

Cave explorers

Discover a world of limestone ornamentation and ancient formations in some of Australia's most famous cave systems, as **AMELIA HUNGERFORD** tracks down some nearby holiday parks.



Deep, mysterious and primordial... caves certainly are alluring. Australia's cave systems are millions of years old, burrowing into the earth and under the mountains. What could be more thrilling than discovering them with your family? Adventure cavers and young day-trippers alike will find delight in the well-trodden paths of Jenolan, the thermal alpine pool of Yarrangobilly, the bat-encrusted caverns of Capricorn, the wildlife of Gunns Plains and the spirit battle of Ngilgi. To make your holiday simpler, we've found the best places to rest your head and prepare for the next day.

CAPRICORN CAVES, QLD

www.capricorncaves.com.au

Just 23km north of Australia's 'Beef Capital' you'll find the Capricorn Caves. This award-winning limestone system has been welcoming visitors since 1884, making it one of Queensland's longest-running tourist attractions. Nowadays you'll find more abseiling and rock climbing than bustling ladies and handlebar moustaches, although the caves themselves remain just as fantastical as ever. Enjoy the popular Cathedral Cave Tour (suitable for children over five years), a one-hour guided journey among the stalactites and stalagmites.

Discovery Holiday Parks Rockhampton, North Rockhampton

www.discoveryholidayparks.com.au

On the banks of the Fitzroy River less than half-an-hour's drive from the 33-hectare Capricorn Caves, this kid-friendly 4.5-star property offers a variety of accommodation from luxury villas to powered sites. A newly refurbished games room stocked with enough goodies to keep the kids entertained for hours and close proximity to the town centre make it perfectly located, and the beautiful views of Mount Archer aren't too shabby either.

Capricorn Caves, The Caves

www.capricorncaves.com.au

If you want your holiday to be all about the caving adventures, stay in the bushland cabins and caravan park within Capricorn Caves itself. Deluxe two-bedroom cabins with large decks offer a fully self-contained option while the lodge caters for large groups. Cool down in the pool or cook up a storm with a barbecue to share. Self-sufficient families will love the caravan park; as well as being close to the main attraction, it's also the perfect place to make a new furry kangaroo friend.



JENOLAN CAVES, NSW

www.jenolancaves.org.au

The underground rivers of Jenolan Caves wind past calcite crystal formations that have been taking shape for over 340 million years. No visit to the Blue Mountains is complete without a trip to Jenolan's outstanding cave system, where tours are offered through 10 wondrous show caves, and professionals are on hand to guide you and the kids into the unknown.

Jenolan Caravan Park, Oberon

www.jenolancarvanpark.com.au

Explore the limestone magnificence of Australia's best-known caves from the Jenolan Caravan Park. Among the mushroom-strewn tablelands of Oberon, you'll benefit from a location just a short walk from town, nestled between the local tennis complex and swimming pool, as well as a kids' playground. Accommodation ranges from two-bedroom cabins to unpowered sites where even pets are welcome.

BIG4 Bathurst Panorama Holiday Park, Bathurst

www.bathurstholidaypark.com.au

If you want to add a touch of speed to your Jenolan Caves getaway, BIG4 Bathurst Panorama Holiday Park has it all. Just over an hour from the caves, you're also only a short drive from the legendary Mount Panorama Racing Circuit. Kids will also love the extensive playground and brand-new jumping pillow, which means there is something for everyone. Oh, and no need to leave the family pooch at home – they're welcome too.

YARRANGOBILLY CAVES, NSW

www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au

Under Kosciuszko National Park's picturesque northern peaks is a limestone belt, moulded over millions of years into the five caves of Yarrangobilly. Formations of shawls and cave corals fill these caverns with charm, and guided or self-guided tours below the vaulted chambers of South Glory are offered. Don't forget swimmers, as the nearby above-ground thermal pool remains 27°C all year round.

Discovery Holiday Parks – Jindabyne, Snowy Mountains

www.discoveryholidayparks.com.au

Kids will have the time of their life at this lakeside retreat, whether summer or winter. Boasting a jumping pillow, games room, movie room, playground and dedicated children's bathroom, Discovery Holiday Parks – Jindabyne gives parents plenty of time to relax and enjoy the on-site spa and sauna. It's close to town as well, and if you feel like a day-trip, Yarrangobilly and its beautiful thermal pool is only a couple of hours away.

GUNNS PLAINS CAVE, TAS

www.gunnspainscaves.com.au

Gunns Plains might not look mysterious, but underneath its pastoral surface you'll find colourful calcite shawls, flowstones, sinkholes

and underground streams populated with fish, eel and crayfish. If you like critters, among the ten-hectare complex you'll also find a magical display of glow-worms, all just 30km west of Ulverstone. That'll light up the visit.

Discovery Holiday Parks – Devonport, Devonport

www.discoveryholidayparks.com.au

On the banks of the Mersey River lies the ideal base for exploring the Gunns Plains Cave. With Spirit of Tasmania ferry services departing daily to Melbourne, Devonport is Tasmania's gateway to the mainland, making Discovery Holiday Parks – Devonport perfectly situated to welcome adventurers to the Apple Isle. Kids will be thrilled with the jumping pillow and playground, while parents will love the range of accommodation from campsites to self-contained cottages with gas log-heated fires.

NGILGI CAVE, WA

www.geographebay.com

Not many caves can claim to have a battle between ancient spirits honoured in their monikers. Ngilgi Cave takes its name from the good ocean spirit who ousted the evil spirit, Wolgine, restoring water and food to the local Wardandi people. Families first enjoyed the cave in 1900, but even modern families will love the cafe, playground and barbecue facilities, and watching Aboriginal history coming to life.

Discovery Holiday Parks – Bunbury Village

www.discoveryholidayparks.com.au

Western Australia's third largest city is awash with family-friendly delights, from swimming with dolphins to handfeeding parrots at Big Swamp Wildlife Park (plus the adult-friendly wine delight of the Margaret River). Immerse yourself in south-west WA's charm at Discovery Holiday Parks – Bunbury Village, just outside Bunbury's town centre and little over an hour to Yallingup and the Ngilgi Cave. Everything from cabins to campsites are on offer, with a fun-filled kids' club and jumping pillow for nonstop excitement.

Discovery Holiday Parks – Koombana Bay

www.discoveryholidayparks.com.au

Enjoy the coastal majesty of Bunbury from Discovery Holiday Parks – Koombana Bay, just five minutes' walk from the Bunbury town centre. Families will feel at home among fully equipped villas, cabins and chalets or at one with nature in a camping or caravan site. As well as a jumping pillow, kids will love being able to explore the nearby mangroves, delve into the depths of the Indian Ocean and, of course, walk among the ancient limestone of Ngilgi Cave. ✨

01 Through the Capricorn Caves. Image from Amanda Jennings 02 Jenolan River waters 03 Marvel at the Broken Column in Jenolan's Lucas Cave

Fun Fact

Tourists have been visiting the Jenolan Caves since the 1840s.



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Holidays with kids

Australia's BEST tourist caves

Do you and the kids long to explore the nation's numerous hidden crevices and rocky delights? Follow our lead and you'll soon be enjoying the best kid-friendly accommodations near all the best caves, on a family adventure you'll never forget.

Yarrangobilly Caves NSW



JINDABYNE On the banks of gorgeous Lake Jindabyne, this award-winning holiday park has a range of comfy self-contained villas ideal for families. With Thredbo and Perisher less than 30 minutes away, and the hikes of Mount Kosciuszko in easy reach, it's a great base for a Snowy Mountains adventure. www.discoveryholidayparks.com.au/jindabyne

Jenolan Caves NSW



JENOLAN This multi-award-winning park in the heart of Oberon puts families on the doorstep of the world's oldest cave system. All ages will be smiling with Deluxe and Family Ensuite Cabins, camping and caravan sites, BBQs, camp kitchen, laundry facilities, campfire (conditions apply) and adventures galore. www.jenolancaravanpark.com.au

Gunns Plain Caves TAS



DEVONPORT With an absolute waterfront settings on the Mersey River, this park is perfect for discovering Northern Tasmania's stunning coastal region. Choose from a range of cosy cottages, cabins or en-suite powered sites. Park facilities include jumping pillow, playground, games room and camp kitchen. www.discoveryholidayparks.com.au/devonport

Capricorn Caves QLD



ROCKHAMPTON Relax in this beautiful park set among 10 acres of landscaped gardens, with fully self-contained apartments, cabins, villas or powered sites to enjoy. Loaded with family-friendly facilities – jumping pillow, playground, swimming pool, tennis courts and games room – this tourist park is a holiday in itself! www.discoveryholidayparks.com.au/rockhampton

Ngigli Caves WA



BUNBURY VILLAGE This semi-rural location, just outside the town centre, offers a range of affordable and comfortable family accommodation: camp and caravan sites, cabins, chalets, motel-style roomettes. Bunbury is about two hours from Perth and an ideal base when exploring the gorgeous South West coast. www.discoveryholidayparks.com.au/bunbury

Ngigli Caves WA



KOOMBANA BAY After a day's adventure spotting the resident dolphins or exploring the Geographe wine region, sit back and relax while the kids play in the pool, on tennis courts or on the jumping pillow. With fully equipped camping and caravan sites, villas and chalets, it will be a home away from home. www.discoveryholidayparks.com.au/koombana_bay