

Fossicking in the Bathurst Region & Surrounds



The days of the gold rush are long over but there's still plenty of opportunities to get out and active finding gold in the Bathurst Region and surrounds.

What is Fossicking?

Fossicking is the act of searching for gold and precious minerals as a recreational activity. This differs from mining and prospecting which are defined as the searching for gold and precious minerals for commercial reasons. There are many areas you can fossick in the Bathurst region, with many requiring different permissions and permits. See the NSW Fossicking Guide for full details.

What can I find in Bathurst?

Bathurst has a long history of gold mining, from the 1870's gold rush, to modern day fossickers making their finds. Gold was never truly payable in Bathurst, only the occasional flake or fleck in the Macquarie River was found during the city's settlement. Rather gold was found further north in Hill End, Sofala and Ophir. The gold rush didn't end when there was no gold left, but when it stopped being profitable for miners as a profession. These days most fossicking is conducted in Hill End and Ophir as tributary rivers still feed fresh sediment and minerals into these rivers and streams in times of flood and heavy rain.

Never Been Fossicking Before? Take a Guided Tour!

Fossicking is hard work, and can be very dependant on luck. Knowing an area and having experience can drastically increase your chance of finding gold. If you are interested in a tour there are plenty of options in the Bathurst region to learn from locals through guided tours.

Gold Panning Tour Only

Jhob's Gold Panning Tours!

Hill End 1 hour 15 min from Bathurst.

Join Jhob Drinkwater, a local gold expert, for an authentic tour where you will learn how to pan for and identify gold! The tour goes for about an hour all equipment is supplied. Visit <https://www.historyhill.com.au/individual-tours/> or call 0421729955 for more information about prices and availability. Call ahead to make a booking prior to visiting Hill End.



4wd tour with Gold Panning

Simmo's Offroad Tours

Get out and explore the great outdoors of Bathurst with Simmo's Offroad Tours. With options for ride along, or if you have your own 4wd a tag along tours. Simmo offers a wide range of activities you can do in one of his off road tours including gold panning. All equipment is provided and visitors are taken out to deep bush areas where gold bearing streams can be found. Visit www.simmosoffroaftours.com or call 0415 641 343 for more information about prices and availability.



Seasonal Tours and activities

Bathurst Goldfields School Holiday Gold Panning Experience (Only during school holidays 1-3pm weekdays)

Be guided through the museum displays and see the various methods of gold mining. See the tools and machinery used, from man and horse power through to steam power. At the outdoor museum, help operate the authentic machines used during the 1850s. Then head to the blacksmith shop where the guide will create a work of art in steel. Try your hand at panning for real gold and keep what you find. Operating during school holidays from 1pm-3pm weekdays. For more information on prices and availability call (02) 6332 2022 or visit bathurstgoldfields.com.au



Accommodation with Gold panning tours

Chesleigh Homestead

40 minutes north of Bathurst just off the Turon River. If you are looking for accommodation with opportunities to fossick. Chesleigh Homestead can book gold panning tours on their expansive property, for a small additional fee when staying with them. As well as some fantastic opportunities for horse riding and bush exploration on their property. Day trip gold panning is not allowed however, so make sure you make an accommodation booking with them ahead of time. Call (02) 6337 7077 or visit <https://sofala.com.au> for more information.



Rules to Follow When Fossicking

This is a brief summary of key rules outlined in the NSW Guide to Fossicking see www.resourcesregulator.nsw.gov.au for full details. **Or scan:**



1. Fossick in approved areas

This guide has approved fossicking areas where you can fossick without written permits. If you would like to fossick in other areas please see our **Guide to Advanced Fossicking**.

2. Only use unpowered fossicking tools (shovels, picks, pans)

Please ensure that fossicking is conducted sustainably. The use of powered mining equipment such as high bankers and jackhammers etc, can disrupt wildlife and waterways.

3. Leave the site as you found it

To ensure that you return any displaced rocks and fill in any holes.

How to identify areas to fossick

Gold is often found in riverbeds and along river banks. This is because gold is 19 times heavier than water. This means that generally, gold only enters river systems during torrential rainfall and flood. Most of the movement of gold from its natural place in the ground into river systems occurs during times of flood where it is pushed around by high pressure water systems. To find gold in and along rivers you have to imagine where the river slows down during floods as this is where gold will come out of the fast flood water to settle on the riverbed.

When choosing a spot to pan look for sediments under boulders, by river banks, in crevices or cracks in the face of the ledge, in small sheltered pools in rapids, in areas where two creeks join or where sediments may be trapped around tree roots.

How to pan for Gold

Fossickers looking for gold mostly use a pan, with sloping sides and at least one narrow groove stamped into the side.

1. Filling the pan

Fill the dish about 3/4 full with dirt. If you have a classifying sieve, you can sieve the soil first to remove large stones before you pan. Hold the pan flat and submerge it in the water so that all of the dirt is just under the water.



2. Puddling the pan

Begin puddling the pan, by shifting it back and forth and side to side, taking care to break up any large lumps of clay and dirt as you go. This process removes the unnecessary dirt and clay while helping the gold settle on the bottom of the pan. For this to work properly the pan must stay at or below the water level. Continue this until the water in the pan runs mostly clear, and the top of the pan is mostly larger pebbles and stones.



3. Settling the gold

From there, tilt the pan in the water so that the bottom inside bend by the riffles is the lowest point (marked by the red arrow in the image). Shift the pan side to side vigorously for 30 seconds to 1 minute to settle the gold into the bottom bend of the pan.



4. Washing the pan

Lift the pan from the water and tilt it so that the lip with the riffles is level with the water and begin shifting it forwards and back. Creating a small wave to wash off the top layers of stone and sediment. Once a reasonable amount of sediment has washed out repeat step 3 to reset the pan and ensure that the gold stays in the bottom of the pan. Then repeat step 4 until only a tablespoon worth of the sediment remains.



5. Revealing the find

Once all of the dirt and stone has been washed out of the pan in step 4, tilt the pan so all of the leftover sediment is in the bottom corner by the riffles. Leave enough water in the dish so that there is about as much water as there is sediment. Slowly swirl the water over the sediment to sweep the leftover sediment away from the corner. Any gold in the pan will be at the bottom under the sediment. Continue this until you reveal any gold. Lift it out by licking the tip of the finger, placing it on the gold then putting it in a small vial containing water.



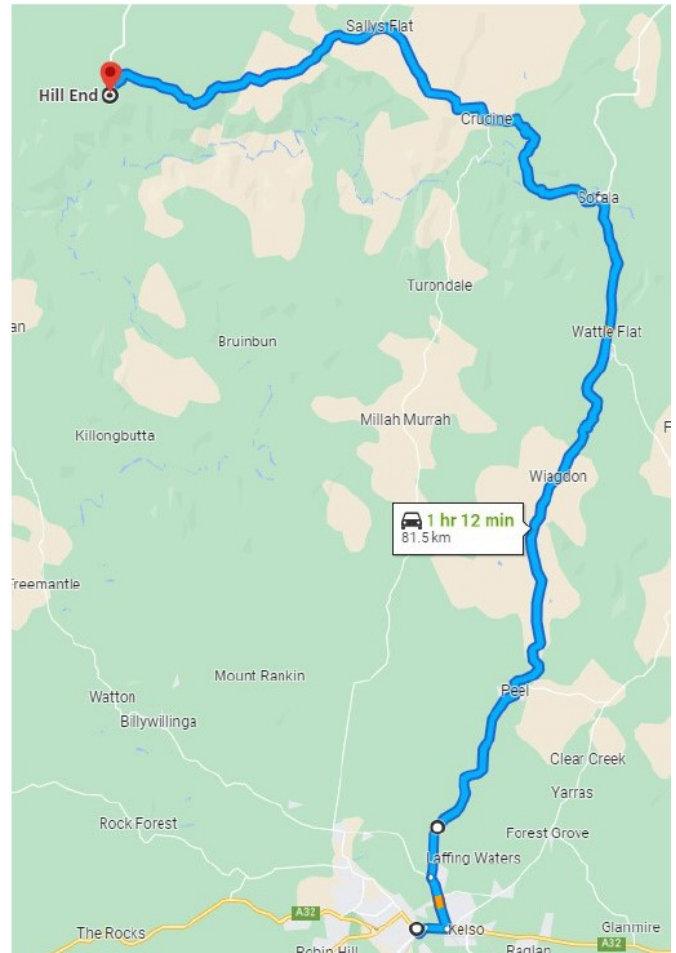
Fossicking in Bathurst

Payable gold was never found in the bounds of Bathurst itself. But rather in the rivers and hills to the north in Sofala and Hill End. Back in the days of the gold rush, gold was primarily found through two methods, panning and quartz reef mining. While reef mining only occurs in some small commercial capacity these days, there are plenty of opportunities for panning in the Hill End region.

How to get to Hill End

1. From the Bathurst Visitor Information Centre exit the carpark left onto Durham Street.
2. Turn left onto Havannah Street and follow to the intersection.
3. Turn right at the intersection onto the Great Western Highway towards Sydney.
4. Continue across the bridge and at the second set of lights turn left onto Gilmour Street.
5. Continue on Gilmour Street as it turns into the Sofala Road and follow for 43km to Sofala.
6. At Sofala Turn left on the Hill End Road and follow for 35 km to Hill End.

Please note that the Duramana/Turondale Road is sealed and in good condition. However, the route marked out here offers the most points of interest and has the least closures during times of heavy rain.



Important Access Information

While there are many areas you could access in the Bathurst region with some research and permissions. The best area (and most freely accessible area) in Bathurst is the Hill End Tambaroora Designated fossicking area. You do not need permission or a permit to access this area as long as you are using only unpowered tools and are following NSW fossicking regulations by filling in any holes you dig and returning any rocks you move.

The following page will go into detail about accessing the designated fossicking area.

Fossicking Beyond the Designated Area

To fossick on the Commons or elsewhere in the Hill End area, you can find more information at <https://www.bathurstregion.com.au/things-to-do/get-outdoors/fossicking-in-bathurst-region/hill-end-fossicking/>

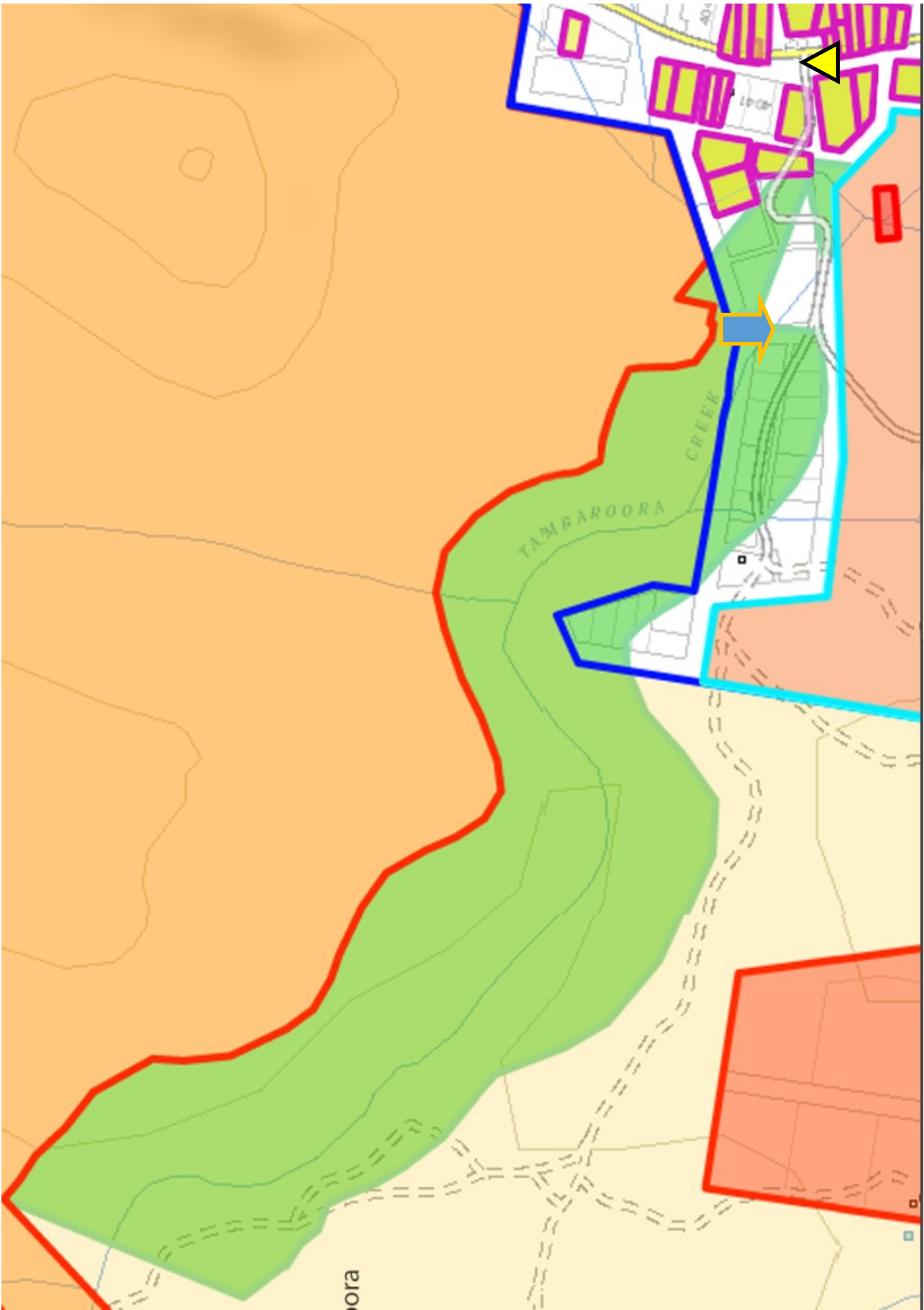
An A3 copy of the Hill End Comms Access Map is available by request at the Bathurst Visitor Information Centre.



Scan here for google maps
directions to Hill End



The Hill End & Tambaroora Designated Fossicking Area



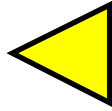
To Access Designated Fossicking Area from Hill End

1. Drive north on the Hill End Road for 5km
2. Look for the chimney stack on the left hand side of the road (Marked on the map below by the Yellow Triangle).
3. If you are in a 4 wheel drive and comfortable doing a shallow water crossing, turn left on the unsealed road after the chimney stack, and cross the river. If you are in a 2 wheel drive, park on the side of the road and walk down the unsealed road to cross the river.
4. As you make your way down the unsealed road to the left of the chimney stack you will see crown land signage that indicates you need a permit to fossick here and to now fossick on the 4 wheel drive crossing. These signs refer to the area outlined in the red dotted rectangle and the unmanaged crown land lot below. Continue past these signs and cross the creek. From there walk/drive 200m along the road around the bend to access the creek again in the designated fossicking area, marked by the yellow and blue arrow.

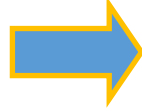
From here you can fossick along the creek bed and banks. With the fossicking area extending for another



Tamaroora Designated Fossicking Area



Chimney Stack



Best point to re-access the Creek



Hill End & Tamaroora Commons

This area is managed by the Hill End and Tamaroora Common Trust and allows fossicking without a permit as long as you fossick in accordance with NSW Regulations.



Unmanaged Crown Lands

Permission required from Crown Lands Department. Enquire with orange.crownlands@crowland.nsw.gov.au for more information on Access to Lot 7317 Dp 11556884.



Private Property Do Not Enter



This area is under extensive exploratory drilling please do not enter

For experienced fossickers, access may be available. Subject to written permissions and an introductory supervised site visit. Enquire with Vertex minerals on Info@vertexminerals.com.au for more information.



National Parks Estate no fossicking allowed

Under the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2019 it is an offence to '...interfere with, dig up, cut up, collect or remove for any purpose any soil, sand, gravel, fossil, clay, rock, ochre, mineral...'; (clause 13(1)(h)). If you are found to be fossicking on NPWS estate, you may be fined up to \$3,300.

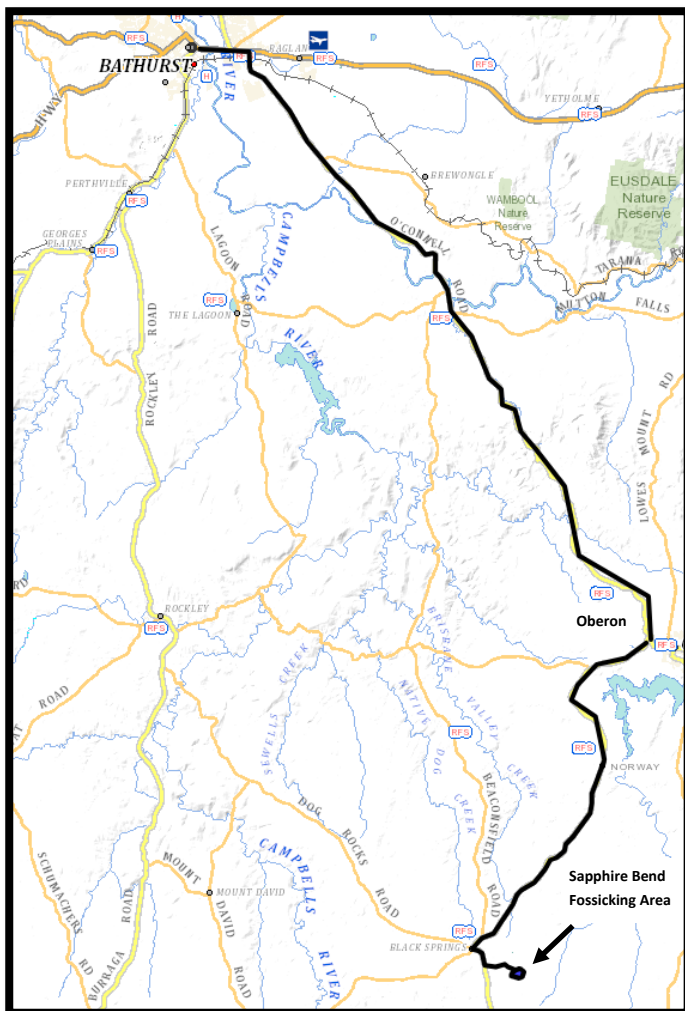
Fossicking in Oberon

Bathurst is known for its gold history and gold fossicking opportunities. But did you know you can go gem fossicking in the neighbouring Oberon region just 50 minutes away at the designated Sapphire Fossicking area.

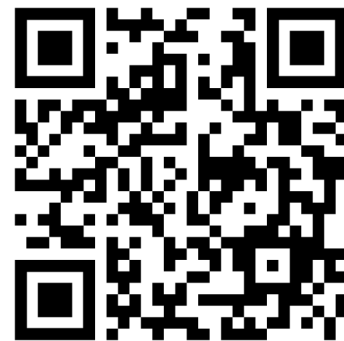
If you would like to try fossicking for gems. Sapphires, Zircons and the occasional speck of gold, as well as plenty of interesting quartz pieces. This guide will only go into detail on Sapphire Bend which is the best public gem fossicking area close to Bathurst which does not require a permit.

Sapphire Bend—Black Springs/Vulcan State Forest

Sapphire bend is a 50 minute drive away right in the heart of Vulcan State Forest it can be accessed via Black springs by following the Abercrombie Road and turning into the state forest on Riverview Forest Road. Some unsealed roads are present in state forest, they are easily passible with a 2wd. Once at the fossicking area it will be easier park off Riverview Forest Road and walk into the fossicking area. As the road into the fossicking area is 4wd only.



Scan here for Google Maps directions to the fossicking area.



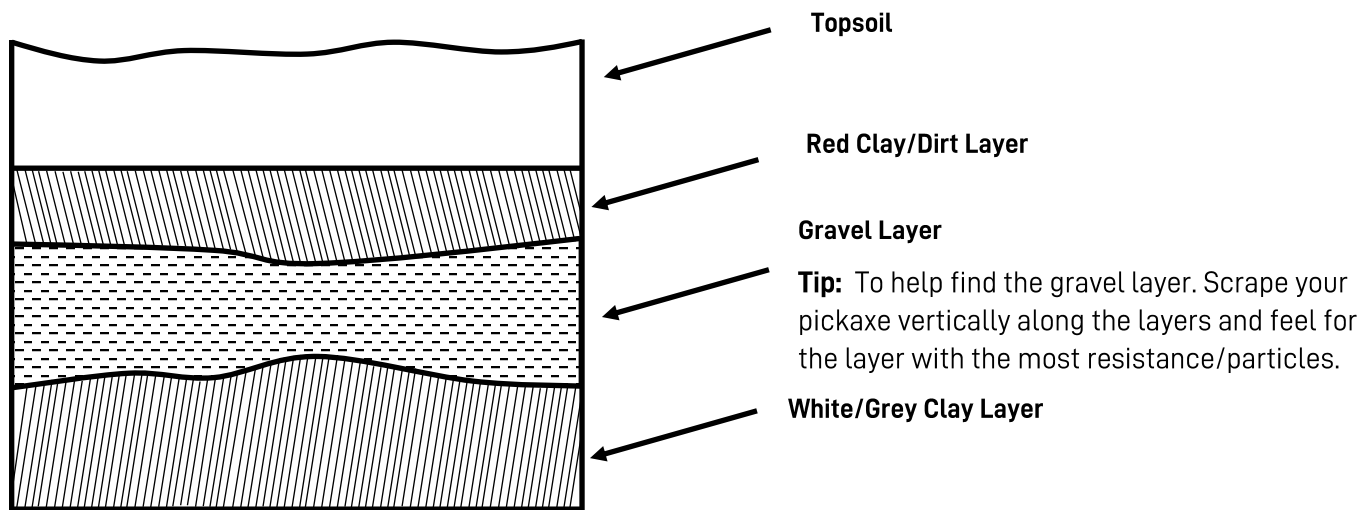
What you will need for gem fossicking:

- Shovel
- Hand pickaxe
- Bucket
- Gold Pan
- Sapphire/Gold Sieves

If you don't have your own equipment the Oberon Visitor Information Centre hires out fossicking kits for \$20 a day.

How to Fossick for Gems

While you can use a pan to fossick for gems, as they are generally heavier than the surrounding stone and gravel, it can be a slow process. For best results use a set of gold/gem sieves to dry sieve the material into a bucket for panning. Or wet sieve all the material for quicker progress. However you are more likely to miss smaller gems and gem fragments this way.



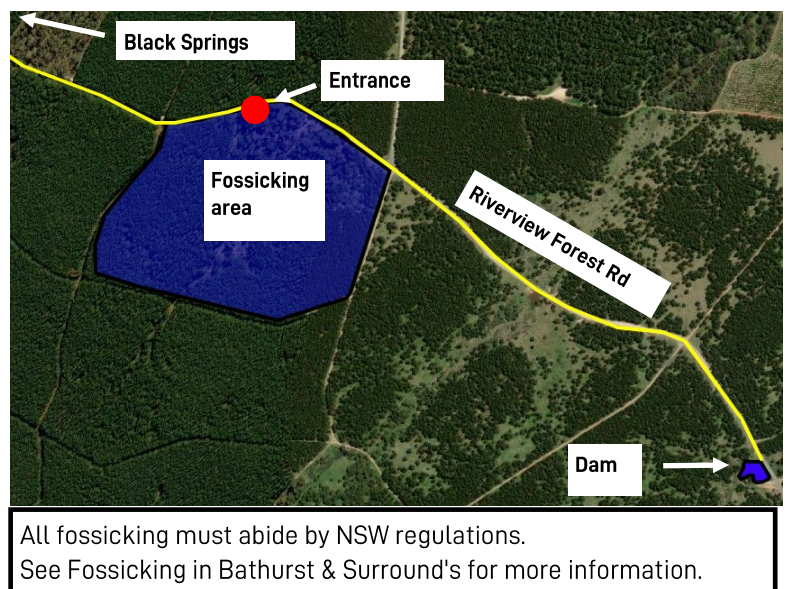
1. Dig a hole and keep an eye on the layers as you go.

2. You are looking for the gravel layer sitting just on top on the white/grey clay layer.

3. For best results scrape the bottom of the gravel layer where it touches the clay layer. Gems are heavier than the other sediment in the gravel layer and are most likely to settle on top of the clay which acts as a false bed rock.

4. If available use the gold sieves to sieve the material into your bucket. (A gold panning classifying sieve can be used as well but will include more waste material).

5. Take your bucket of material down to the dam to pan it out and check your finds. The dam is located down Riverview Forest Road.



Fossicking in Orange

Ophir Recreation Reserve

Approximately 1 hour from Bathurst.

History

The gold rush at Ophir started in 1851, following the announcement of payable gold in late 1850 when over 400 miners headed out to seek their fortune. However the rush was short lived. Within 1 year of the rush beginning miners had experienced poor returns and a harsh winter with the majority of them moving on to the Turon River north of Bathurst where they could find payable gold more easily. The area has remained quite popular in the century since, with Chinese miners successfully reworking the area in 1855, and new mines still producing gold well into the 20th century. Gold can still be found in the area for those willing to look.

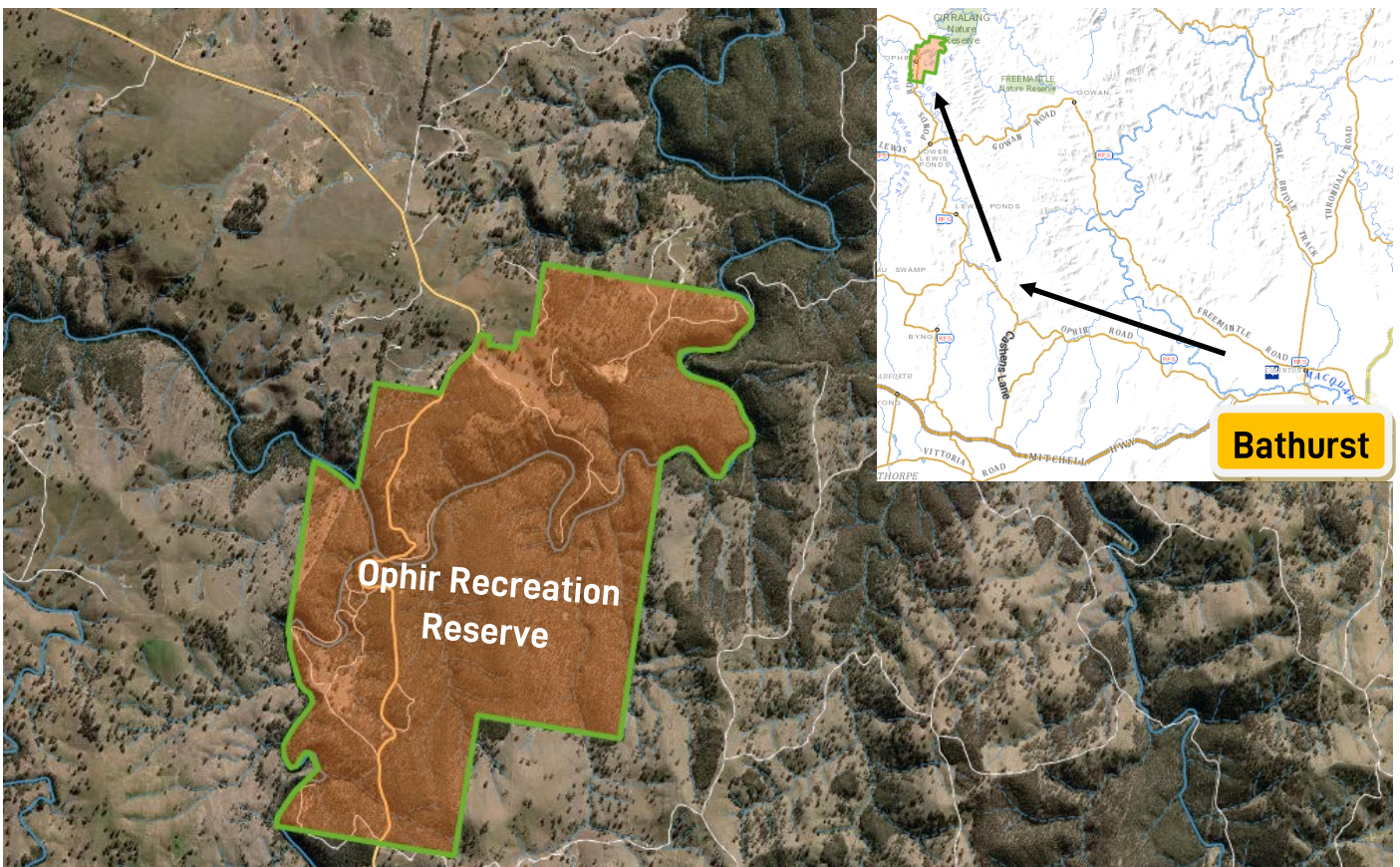
Visiting the Area

Visitors looking to spend a day or even two can go out to the Ophir Recreation Reserve where opportunities for camping, fishing and fossicking can be found. Camping can be organised for \$10 a night through the Orange Visitor Information Centre, call 1800 069 466 for more information. No day trip fees apply.

How to Get There

Leave Bathurst west via the Ophir Road. Turn right onto White Rocks Road. Turn right onto Dry Creek Road. Follow Dry Creek Road to the Ophir Recreation Reserve camping area.

This road includes several long stretches of unsealed roads. If driving in a 2wd you may need to slow down and take care when passing these sections. Conditions may not be suitable for 2wd during or after rain.



Businesses around Bathurst that sell fossicking equipment

Aussie Disposals

Fossicking and camping equipment.

67 William Street, Bathurst.

(02) 6332 9275

BCF - Boating Camping & Fishing

Fossicking and camping equipment.

240 Sydney Road, Kelso.

(02) 6331 4188

The Sofala Collective

The Sofala Collective is the primary general store of Sofala open Thursday-Tuesday 9am – 2pm.

Gold pans, shovels, picks and river sluices are available.

25 Denison Street, Sofala NSW 2795

0400 406 551

Other attractions in the region that you might be interested in:

Australian Fossil and Mineral Museum

224 Howick Street, Bathurst

Adult \$15, concession \$10, child \$7, family pass \$35.

Call 02 6331 5511 for more information. Open 6 days a week from Thursday-Tuesday closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Years Day.

Examine over 2000 fossil and mineral specimens from around the world. Including gold found in various forms. Located on Howick Street right in the centre of Bathurst the Australian Fossil and Mineral museum is a great way to see the wonders of natural geology.

History Hill

3458 Bathurst Road, Hill End.

Open Weekends school and public holidays. Adult \$10; Child \$7, u/6 free.

This is the largest privately owned gold rush collection on display in Australia. The collection focuses on the land, the time and people of Australia's gold rush area. With a recreation gold mine to visit this is a must do when visiting Hill End.]

Sofala History Tours

(02) 6337 7177

sofalahistory@bigpond.com

If you are heading out to Sofala for gold rush history and exploration, Ken Webb is a wealth of knowledge and is available for guided walk around tours of Sofala. Learn about the original founders of Sofala and how the town has evolved over time. From it's early days as the crossing place for stockmen traveling between Bathurst and Mudgee, to its heyday as a gold rush town with a population of over 26 thousand people. Ken's knowledge comes from the oral history passed to him from the old residents of Sofala and those before them and is filled with information you wont find anywhere else.

Bathurst Visitor Information Centre

1 Kendall Avenue

02 6332 1444 / 1800 68 1000

www.bathurstregion.com.au

visitors@bathurst.nsw.gov.au

Open 7 Days

9.30am-4.30pm



Visit Bathurst NSW



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@visit_bathurst

The information in this booklet was obtained from the websites of Crown Lands NSW, NSW Resources Regulator, State Forest NSW. With consultation from Crown Lands NSW. All maps generated through Minview Geosciences mapping tool. Images retrieved from business websites or from internal images. All information is correct at the time of print 03/07/22, and may be subject to change without notice.

