

# Visit a village

## To the north

Take a trip to gold mining villages that thrived in the region in the late 1800s to see reminders of days gone by can be found everywhere.

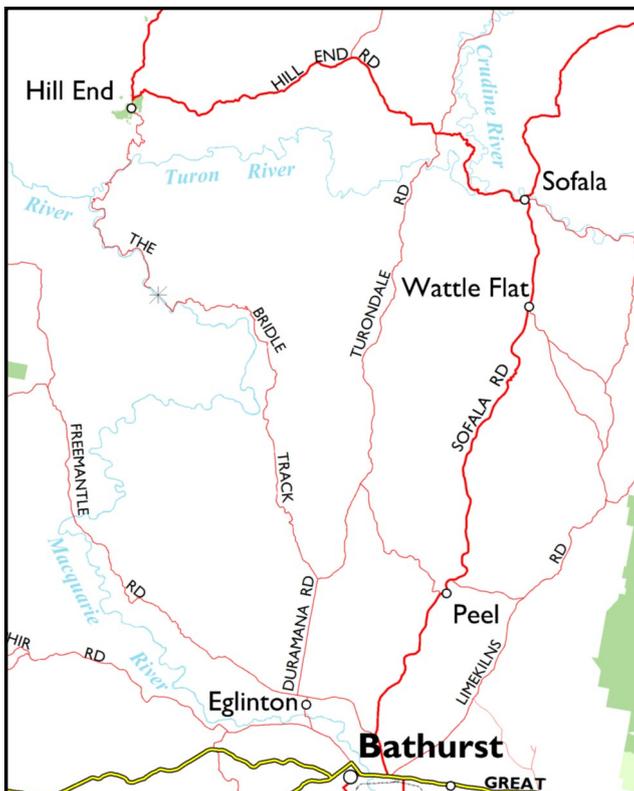
Route: Bathurst to Hill End via Sofala and Wattle Flat  
 Total distance: 86kms via Sofala—*all sealed*  
 75kms via Turondale—*all sealed*  
 Time: Could take up to a day depending on stops along the way

The following brochures available from the visitor information centre can help you plan

- Historical Walking Tour of Sofala
- A stroll through Wattle Flat
- Wattle Flat Heritage Lands
- Hill End Historic Site

<p>1. Depart from Bathurst Visitor Information Centre. Travel north along Durham Street &amp; turn right into George Street at 3rd set of traffic lights.</p> 	<p>As you travel along Hereford Street you'll cross the Macquarie River floodplain where the original inhabitants, the Wiradjuri camped, fished and hunted.</p>
<p>2. At the roundabout on Gilmour Street turn left on to Sofala Road. Approximately 11kms along is the village of Peel.</p>	<p>Leaving the city the road winds through rural countryside where animals graze and early settlers made their homes. About 2kms from the village of Peel is the historic property 'Bruceedale', which has been in the hands of the Sutor family since 1822 and is the burial place of Windradyne, leader of the Wiradjuri.</p>
<p>3. Continue to Wattle Flat - 34 kms north of Bathurst.</p> <p>Turn left into Thompson Street</p> 	<p>Originally a farming community this village became a boom town in 1855 when gold was discovered. The town at one stage had 5 hotels, 2 stores, 2 schools and 2 churches. A walk through the streets today reveals remains of abandoned mines and early settlers' cottages. Wander through the cemetery where some headstones date back to the 1800s. Discover the diverse nature of the vegetation and wildlife as you stroll through the Wattle Flat Heritage Lands. Reminders of gold mining activity can be seen throughout the reserve and fossicking is permitted. Camping is allowed and walking trails exist so you can explore the 250ha sanctuary.</p>
<p>4. Continue your journey another 11 kms to Sofala—Australia's oldest surviving gold town.</p> 	<p>Seeing Sofala today it is hard to imagine that in the 1850s the township stretched 16 kms along the Turon River with a population of around 40,000. At the height of the gold rush there were churches, schools, hotels, a court of petty sessions and a hospital. Historic buildings set against the backdrop of rugged scenery have led to the location being used for movies and providing inspiration for artists. Along the Sofala Road towards Ilford the Turon Technology Museum has a vast display of engines &amp; motors of the past.</p>

<p>5. After visiting Sofala return to the crossroads of Sofala and Hill End Roads. Travel west 38 kms to Hill End.</p>	<p>As you head towards Hill End you will pass through the spectacular scenery that is known as Wallaby Rocks. At one stage the township of Sofala extended to this point.</p>
<p>6. Enter the village of Hill End, turn left into High Street and drop in to the Visitors' Centre.</p>	<p>The visitors' centre and museum is located in the former district hospital. The restoration of this building was one of the first projects undertaken by National Parks &amp; Wildlife Services when it took over the management of the historic site in 1967.</p>
<p>7. Leaving the Visitors' Centre follow Beyers Avenue to the centre of the village.</p>	<p>The discovery of gold between 1871 and 1874 changed Hill End from a small rural village into one of the largest inland towns in NSW. The gold rush was short lived however and when the miners departed the village returned to its former lifestyle. The most famous find was the Holtermann nugget—the largest mass of gold found in Australia. It weighed 286 kilos and yielded 3000 ounces of gold. Throughout the village you'll find story boards with images that were taken by Beaufoy Merlin during the boom period that will help you imagine what it would have been like to live in the village at that time. While you can't fossick in the village itself the former township of Tambaroora about 1.6km from Hill End on the Tambaroora Road is a great place to try your luck.</p> <p>Many renowned artists including Donald Friend, Russell Drysdale, Margaret Olley and Brett Whiteley have been attracted to the rugged scenery and history of the region and today an Artists in Residence program has been developed inspiring many modern artists to continue exploration of a different kind. There's so much to do in Hill End you may need to stay a while. To make the most of your visit talk to the staff at the Visitors' Centre who can advise you on the most up to date activities.</p>
<p>8. Depart Hill End and travel back along Bathurst Road towards Sofala.</p>	<p>About 4 kms from Hill End on the left hand side of the road you'll notice History Hill—a fascinating museum of gold mining history. Mostly open on weekends and during school holidays.</p>
<p>9. Turn right at Turondale Road 24 kms from Hill End.</p>	<p>For a different view of the countryside take the alternate route back to Bathurst via Turondale.</p>



**Useful Websites:**

heatgg.org.au  
 historyhill.com.au  
 nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/visit-a-park/parks/hill-end-historic-site  
 hermes.net.au/turon

**Contact numbers:**

Hill End Visitors' Centre 02 6337 8206  
 History Hill 02 6337 8222  
 Turon Technology Museum 02 6358 8434

*The historic Bridle Track that once provided access between Bathurst and Hill End with its reserves and wild scenery is no longer a through road but reserves along the Turon and Macquarie Rivers can still be reached from either Bathurst or Hill End.*

*Reviewed July 2015*