queenslandholidays.com.au

Queensland Transport

Queensland Temporary Road Closures and Load Restrictions
Ph: 1800 077 247

Maps available from RACQ outlets

RACQ Road Service

Breakdowns (24 Hours)
Ph: 13 1111
Towing (24 Hours) Ph: 13 1111
TTY for members with impaired hearing
Ph: 07 3248 2074

Outback Visitor Information Centres

Barcaldine

Visitor Information Centre
Oak Street
Ph: 07 4651 1724
Fax: 07 4651 2243
Email: tourinfo@bigpond.com.au

Birdsville

Wirrarri Centre
Billabong Blvd
Ph 07 4656 3300
Fax: 07 4656 3302
Email: info@diamantina.qld.gov.au

Blackall

Visitor Information Centre
Shamrock St
Ph: 07 4657 4637
Fax: 07 4657 4913
Email: vic@blackall.qld.gov.au

Boulia

Min Min Encounter & Boulia
Information Centre
Herbert Street
Ph: 07 4746 3386
Fax: 07 4746 3387
Email: tourism@boulia.qld.gov.au

Camooweal

Barkly Tableland
Heritage Centre
Ph: 07 4748 2160
Fax: 07 4748 2133

Drover's Camp
Information Centre
Barkly Highway
Ph/Fax: 07 4748 2022

Charleville


Visitor Information Centre
Enterprise Drive
Ph: 07 4654 3057
Fax: 07 4654 3970
Email: tourism_murweh@murweh.qld.gov.au

Cloncurry

Mary Kathleen Park
Information Centre
Flinders Highway
Ph: 07 4742 1361
Fax: 07 4742 1712 (Shire Council)

Cunnamulla

Visitor Information Centre
Centenary Park
Ph: 07 4655 8470
Fax: 07 4655 1120
Email: cunnamullainfo@paroo.qld.gov.au

 Accredited Visitor Information Centre:
This sign denotes high quality, genuine visitor information centres that have achieved specified industry standards.

Hughenden

Visitor Information Centre
& Dinosaur Display Gray Street
Ph: 07 4741 1021
Fax: 07 4741 1029
Email: info@flinders.qld.gov.au

Longreach

Visitor Information Centre
Qantas Park
Ph: 07 4658 4150
Fax: 07 4658 4177
Email: visitinf@longreach.qld.gov.au

McKinlay

Walkabout Creek Hotel
Ph: 07 4746 8424
Fax: 07 4746 8768

Mitchell

Visitor Information Centre
Great Artesian Spa
Ph: 07 4623 8171
Fax: 07 4623 8172
Email: GreatArtesianSpa@booringa.qld.gov.au

Mount Isa

Riversleigh Centre
Marian Street
Ph 07 4749 1555
Fax 07 4743 6296
Email: info@outbackatisa.com.au
Website: www.outbackatisa.com.au

Quilpie

Quilpie Museum, Art Gallery & Visitor
Information Centre
Brolga Street
Ph: 07 4656 2166
Fax: 07 4656 1016
Email: information@quilpieshire.com.au

Richmond

Kronosaurus Korner Fossil Centre &
Information Centre
Goldring Street
Ph: 07 4741 3429
Fax: 07 4741 3802
Email: kronosauruskorner@tpg.com.au

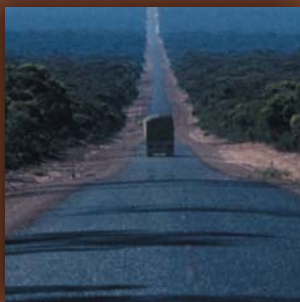
Thargomindah

Information Centre
Eccles St
Ph: 07 4655 3399
Fax: 07 4655 3374

Winton

Walzing Matilda Centre
Elderslie Street
Ph: 07 4657 1466
Fax: 07 4657 1886
Email: waltzing.matilda@bigpond.com

For up to date information on Visitor Information Centres in the Outback and the rest of Queensland visit www.queenslandholidays.com.au and search for visitor information centres.



Survive the drive



Queensland Government
Queensland **Transport** and **Main Roads**