

2 Day Itinerary

Need a change of scenery? Or perhaps you are sick of the rain and looking to dry out... Head west for a weekend getaway to experience something different and reset your spirit. Hughenden is a 4-hour drive from Townsville and is achievable in a weekend, but even better on a long weekend to allow a little more time to explore.

The best months to visit Hughenden is between April and October where temperatures are pleasant, and the rainfall is minimal. Your visit can be as active or slow paced as you like. It's your getaway, so you choose.

Depending if you are planning on towing your accommodation behind you or just travelling by car there are several accommodation options. The Allen Terry Caravan Park has powered and non-powered sites as well as a range of cabin styles. The Flinders Shire Council also have a free RV Park near the showgrounds if your van/camper is fully self-contained with its own toilet and shower.

If you are wanting a little but more of a social experience Hughenden has two hotels, the Royal and the Great Western, both offering accommodation, meals, dining rooms, bar, and gaming rooms. You may want to join in the social raffles that run across the weekend. A great place to mix it up with the locals.

The town had four operating Air BNB's each offering 4-star accommodation with country flair and charm. You can rent a whole house and bring some friends, or Hughenden Guest House offers individual rooms. Lets get started shall we....

Day 1 Morning

Make the most of your two days in Hughenden by welcoming in the day with a morning walk along the banks of the Flinders River. It's the best part of the day and you will be rewarded with a stunning sunrise, displaying various shades of orange, which dissipate to pink and blue as the sun moves up from the horizon. The early morning birdlife is quite something. Be prepared for an assault on your ears with large flocks of Corellas and Major Mitchells squawking in the trees above you as they awaken from their overnight roosting. In contrast you will often see the graceful white Egrets and peaceful Pelicans doing some early morning fishing in the water puddles of the receding Flinders River, and the Kookaburras are always up for a laugh. There is usually a flock or two of Guinea Fowl you will encounter on your walk, obviously escaped from somewhere once, but have now made the banks of the river home.

After your morning walk, time to grab some breakfast and a great coffee to get you fired up for the day. Head to the Golden Lab Espresso for the best homemade muffins, croissants and a wickedly good coffee. You know a good café when you see the road trains pull up to grab a cuppa!

Next on itinerary, is a trip to the Flinders Discovery Centre to meet the locals and learn more about the region's rich cultural heritage and landscapes. Bea and Claire that work at the centre are born and bred locals and have a wealth of information they can share with you. The centre has a great range of souvenirs, visitor maps and destination guides.

Inside the museum, are several videos (with audio captions) telling local stories of interest. And if your eyes are a little worn out, we also have an audio guide available. One thing that you are unlikely to miss in the museum is Mutt, a lifesize replica of a Muttaborrasaurus, along with his sound effects. You will also see a range of fossils found in the local area which might inspire you to try your hand at fossicking for a fossil of your own.

There is also the shearing shed display, which explains the rise and fall of the local wool industry in the region. Make sure you also enter the theatre to watch the film on the formation of Porcupine Gorge. This incredible ancient landscape is on your itinerary to see, so the film will make you appreciate its age and provide a deeper understanding of its geology. Before leaving the Flinders Discovery make sure grab a copy of the Porcupine Gorge information booklet and

the Hughenden Destination Guide which highlights the local Art Trail and points of interest. Now a visit to a country town wouldn't be complete without checking out the shops in the main street. Take a stroll up Brodie Street to see what business the town offers. The Artisan collective is open on Saturday mornings and offer a great range of arts and craft, jams and chutney's all made or created by locals. Dotted along the main street in the alley ways are historical skins with images of Hughenden with some great stories which can be accessed by the QR code on your phone.

While you are in the main street, pull up a stump at FJ Holdens for lunch. This little café will keep your eyes busy with old sorts of Holden and Elvis memorabilia while you grab a bite to eat.

Day 1 Afternoon

Depending on your interests, you have a few options for the afternoon. For the hunters and gatherers Option 1 will appeal to you. Option 2 for the explorers, there are vast landscapes awaiting you.

Option 1

For those interested in fossicking, there are a couple of sites to explore for some collectables. The region millions of years ago was covered in water with the Eromanga Inland sea. Many of the fossils that are found in the area are marine fossils. There is a site 16km out of town, just off the side of the Kennedy Development Road, which is a hotspot for Belemnite fossils, a creature like the modern squid. The visitor information has a map, and the staff provide you with tips on how to find them.

Who doesn't like pretty rocks and historical treasures? Explore the dry riverbed of the Flinders River, you will find an incredible array of rocks and agates in all variety of colours, shapes and sizes. Every wet season after the river has run, new treasures are waiting to be found. People have found old glass bottles, ceramics, indigenous artefacts and fossils, and relics from days gone past.

Option 2

For those who would like to get off the beaten track, the shire has three different tourist drive to choose from. Each one has its own beauty with jumps ups, large basalt ridges and expansive valleys. You are likely to encounter wildlife such as emus, kangaroos, plains turkeys and if lucky the majestic brolgas. Also, the non-native species, cattle, horses, sheep and even a camel! As the drive goes through private properties remember to shut any gate you open. These roads are dirt so check the roads conditions at the visitor centre before you go, as these roads may be closed after rain.

Day 1 Evening

After all that exploring, time to start unwinding. Grab some nibbles and a drink and head up to Mt Walker. A favourite haunt for locals, this lookout is a 15 min drive and provides 360-degree views, picnic shelters and toilets. The perfect place to relax and watch the sun disappear with all its glorious hues over the vast landscape.

After the sunset, head to one of the local hotels for a pub meal and a cold drink. Play a game of pool or darts, chat to a local, but don't stay too late because tomorrow you are going to the gorge.

If you are into star gazing, you don't have to go far to see the night sky in all of its glory. Drive away from the town lights in any direction for 5 mins and look up. Take a chair or a picnic blanket and spend some time counting satellites or try your hand at night sky photography.

Day 2

Morning

Head to the Holdens Bakery for some breaky and a coffee. Stop in at one of the grocery stores to pick up some supplies to take to Porcupine Gorge with you. You will need to take plenty of water, some snacks, swimmers and a towel and most importantly your camera!

Using your Porcupine Gorge information booklet, cross the Flinders River and follow the Kennedy Development Road north towards the gorge. For the history buffs and inquisitive, there are points of interests dotted along the drive out to the gorge, including the whistling bore, the old Cobb and Co track, and the unmarked grave to name a few.

The Porcupine Gorge Lookout appears first, a short distance off the highway. The lookout is around 20 meters from the carpark and an easy walk. The view is spectacular with sheer cliff faces with the crystal-clear water snaking its way through the canyon. If you stay quiet and still for a little while, you can usually see the white cockatoos flying through the canyon, with their screech echoing across the walls.

Now the view at the lookout is impressive and you might be thinking that this looks awfully steep to hike down to the bottom. Relax, you are not required to do any abseiling. Another 15 km up the highway is the Pyramid Camping Grounds which offer National Park campsites, toilets, picnic shelters and hiking trails.

Depending on your fitness level there are two options to view the gorge. Trail one is an easy 30min stroll that brings you to a point on the canyon rim, providing views to the south of the Pyramid monolith and to the north the winding gorge. For those up for the challenge you can hike down into the gorge which is a 1.25 km trip each way. For a moderate fitness level around 30 mins down and 60mins to hike back up. As you are hiking down, each step represents 10,000 years or time. Once at the base of the gorge, it is easy walking along the beautiful sandstone, vibrant in colours and interesting patterns from the years of water erosion.

At the base of the pyramid is a natural spring supplying water year-round to this location.

Depending on what time of year you visit, will depend on the level of water in the gorge and its flow rate. A dip in the refreshing creek is a nice reward for your efforts. It's a shame there is not a pool at the top! After you hike, head back to Hughenden for a hearty lunch at one of the pubs and then some R & R.

Day 2 Afternoon.

Depending on your energy levels after the Porcupine Gorge Hike, there are a couple of options for your afternoon. Option 1 if you are ready for some downtime or option two if you are hungry for more.

Option 1

After your big effort this morning, spend the afternoon relaxing by the lake. There are lots of picnic shelters, bbq and swimming areas to enjoy. Go to the newsagency to buy a paper or magazine or book to enjoy the simple pleasures of life. Drop a fishing line into the lake or for those with toys, a paddle on a SUP or kayak is a pleasurable way to enjoy the afternoon sun. Sometimes the best thing you can do is nothing. Just relax enjoy the view, wide open spaces and lack of business and bustle.

Option 2

If you do still have some energy to burn, the Art Trail and points of interest are there for the finding. The historic Coolabah Tree blazed by William Landsborough while searching for Burke and Wills, the giant Comet Windmill, metal art sculptures inspired from the prehistoric past and some great water tank throughout the town. The sales yards are always worth a look. While no cattle sales occur in Hughenden anymore, the yards are often full of cattle on route to new agistment or sales. It is a good chance to see the up close and if you're lucky watch them been off loaded/or loaded. The solar farm is also next to the cattle yards and is impressive to see the expanse of the panels.

We hope you enjoy your outback weekend and be sure to visit again when one of the town's amazing events is happening.