

Bourke

'Back 'O' Bourke' – The Gateway to the Real Outback

**'...Where the mulga paddocks are wild and wide
That's where the pick of the stock man ride
Out at the Back of Bourke ...'**

Will Ogilvie 1890

'Back 'O' Bourke is more than a geographical location. It's part of the Australian language, part of our folklore. It is what provoked Henry Lawson to write after his visit in 1882, 'If you know Bourke, you know Australia'.

Bourke, located on the floodplains at the head of the Darling River, was the 'wild west' frontier for European settlement in the 19th Century. The successful navigation from the Murray River, up the Darling River to Bourke and Brewarrina by riverboat in 1859 signaled that the river had also become a highway. River front wool empires grew at phenomenal speed; some were 2 – 3 million acres, shearing millions of sheep, so that by the 1890's world record amounts of wool were shipped away to Europe from the Port of Bourke.

Legends were made in and around Bourke. Literary myths were created by Henry Lawson, Will Ogilvie and Breaker Morant. Kidman, Tyson and McCaughey created pastoral kingdoms of unparalleled proportions.

Bourke Shire is located in the north west of New South Wales, 600km north east of Broken Hill, 360km north west of Dubbo and approximately 800km north east of Sydney. The Shire covers an area of some 43,117 square kilometres and is traversed by the Darling and Warrego Rivers, the Paroo River forming part of the western boundary.

The township of Bourke, on the banks of the Darling River, has a population of approximately 3,500 people. In addition, Bourke Shire contains several small villages and scattered rural properties, supporting an additional population of 1,000. A large Aboriginal population (approx. 37%) lives in Bourke.

Industry and agriculture in the District include sheep (wheat & wool), goats (meat), and crops including cotton, citrus fruit and table grapes. Tourism is a growing industry.

Transport

Public transport from Sydney to Bourke and return consists of a NSW Country Link Service. A bus or train is available from Sydney to Dubbo and bus travel only from Dubbo to Bourke. There are commercial airlines providing regular air travel services between Bourke – Dubbo – Sydney and return.

Banks

The Commonwealth (ATM available) and National Banks maintain branches in Bourke whilst Westpac and State Banks are represented via agencies. EFTPOS facilities are available at some retail outlets.

Shopping

Retail Outlets include supermarkets, butchers, hardware, clothing and specialty shops and a newsagent.

Dinning Out

Dinning outlets include take-away and coffee shops, Chinese (Bowling Club), a la carte (RSL) and Counter Meals (Port of Bourke Hotel).

Hotels and Clubs

The town has 3 hotels and numerous motels, a Bowling Club and RSL.

Things To Do

Bourke has a young and vibrant population and sport is central to many social activities. Sporting facilities include a swimming pool, golf course, lawn bowls, tennis, squash, basketball, cricket and football venues. Fishing and boating on the river are popular recreational activities. Many extra sporting opportunities are available for children and these include pony clubs, athletics, swimming and hockey.

Shops and the Bourke Shire swimming pool are a short walking distance from the health service accommodation.

The Darling River is also within walking distance and offers attractive walks and the opportunity to fish.

The local tourist agency offers excursions to nearby scenic and historic sites at reasonable prices.

Organisations such as the CWA offer the opportunity to learn and engage in craft work. Staff often avail themselves of TAFE recreational courses including cooking, wine tasting, silver jewellery making etc. Bourke has an active Arts Council which organises exhibitions, play performance and other arts activities.

Throughout the year in Bourke and nearby towns there are annual events including shows, field days, rodeos, fishing competitions, bush poetry recitals and race meetings. Bourke provides a good jumping off point to visit other bush centres, particularly enjoyable for those who enjoy pristine environs and camping.

Generally the locals are very friendly and readily invite newcomers to participate in any sporting or social activity.

Education

There is a choice of education facilities in Bourke. There are four(4) primary schools in Bourke and these include State, Catholic and two(2) Christian Schools. Two(2) High Schools are available for older children and include Bourke State High School and Pera Bore Christian School. A TAFE College offers a range of vocational and recreational courses.

Child Minding

Child minding services available include a child care centre and family day care services.

Churches

Religious denominations which offer regular services include Anglican, Catholic, Bourke Christian Fellowship, Full Gospel Family Fellowship, Family Ministry and Jehovah Witness.

Communications

Bourke is on the digital mobile telephone network and enjoys reliable communication services. TV reception includes ABS, SBS, 7 Central (Q'LD) and Impaja(NT). National radio reception is good and Bourke has 2 community radio stations (CuzFM and 2 WEB).

The Weather

For most of the year Bourke offers a pleasant climate but the summer can be very hot, into the 40's.