



Cotton field, St George.
Image courtesy of Dana Gluzde.

Story: Sheryl Allen

LOCATION: St George
5.5 hours west of Brisbane

POPULATION: 2,400

INDUSTRIES: Agriculture, horticulture, retail

CLIMATE: Temperate
Summer: 21.5°C – 34.5°C
Winter: 5.4°C – 19.0°C
Rainfall: 517mm

Southern Queensland's St George is a place where rivers and roads intersect and where farming and lifestyle connect.

Water has had a significant impact on the development and growth of St George, building its reputation as both an "oasis" and the fishing capital of Queensland.

The beautiful Balonne River flows through the district like a giant, life-giving artery. It is the centrepiece amongst parklands, river walkways and tree lined streetscapes.

Irrigation has sustained this flourishing agricultural region since its introduction in the 1950s and augmentation with Beardmore Dam in 1967 and the Jack Taylor Weir in 1972.

The St George district developed as one of Australia's major cotton producers. At nearby Dirranbindi, Cubbie Station is Australia's largest cotton producer and the biggest privately owned irrigation property in the southern hemisphere.

Today, cotton accounts for around 60% of the value of agricultural production with beef

cattle, sheep and wheat also significant. The climatic conditions favour a diverse range of agricultural activities.

"It's a very versatile farming and grazing area and generally considered a safe irrigation valley with a number of rivers and creeks feeding into Beardmore Dam," said Landmark's Will Killen. "Irrigated horticulture includes table grapes and wine grapes with at least one large scale operator growing rockmelons, watermelons, pumpkins and onions."

As the service centre for this agricultural catchment, St George boasts an assortment of machinery retailers, engineering works and a strong retail and administrative sector including two supermarkets, solicitors, accountants, several hairdressers and specialty shops. "We are spoilt for good doctors at both the hospital and doctors surgery."

Visitors and locals have plenty of choice for dining out or sleeping over. Several hotels, motels, B&Bs, backpackers and caravan parks offer a range of accommodation.

The Riverland Motor Inn was named "Outback Motel of the Year" for three years running and its River's Restaurant is a multi-award winner in its own right.

St George offers a relaxed, riverside lifestyle in a typical Queensland rural setting.

"Like most of the country, our property market has been subdued on the back of the drought and GFC," said Will. "But we've had an excellent season out here, so enquiry is increasing again.

Commodity prices are quite good, especially for wheat and young cattle. Sheep prices have been excellent for a while now, particularly mutton and lamb and cotton has had a few good spikes giving producers the opportunity to forward sell at a reasonable level. That extra confidence means more properties on the market and more enquiries, offering buyers plenty of choice and value."

Will confirms that enquiries are from local surrounding areas and prospective buyers in northern NSW looking to secure safe, productive, affordable country.

Or perhaps they've heard about the fishing. The rivers and creeks around St George are renowned for Yellowbelly and Murray cod. Beardmore Dam, Kapunda Fishing Park, Warroo Bridge and Moonie River are popular spots with anglers and water sport enthusiasts.

Farming, fishing and fun – a perfect mix of St George lifestyle and livelihood.

CONTACT:

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PROPERTY GUIDE:

Residential: median house price \$250,000

Residential/Lifestyle: large home on several riverside acres \$600,000-\$1,000,000

Rural: grazing property \$1-\$10 million

Irrigation property \$3,000-\$4,500 per acre