



Visit
MAREEBA SHIRE

2-Day, 1-Night Self-Drive Itinerary

**Explore Chillagoe, Tropical North
Queensland's Outback Oasis**

For travellers seeking a unique outback experience within easy reach of the coast, Chillagoe offers a rare blend of rich history, remarkable geological formations, and country hospitality.

This 2-day itinerary is designed for self-drive visitors departing from Cairns or Mareeba, providing a well-paced introduction to the landscapes, attractions and local culture of this fascinating region.

DAY ONE

Mareeba to Chillagoe – The Wheelbarrow Way to the Outback



9:00 AM – Breakfast & History at Mareeba Heritage Museum

Start your journey with coffee and a light breakfast at the [Mareeba Heritage Museum & Visitor Information Centre](#). Explore fascinating exhibits—from replica shops to vintage train carriages—and get a feel for the pioneering stories that shaped the region.

mareebaheritagecentre.com.au

10:00 AM – Travel the Historic Wheelbarrow Way

Hit the road west along the Wheelbarrow Way, named after the gold rush-era prospectors who wheeled their worldly belongings along this route. Today's drive is much easier, offering sealed roads (with the exception of about 3km) and stunning transitions from farmland to savannah country.

[Wheelbarrow Way](#)

11:30 AM – Arrive in Chillagoe + Coffee at Gallery 29

Your first stop in town: [Gallery 29 Café](#). Meet locals Chris and Laura, enjoy excellent barista coffee and a quiet moment in their peaceful garden courtyard. Take your time browsing quirky gifts, local art, and cards—and don't be surprised if a friendly local or two stop for a chat.

12:00 PM – Book Cave Tours at The Hub

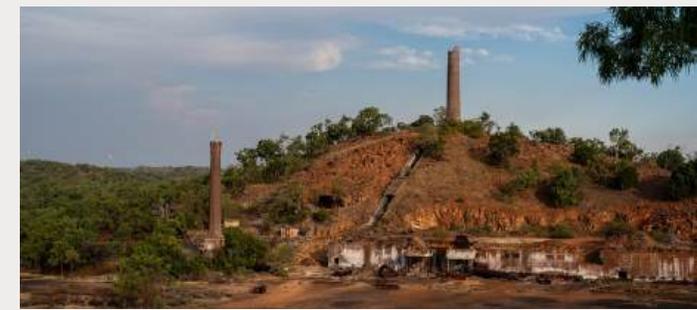
Drop by [The Hub](#), home to Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, to book your ranger-guided tours of Chillagoe's spectacular limestone caves. Guided tours of the Donna, Royal Arch, and Trezkinn Caves run daily (except Christmas Day). Tickets must be purchased in advance.

Take at least 30 minutes to explore the engaging exhibits at The Hub. Curated by a local geologist and historian, the interactive displays and detailed panels offer a fascinating introduction to Chillagoe's geological wonders and rich cultural heritage. It's the perfect way to get your bearings and set the scene for the adventures ahead.

[Tour bookings](#)

12:45 PM – Explore the Chillagoe Smelter Ruins

The towering chimneys of the old [Chillagoe Smelters](#) is one of the first landmarks you'll notice. Visit the site for fascinating insights into Chillagoe's mining past, complete with interpretive signage and panoramic views of the surrounding ranges.



2:00 PM – Lunch at the Historic Post Office Hotel

Enjoy a classic pub lunch at the Post Office Hotel, known for its hearty meals and relaxed country setting.

INSIDER TIP: Take a look around—we dare you to find a bare patch of wall. It's a long-standing tradition for visitors to leave their mark, so grab a pen and add your name or message to the collection. You'll be in good company.

3:00 PM – Check-in & Recharge

Check-in at either Chillagoe Cabins or the Chillagoe Observatory and Eco Lodge. Both offer comfortable, air-conditioned accommodation, swimming pools, and a chance to unwind before the next round of exploring.

chillagoe.com | coel.com.au

4:00 PM – Afternoon Activities

Choose your own adventure:

- Head to the Walsh River Weir for a swim, dive off the rope swing, birdwatching or a quiet fish.
- Ride or walk the nearby trails.
- Swing by the Tom Prior Ford Collection Museum.
- Pack your golf clubs and try a few holes at the cutest outback golf course.

5:00 PM – Sunset at the Smelters Lookout

As golden hour approaches, make your way back to the smelter ruins for a sunset worth staying up for. From the elevated vantage point, you'll enjoy sweeping views of the outback bathed in warm, golden light—perfect for a few snacks, a drink, and some unforgettable photos.

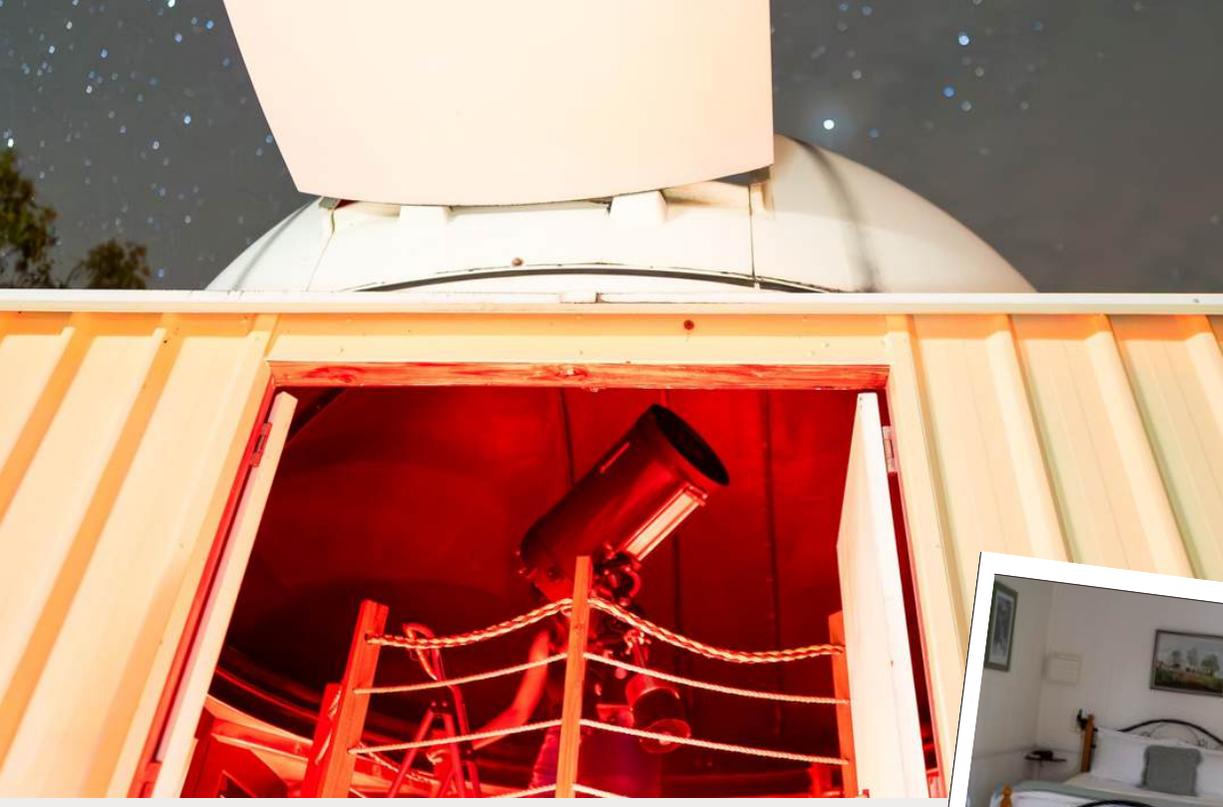
Visiting in summer? Sunset tends to fall around 6:00–6:15pm, so consider pushing dinner a little later and making the most of the afternoon with the activities above.

6:00 PM – Dinner at Chillagoe Cockatoo Hotel

Wrap up the evening at the Chillagoe Cockatoo Hotel. Expect generous portions, cold drinks, and a friendly atmosphere. Bartenders and locals here are more than happy to share a story or two. You might even find yourself in a table pool comp with fellow travellers or friendly locals.

chillagoecockatoohotel.com.au





7:30 PM – Stargazing at the Chillagoe Observatory

Thanks to minimal light pollution and dry savannah skies, Chillagoe is ideal for stargazing. Book into an evening tour at the [Chillagoe Observatory](#), where a guided look through the fully-equipped dome and telescope reveals planets, nebulas and star clusters. This is a fun and educational evening for all ages.

Observatory sessions begin at 7.30pm and last for about 1.5 hours. Pricing is as follows:

ADULTS – \$30.00
CONCESSION – \$25.00
CHILDREN (6*-14yrs) – \$20.00

Bookings are essential as sessions are weather dependent.

9:00 PM – Rest Up

After a big day of exploring, get a good night's sleep—you've got more to see in the morning.

DAY TWO

Sunrise, Caves & Outback Charm

5:30 AM – Sunrise at Castle Rock

Start your morning with a short hike to [Castle Rock](#), located about 5km before town in the Ramparts Section of the Chillagoe-Mungana Caves National Park. If your car has low clearance, then park and walk the short way in. It will be worth it.

The early light on the landscape is stunning, and if you're lucky enough to be alone, it's a truly peaceful way to begin the day.

Insider Tip: Before you go, sit back in the cave and look at the ceiling.

6:30 AM – Heritage Walk Around Town

Before the heat kicks in, take a walking tour of Chillagoe's historic town sites— Check out the [Railway Station](#), [Bank Vault](#), [Court House](#), [Police Museum](#), [Post Office](#) and [Post Office Hotel](#). It's a self-guided slice of living history.



8:00 AM – Breakfast at Chillagoe Tourist Village Café

Enjoy a relaxed breakfast at [Chillagoe Tourist Village Café](#), this rustic bush-style café has a menu that caters to all and a peaceful setting to match.

The restaurant is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner and enables you to further enjoy your holiday and stay.

9:00 AM – Donna Cave Tour

It's Cave tour time! Begin your explorations with the [Donna Cave](#), known for its stunning calcite crystals and iconic "Madonna" formation. This tour includes electric lighting and expert commentary.

10:15 AM – Balancing Rock & Wullumba Rock Art

While waiting for your next tour to begin, take a short walk from the Donna Cave carpark which leads to [Balancing Rock](#), a gravity-defying geological marvel. Nearby, located on the right hand side of the carpark is the Wullumba Aboriginal Rock Art Site, showcasing ancient artwork on the stone walls.

11:00 AM – Trezkinn Cave Tour

Your next guided tour takes you into [Trezkinn Cave](#). First, a boardwalk leads to a shelter shed at the entrance to the cave, where you can enjoy outstanding views of the Chillagoe landscape. Your guide will point out major landmarks visible from the height, including the impressive Featherbed Ranges in the distance.

Inside the cave, a steel catwalk wraps around soaring limestone formations and the impressive “chandelier” feature. Electrical lighting is provided in this cave.

Insider tip: Are you a fan of our homegrown Bundaberg Rum? Ask your guide to point out the upside down Bundy Bear formation. Your imagination may be required.

12:00 PM – Picnic Lunch at the Park

Pick up supplies from the [Chillagoe General Store](#) and enjoy a shaded picnic across the road. It’s a laid-back way to refuel before your final cave experience.

FUN FACT: The store was featured in a recent [Coca-Cola campaign](#).

1:30 PM – Royal Arch Cave Tour

This [Royal Arch Cave Tour](#) takes you through an expansive 11-chamber cave system that is explored by hand-held lanterns provided for visitors aged over five years. This adds a sense of adventure and excitement to your walk through fig-rooted chambers, fossil walls, and cathedral-like spaces.

3:00 PM – Self-Guided Cave at The Archways

If you haven't yet had your fill of caves, wrap up your visit with a short drive to [The Archways](#), located about 15 minutes west from Chillagoe town centre. Here you'll find an accessible and fun self-guided cave system with plenty of photo-worthy formations to make your friends and family jealous back home!

4:00 PM – Return to Mareeba or Beyond

If you have not now decided you MUST stay on for a few more days to enjoy the outback oasis that is Chillagoe, then it is sadly time to depart. It's an easy 1.5hr drive back to Mareeba via the Wheelbarrow Way. Consider a final coffee or afternoon tea stop in one of the small historic towns along the route.



Visit
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