

ITINERARY - 2 days in Collinville

Day 1 - Meet the locals and learn the story of the pit ponies

8am

Your journey begins as you leave Bowen and head down the Bowen Developmental Road towards Collinville. While the road may seem long, there are plenty of landmarks to spot.

As you leave the flat plains of the Don River delta, cattle country begins. Keep an eye out for Brahman and Wagyu cows and see if you can spot the difference! You'll also see Mt Aberdeen coming into view, marking the passage from Giya country into Birri country. At the top of Mt Aberdeen, nearly a kilometre high, is a cloud rainforest. While the country surrounding Bowen and Collinville is a dry tropic environment, this unique patch of rainforest is watered by a cloud that gathers every night.

From here the road traverses the ranges that separate Collinville from the coast. Look out for the sign that announces your arrival in the Pit Pony Capital of Australia!

9am

Your first stop in Collinville is the RV Park and Visitor Information Centre. The park offers free camping so if you are bringing your own accommodation with you, it has excellent, fully accessible facilities. The Info Centre is manned by fourth generation Collinville local, Brett Murphy, the perfect guide to introduce the history of the town.

10am

Once you have set up camp, the Information centre is an attraction in itself. Along with maps, history books and copies of the Bowen and Collinville Visitor Guide, it also has historical displays including a police precinct.

The kids will be fascinated by the old gaol – which was transported from Charters Towers back in 1924. The police officers slept in the jail when it wasn't housing the criminals as prior to that, they had to sleep in tents! Once the jail was no longer used, it became a permanent attraction right here at the info centre.

Spend an hour or so with Brett – the kids will be fascinated by his art of story-telling and they



will learn a lot about the history of the town they are about to discover.

12 noon

Feeling hungry? The Collinville Workers Club offers bistro dining with classic pub food and is straight across the road from the RV Park.

On the front lawn you'll find the Miners Memorial Garden, a tribute to local miners who have been killed underground. The shed on your right is a replica of the State No. 1 Mine Tunnel and forms the background for the Memorial Service held on the anniversary of the 1954 mine disaster, 13 October, each year.

The meals in the club are perfect for every member of the family. You'll want to eat well as next on the list is a tour of the Coalface Experience.

1.30pm

A lesson in history awaits as you make your way into the Coalface Experience Museum upstairs from the Workers Club.

The Coalface Experience begins with a video introducing the audience to the life of a coal miner and their families. Featuring interviews with locals, the film highlights the union spirit so strongly felt in small coal mining towns like Collinville.

Throughout the museum there are multimedia displays about different aspects of coal mining, from the Pit Ponies to modern safety methods. As you move through the exhibit you will gain a

personal understanding of the hardships and rewards found in the coal mining industry.

The final display of the Experience, a 'pepper's ghost' film, re-enacts the 1954 mine disaster, bringing to life the men who lost their lives in this gas explosion underground. We suggest you allow 1.5 hours to truly explore this multimedia experience.

3.30pm

As the day winds down it's time to discover why Collinville is known as the Pit Pony Capital. Head along the main street of town and onto Sonoma Street and you will find the Pit Pony Experience – a life size sculpture of one of Australia's last working pit ponies. We recommend you check out the Coalface Experience first so you and the kids will really appreciate what this statue is all about.

You might notice that these were no ponies, but more like Clydesdale horses! Retired in 1990, the ponies worked alongside the miners underground and were loved members of the community. Behind the sculpture you'll find a coal wall with the story of the community fundraising campaign to build the pony and a list of everyone who contributed. It's a remarkable tale of resilience and local spirit in the face of adversity.

4pm

To view photographs of the last pit ponies, head to the Pit Pony Tavern and enjoy an afternoon drink and then stay for dinner. A local favourite, you find a diversity of meals celebrating local beef and fresh produce, and it is a great place for locals to tell you the tales of their day at work and reminisce about days gone by.

7pm

It's probably time for the kids to wind down as it has been a big day of learning.

Head back to the RV Park – you are sure to find other travellers chatting about their day in the outback, where they have been before and give you tips on where to head to next.

Day 2 - Check out our town and learn more about our past

8am

Your second day in Collinville will uncover more stories about the past and have the kids begging for more!

There is a camp kitchen at the RV Park and travellers usually gather around for a get-together over bacon and eggs with strong coffee!

9am

Begin with a tour through the Collinville Scottville Historical Society.

Located in the original hospital, the society houses a vast collection of artifacts and day-to-day objects that show what it was like to live in Collinville 100 years ago.

Find out how food was kept cool in an ice chest, check out the early hospital instruments, and keep an eye over your shoulder for the ghost that is said to wander the rooms.

11am

Leaving the historical society, get a great view

of the entire town and surrounding ranges by driving up to Miller Street to the Collinville lookout. This is the perfect spot for photographs.

12 noon

Collinville has a great bakery – so grab some pies and their yummy cream buns and head to the park near the Pit Pony Statue where the kids can unwind and you can enjoy the beautiful fresh air.

1pm

It is now time to check out the State Mine Tour. Bookings are essential and it really is worth it. Local tour guides Ray and Gerry both worked in this now abandoned mine as young men and have some fascinating tales to tell.

The mine site is navigated via accessible pathways while signs along the way explain the roles of the different buildings and machinery. You'll see the stables where the Pit Ponies lived and the poppet head that lowered the men and horses into the tunnels every day.

The tour will take approximately 2 hours and will have you all imagining the dark, hot tunnels and endless hard work for days to come.

3.30pm

We suggest a couple of hours back at the RV Park to unwind and take in that great history you have just learnt all about.

5.30pm

For a different dinner option, wander back down to the main street and have a meal and a few drinks at the Opal Ridge Motel. This is a classy venue – with a menu that would rival any in the city.

7pm

After dinner, wander back to the park to catch up with like-minded travellers again – ready for your next adventure tomorrow. You will be glad you took the road to Collinville!