

WARNING

ACHTUNG

警告

Cliff edge

Serious injury may result from walking on or around the cliff edge.

Always:

- remain behind the safety barrier at the lookout
- keep away from the cliff edge
- supervise children carefully.

Your safety is our concern, but your responsibility.



SV1659

Welcome to the Pyramid lookout

Porcupine Gorge National Park

At this wide section of Porcupine Gorge the ancient savanna landscape rolls down the slopes to the creek below.

The formation of this gorge began about 280 million years ago when Porcupine Creek started to erode layers of rock. At this location it was a meandering creek, meeting with tributaries to create these gently-sloped walls.

From here you have an uninterrupted view of the Pyramid — the rock formation for which this area is named. This large rock was slowly exposed over time by Porcupine Creek demonstrating the powerful combination of water and time. Today the melaleuca-lined Porcupine Creek still trickles through the gorge. It supports permanent and transient residents including freshwater turtles and dragonfly larvae.

Look for the Pyramid track snaking its way to the bottom of the gorge. Unlike the steeper sections, this part of the gorge is accessible by foot. Walk the track to fully appreciate the natural beauty of the gorge and its history.



View of the rock formation from the end of the Pyramid track.

Welcome to the Gorge lookout

Porcupine Gorge National Park

Porcupine Gorge is a vast 2.7km long gorge in dry savanna country. Through the centre runs Porcupine Creek, a tributary of Queensland's longest river, the Flinders. The creek is the heart of life in the gorge, providing a permanent water source for wildlife.

European people settled in this part of north-west Queensland in 1864. Ernst Henry established Hughenden Station, the first cattle and sheep station in the area, after which the nearby town of Hughenden is named.

The township of Hughenden was surveyed on 21 August 1877. Many properties quickly established around the town and what is today Porcupine Gorge National Park.

Sections of Porcupine Gorge once formed part of Wongalee cattle station. In October 1970, due to its geological significance, the gorge became a national park. The remainder of the park's 5300ha was added in 1991.

Meeting the locals

In a landscape that appears sparse and peaceful, Porcupine Gorge supports a myriad of plant and animal life including raucous parrots and unusual spiny knob-tailed geckos. Echidnas and wallaroos hide out of sight amongst significant flora like kangaroo grass and pink gidgee trees.



You may see pretty, coloured galahs perched in eucalypt trees. Their pink and grey plumage stands out against this stark landscape. Galahs are an iconic Australian bird, well known for their distinctive "chi-chi" call and cheeky personality. Flocks can vary in size from 30 to 1000 birds – an impressive sight.

The sandstone and basalt soils of Porcupine Gorge are home to the vulnerable pink gidgee tree (*Acacia crombiei*) – one of the few stands of this acacia in all of Australia. Its botanical name is a tribute to James Crombie, a local pastoralist who lived in this area during the late 1800s. Pink gidgees have typical yellow wattle flowers but pink heartwood which gives the tree its common name.

Facilities

Toilets, picnic tables, a day-use area, campground and lookout are provided in the Pyramid campground, located 11km north of here on the Kennedy Developmental Road.



Walking

There is one walking track in Porcupine Gorge National Park. Located at the Pyramid campground, the track allows access to the bottom of this stunning gorge. The Pyramid track is steep and has unstable surfaces. A moderate level of fitness is required to complete the 2.4km (1.5hrs return) walk.

For your safety

- Take care around cliffs, steep slopes and rock faces along tracks and at lookouts.
- Supervise children closely.
- Keep to the walking track at all times and take note of the safety signs.
- You may encounter cattle. Do not startle or approach these animals. Never block their path.

Caring for park

- Domestic animals are not permitted in the national park.
- Camp only in the designated campsites at the Pyramid campground.
- Take your rubbish with you when you leave.
- Take care not to transport weed seeds in shoes or socks – dispose of seeds in rubbish.

Remember this is a national park – everything is protected.



Welcome to Gorge lookout

Porcupine Gorge National Park

Porcupine Gorge is an ancient and special place. There are very few sites which offer such a clear insight into Queensland's geological history.

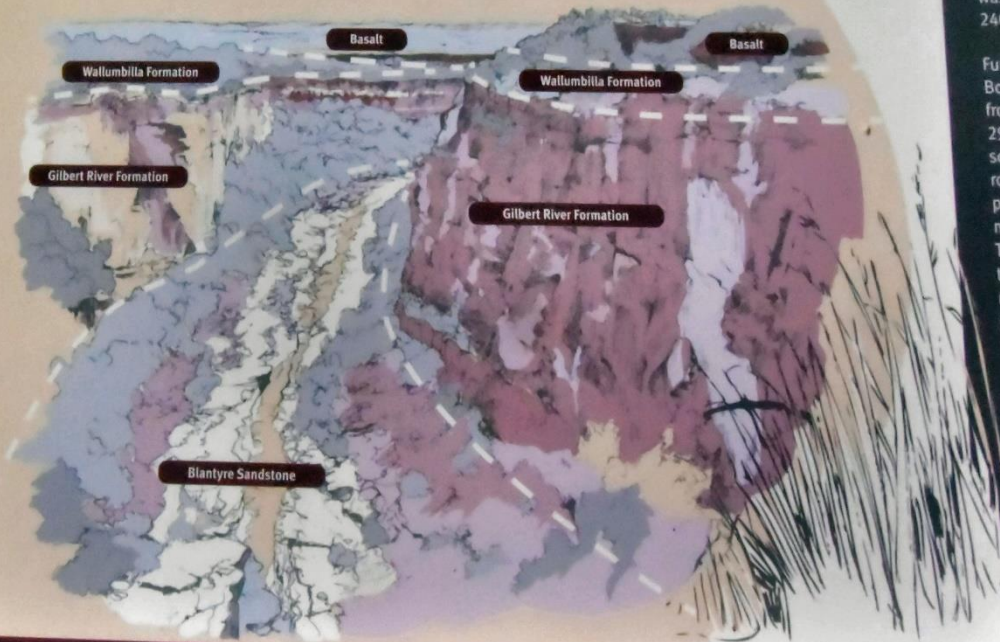
Gaze into Porcupine Gorge, 120 metres into the Earth, where almost 200 million years of geological history is revealed.

Sometime in the prehistoric past, forces in the Earth's crust uplifted this region above the lower country to the south. Between six and two million years ago it was then covered by sheets of basalt lava that erupted from small volcanoes. This basalt formed a hard cap over the elevated land surface.

Porcupine Creek began to erode through the basalt and, upon finding softer sedimentary rocks beneath, rapidly cut down to its present level. The hard basalt cap prevented its sandstone sides from eroding too quickly, creating the vertical walls of the gorge. Look down below for the "gutter" where the creek is still eroding the sandstone, continuing the age-old process.

See the different layers of sedimentary rocks in the gorge walls. Two separate river systems deposited the two major visible layers. The dull, brown Blantyre Sandstone was laid down first, about 170 million years ago.

This was followed by the red-brown Gilbert River Formation about 145 to 120 million years ago. Above these layers is the thin, white Wallumbilla Formation that was deposited from a shallow sea about 115 to 110 million years ago. The lookout is built on this layer.



Ancient upstream geology

Visit the Pyramid rock formation further north in the park where erosion has revealed even older rocks. At the base of the Pyramid, purple-white Warang Sandstone was laid down by rivers about 240 to 235 million years ago.

Further upstream, exposed Boonderoo beds were deposited from glacial rivers about 300 to 290 million years ago. Very old schists and gneisses (metamorphic rocks created from heat and pressure under the Earth's surface) may be as old as 600 million years. These are mostly inaccessible at the headwaters of the gorge but rounded fragments can be seen in the creek bed at the Pyramid.

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walking

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Welcome to Pyramid track

Porcupine Gorge National Park

Dry plains, open woodlands and savanna grasslands cover much of this park but here the land plunges into the striking Porcupine Gorge, a geological feature unmatched in north-west Queensland.

Pyramid track

2.4km (1.5hrs return)

The Pyramid walking track is steep and has unstable surfaces. A moderate level of fitness is required to complete the walk.

This track allows you to venture deep into this remarkable gorge. Over millions of years the gorge was carved out of the surrounding landscape by Porcupine Creek. This erosive process cut through 120m of soft sediments to produce today's deep-sided Porcupine Gorge.

Along the walk the Earth's ancient past is exposed. Look around you at the uncovered layers of sedimentary rock, such as the Pyramid at the base of the gorge. This spectacular rock formation, composed of layer upon layer of flat-bedded sandstone, was eroded by the creek to produce equally inclined sides, shaped like a pyramid.

At the bottom of the gorge you will see smaller, softly coloured, rounded sandstone that has been exposed and shaped by river and wind forces over time.

Meeting the locals

Although the gorge may appear stark and arid, many animals are found here including the curious, cheeky rufous bettong. Look for the cylindrical droppings left behind by these nocturnal marsupials. The bettong rests during the heat of the day in small natural caves or grass tussocks.

Look overhead for wedge-tailed eagles flying at altitudes of up to 200m, their characteristic wedge-shaped tails in clear silhouette against the endless sky.

Woodland plants in the gorge can withstand dry conditions; the spindly lancewood survives, precariously clinging to the walls of the gorge. They can be seen in full flower from July to September.

walk safely

Take care around cliffs, steep slopes and rock faces along tracks and at lookouts.

Always carry water, wear a hat and sturdy footwear, and try to walk in the cooler part of the day.

Plan to complete your walk well before dark.

As you walk, rest often in the shade as heat exhaustion can affect even the fit and healthy.

walk softly

Always stay on the walking track. Do not cut corners or create new tracks.

Toilets are not provided on this track. Use a trowel to bury toilet waste and paper. Dig a 15cm hole at least 100m away from watercourses.

Do not chase, scare or feed animals.

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Porcupine Gorge National Park map

