Undara
275km (4 hours) from Cairns
Undara is an Aboriginal word for a long way and the Undara Lava Tubes, which stretch for 180km, are the longest lava tubes in the world. Ancient rock 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 before you head to the gem field. 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 mayor finds including the 88kg Providence Nugget at the Terrntorial Centre, a modern display of over 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/territorial. 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. Latah 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 sandy 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 salt engine, can be seen in Cascohal 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- and postal service all under the one roof. Phone (07) 4062 5374.

Cobbold Gorge
45km (1 hour) from Forsayth
An electric boat tour beneath narrows 30m high and 80m wide gives a vivid picture of the hardships faced by pioneers and Caschafor Park in the 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 Banita St.

Agate Creek
70km (1 hour) from Forsayth
Agate Creek gem fields are famous for the world’s most colourful agate, thunder eggs as they are known. The agate is the result of the region’s large number of volcanic basaltics 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.

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Gilberton Outback Retreat
56km (1 hour) for road-off 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 all among the activities offered. Go to www.gilbertonoutbackretreat.com or phone (07) 4062 3229 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 flow 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 Banita 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 nooks, campers and home-cooked meals seven days a week. Phone (07) 4062 5291.

Events
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 Terrntorial Centre on (07) 4062 1485 or visit www.etheridge.qld.gov.au 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 unsurfaced Outan Road from east of Mount Surprise to Almaden and Chillagoe
◆ From Georgetown continue west along the Savannah Way which is sealed to Kurumba
◆ 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
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.