



THE LIMESTONE COAST 4WD EXPLORERS GUIDE

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Left: Four-wheel driving in Canunda National Park
Top: Yellow Robin (Photo Steve Bourne)

WELCOME TO THE LIMESTONE COAST

*Tread lightly...
have fun!*

The Limestone Coast and Coorong Coastal Management Group acknowledges and respects the traditional owners of the ancestral lands of the Limestone Coast. We acknowledge elders past and present and we respect the deep feelings of attachment and relationship of Aboriginal peoples to this country.

We hope that within this guide, you will find the makings of a great holiday within our region, in which you will explore and enjoy all that the Limestone Coast has to offer. We encourage you to tread lightly and to think about your impact. Help us to protect this great part of the country now, so that we can all enjoy it long into the future.



Four-wheel driving in Ngarkat Conservation Park

Think about your
"footprint" 



Pelicans in flight. Photo John Giltsham

footprint / fütprint / n.

1. An impression left by the sole of the foot in walking or standing etc
2. The ground area beneath a vehicle or aircraft that is affected by forces such as noise, pressure, or blast
3. The area of contact between a tyre and the ground

From The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary

As word gets out about the fantastic four-wheel drive experiences on offer in the Limestone Coast, more and more people are visiting the region each year, to drive the tracks for themselves. While new visitors are welcome, reckless drivers are endangering the fragile coast. The coastal landscape, although it looks rugged and harsh, can be easily damaged by four-wheel drives and motorbikes driving off the tracks.

The production of this guide comes after many years of discussion by locals with a passion for exploring their local patch, including four-wheel driving enthusiasts and conservationists alike. The rigours of vehicles on our natural landscape were starting to show so the concept for this book was devised - guidelines for safe and respectful use of the coastal strip. The guide includes information about things to

see and do, advice about some of the tracks to take and importantly an acknowledgement that if we all do the right thing, we can all enjoy the place for the long run. We want our children and grandchildren to enjoy this wonderful landscape as much as we do now and have access to the same great destinations.

There are some simple principles we ask you to follow to have your own 'tread lightly' adventure.

- **Stick to the tracks**
- **Don't disturb the plants and animals**
- **Respect the heritage and the history**
- **Look out for others**
- **Take your rubbish home**

GETTING TO KNOW THE LIMESTONE COAST

5

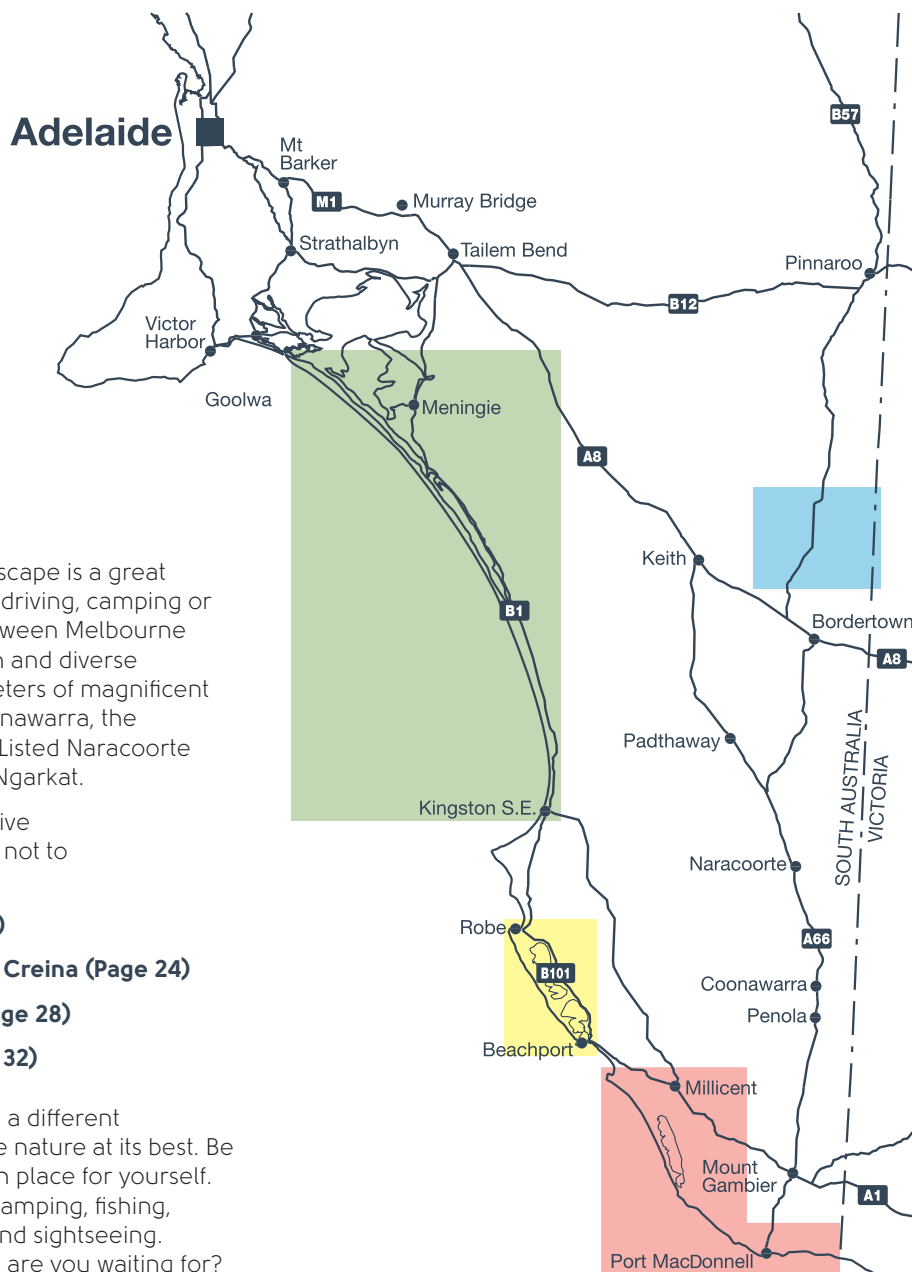
GET YOUR BEARINGS

The Limestone Coast's stunning landscape is a great destination for your next four-wheel driving, camping or touring holiday. Located half way between Melbourne and Adelaide, the region takes in rich and diverse scenery, including almost 400 kilometers of magnificent coastline, the terra rossa soils of Coonawarra, the ancient fossils of the World Heritage Listed Naracoorte Caves and the mallee wilderness of Ngarkat.

If you are travelling by four-wheel drive here are some trips and destinations not to miss, all are featured in this guide:

- **The Border to Southend (Page 20)**
- **Beachport to Robe, through Nora Creina (Page 24)**
- **Kingston to the Murray Mouth (Page 28)**
- **Ngarkat Conservation Park (Page 32)**

Each of these trips takes you through a different landscape where you can experience nature at its best. Be sure to take the time to discover each place for yourself. There are endless opportunities for camping, fishing, bushwalking, bird watching, surfing and sightseeing. There's so much to see and do. What are you waiting for?



WHILE YOU'RE HERE

The Limestone Coast offers visitors so much to see and do.

UNDERGROUND WONDERLAND

Hidden out of site in the Limestone Coast is an intricate network of underground caves. A great place to learn about the geology and history of the region is at the World Heritage Listed Naracoorte Caves, which shows a continuous record of the past 500,000 years, including the evolution of Australia's unique megafauna. Not for the faint-hearted, adventure caving tours are available here also. For bookings please telephone (08) 8762 2340. In and around Mt Gambier caves can be explored with guided tours of Englebrecht and Tantanoola Caves. Picanninie Ponds and Ewens Ponds can be explored by snorkelling. These freshwater ponds are the window into an underground world of water plants, reptiles and fish. For bookings please telephone the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (08) 8735 1177.

GREAT WINE, GREAT FOOD

The terra rossa soils of the region produce world class wines in the wine growing districts of Coonwarra, Wrattenbully, Cape Jaffa, Mount Benson, Robe, Mount Gambier and Padthaway. Most wineries welcome visitors for tasting and sales. Grab a copy of the Limestone Coast Real Food Trail Guide to help you experience the region's food and wine at its best.

ALL IN THE PAST

To get a taste of the history of the Limestone Coast, take the time to visit the local museums. Usually run by volunteers, museums are a great source of facts and interesting information about the place you are visiting. The volunteers always know their patch and enjoy sharing their knowledge of the people and the place. Don't miss the award winning museums of Beachport and Millicent, and the fascinating Port MacDonnell Maritime Museum.

Around the region there are many historical sites such as Robe's Old Gaol Ruins and Chinese Monument, Dingley Dell just out of Port MacDonnell, home of Australian Colonial poet Adam Lindsay Gordon and the Mary MacKillop Museum at Penola where you can enjoy a stroll down Petticoat Lane to experience



World Heritage listed Naracoorte Caves

the picturesque rows of quaint cottages. The Admella Trail, stretching from Portland in Victoria through to Robe, takes you on a journey of discovery as you learn the tragic and heroic history of the Shipwreck Coast.

RELAX

There are some stunning beaches along the Limestone Coast which are a great place to unwind and relax on a hot day. There are popular surf beaches in the region, such as Long Beach at Robe, home to the National Kite Surfing Championships and the Robe Surfing Classic, Beachport's Surf Beach and Browns Bay east of Port MacDonnell. If you are heading to a more secluded beach, check with the locals first to make sure it is safe for swimming.

CLIMATE

The climate of the Limestone Coast region is considered to be Mediterranean, with cool wet winters and mild to hot, dry summers. Through summer the average daily temperature ranges from 21°C to 29°C. In winter, daytime temperatures average 15°C and nights can be cold. The southern part of the region has a generally cooler climate than the northern part. Late spring, summer and early autumn are the best time to explore the coastal regions by four-wheel drive.

Ngarkat Conservation Park experiences more extreme summer temperatures than the coast, with temperatures often remaining in the high 30's for many days at a time. The best time to visit Ngarkat Conservation Park is in the cooler months when fire danger is low and daily temperatures aren't as high.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Contact one of the many Visitor Information Centres and Information Outlets in the region for further information, assistance with bookings and for an extensive selection of brochures, maps and useful information.

The Limestone Coast Visitor Guide offers comprehensive information on accommodation, dining and attractions throughout the region. To obtain a copy please call Limestone Coast Tourism on freecall 1800 087 087 or visit www.thelimestonecoast.com.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

Visitor Information Centres			
Beachport Visitor Information Centre	Millicent Rd, Beachport SA 5280	Tel (08) 8735 8029 Freecall: 1300 045 373	beachport@wattlerange.sa.gov.au
Bordertown Visitor Information Centre	81 North Tce, Tolmer Park Bordertown SA 5268	Tel (08) 8752 0700	bordertownvic@tatiara.sa.gov.au
Millicent Visitor Information Centre	1 Mount Gambier Rd, Millicent SA 5280	Tel (08) 8733 0904 Freecall 1300 045 373	millicent@wattlerange.sa.gov.au
“The Lady Nelson” Visitor & Discovery Centre, Mt Gambier	Jubilee Hwy East, Mount Gambier SA 5290	Tel (08) 8724 9750 Freecall 1800 087 187	theladynelson@mountgambier.sa.gov.au
Naracoorte Visitor Information Centre	36 McDonnell St, Naracoorte SA 5271	Tel (08) 8762 1399 Freecall 1800 244 421	naracoortevic@nlc.sa.gov.au
Nelson Visitor Information Centre/Parks Victoria	Leake St, Nelson Vic 3292	Tel (08) 8738 4051	nelsonvic@hotmail.net.au
Penola / Coonawarra Visitor Centre	27 Arthur St, Penola SA 5277	Tel (08) 8737 2855 Freecall 1300 045 373	penola@wattlerange.sa.gov.au
Robe Visitor Information Centre	Mundy Tce, Robe SA 5276	Tel (08) 8768 2465 Freecall 1300 367 144	robetourism@plain.sa.gov.au

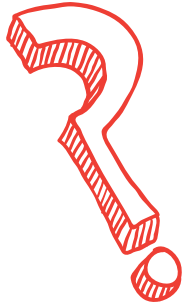
Visitor Information Outlets			
Port MacDonnell Visitor Information Outlet	5-7 Charles Street, Port MacDonnell, SA 5291	Tel (08) 8738 2380	rtc@dcgrant.sa.au
Kingston Visitor Information Outlet	29 Holland Street, Kingston SE, SA 5275	Tel (08) 8767 2036	info@kingstondc.sa.gov.au
Lucindale & Avenue Range	34 Musgrave Avenue, Lucindale SA 5272	Tel (08) 8766 2002	council@nlc.sa.gov.au
Kingston – Littles BP Roadhouse	1 Princes Highway, Kingston SE, SA 5275	Tel (08) 8767 2404	info@kingstondc.sa.gov.au
Heart of the Parks	Becker Terrace, Tintinara SA 5255	Tel (08) 8757 2220	coorong.sa.gov.au
Keith Mobil Service Station	Cnr Dukes Hwy & Riddoch Hwy, Keith SA 5267	Tel (08) 8755 1700	tatiara.sa.gov.au
Meningie Visitor Information Outlet	Coorong Cottage Industries, 14 Princes Hwy, Meningie SA 5264	Tel (08) 8575 1770	
Tailem Bend Visitor Information Outlet	Tailem Bend Railway Station, Tailem Bend SA 5260	Tel (08) 8572 4277	taileminfocentre@gmail.com

National Parks and Wildlife Offices (Department of Environment and Natural Resources)		
Mount Gambier Office (Diving/Snorkeling Permits)	11 Helen Street, Mount Gambier SA 5290	Tel (08) 8735 1177
Southend Office (Canunda National Park)	Cape Buffon Drive, Southend SA 5280	Tel (08) 835 6053
Robe Office (Little Dip Conservation Park)	Robe Street, Robe SA 5276	Tel (08) 8768 2543
Naracoorte Caves	Naracoorte Caves, SA 5271	Tel (08) 8762 3412
Lameroo Office (Ngarkat Conservation Park/Murraylands)	74 Railway Terrace, Lameroo SA 5302	Tel (08) 8576 3690
Noonameena Office (Coorong National Park)	Noonameena, via Meningie SA 5264	Tel (08) 8575 1200

Other			
South East Natural Resources Management Board and Aboriginal Focus Group Mount Gambier 5290	9 Wehl Street South	Tel (08) 8724 6000	reception@senrm.sa.gov.au
Murrapeena Heritage Association			murrapeena@gmail.com
Four Wheel Drive South Australia	PO Box 178, Enfield Plaza SA 5058		secretary@saafwdc.asn.au
Wattle Rangers 4WD Club	Beachport		handh@aapt.net.au
Border Country 4WD Club	Bordertown		bordercountry4wdclub@dodo.com.au
Mount Gambier 4WD Club	Mount Gambier		info@mtgambierfour-wheel-driveclub.com

Emergency	
Police	000
Ambulance	000
SES	132 500
RAA	131 111

KNOW YOUR VEHICLE



Morning tea in Coorong National Park

4WD OR NOT?

Four-wheel driving can be exciting and challenging as you discover out-of-the-way places two wheel drives can't reach. Before you embark on a four-wheel driving adventure though, make sure you understand the capability of your vehicle and your capabilities as a driver. The safety of yourself and others is paramount. Some of the tracks featured in this guide will be easy going, but others will test your skill.

There is a wide range of vehicles on the market today which are advertised as sports and adventure vehicles. It is important to understand what your vehicle is designed for and to know its limits. Many current model all-wheel drives and SUV's (Sports Utility Vehicle) look like great sports/adventure vehicles with chunky tyres, sports fittings and advertising to match. However, it is only a true four-wheel drive that will get you safely through many of the tracks featured in this guide.

Genuine four-wheel drives are purpose built for tough tracks. As the name suggests, when engaged in four-wheel drive, all four wheels have power supplied to them from the engine. Genuine four-wheel drives also offer low range, which gives you more torque or 'pulling power'. Generally, they have high ground clearance which is the distance between the bottom of the vehicle and the ground. This means you can safely travel over rocks and rough ground or through water, mud or sand.

BEFORE YOUR TRIP...

BE PREPARED!

A great trip requires good planning and this means getting organised before you leave home. There is excellent gear on the market to make your four-wheel driving easy and to get you out of trouble.

Check out the list of recommended equipment (right) for gear to make your trip a winner. Have your vehicle serviced before you leave home and practise using your jack, changing a tyre and fixing a puncture. Remember, spare parts are only useful if you know what to do with them. Seek professional advice about where the recovery points are on your vehicle and have them installed if you don't have them.

Although it sounds like stating the obvious, make sure you know how to engage four-wheel drive. In many vehicles this means engaging the hubs, not just selecting the four-wheel drive setting on the gear stick or dial. Many a tragic tale has been told of people getting bogged, especially in the Outback, who could have driven out of their predicament if only the vehicle was in four-wheel drive.

If you are new to four-wheel driving, the best way to get to know your vehicle is to take a four-wheel drive training course. Alternatively, do a few trips with your local four-wheel drive club and learn from other drivers' experience. Check out the website of your state's four-wheel drive association to find your nearest club.

It is strongly recommended that you travel with at least one other vehicle if heading to the places featured in this guide.

BE LEGAL!

Any vehicle travelling through public land, reserves or crown land must be registered and roadworthy. There are no exceptions to this. All drivers must have a current driver's licence. Check out your insurance policy to ensure it covers you for any situation, in particular off the bitumen and on beaches. Seatbelts must be worn by the driver and all passengers at all times and this remains the responsibility of the driver. Dunes and beaches under the Road Traffic Act are considered a 'road' so normal road rules apply. Adhere to speed limits as displayed. Maximum speed limit within National Parks and Conservation Parks is 40km/hr unless otherwise stated.

BE FOUND

Before heading out, let someone responsible know your travel plans, including the specific route you plan to take, so if you don't arrive or call, they can then contact the Police. Remember that some destinations do not have mobile phone coverage.

RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT

In order to have a great trip, do some homework before you leave. Listed below is the gear you should consider taking with you.

Essential Equipment

- Air compressor/ pump
- Bow shackles (2) (rated to 3.2 tonnes or 4.0 tonnes)
- Basic tool kit
- Fire extinguisher
- First aid kit (including bandages suitable for snake bite)
- Firewood
- Food (including emergency supplies)
- GPS system
- Jack and jacking plate
- Long handled shovel
- Maps
- Mobile phone (limited service in some areas)
- Radios - UHF
- Rated recovery points on your vehicle
- Sand flag and mounting pole (2.3-3m)
- Snatch strap
- Spare tyres - inflated
- Tow rope
- Tyre pressure gauge
- Water - 8 litres/person/day

Good if you've got it

- Axe – for clearing fallen timber from tracks
- Battery jumper leads
- Engine oil
- EPIRB (Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacon)
- Fan belts
- Filters – fuel, air, oil
- Fuel (spare)
- Maxtrax or equivalent – traction boards
- Radiator hoses
- Satellite phone / high frequency radio
- Sunscreen 30+
- Toolkit
- Torch
- Tyre deflators
- Tyre tubes
- Tyre repair plug kit
- WD40 spray lubricant or equivalent
- Wheel bearing kit
- Winch
- Winch extension straps

important!

SAND & BEACH DRIVING

TYRE PRESSURE

Tyre pressure is all important for sand driving. Tyres on any vehicle in sand should be deflated to 15psi. This gives you better traction as your tyre's 'footprint' becomes larger, thus spreading the weight. This means you are less likely to get bogged and importantly, your vehicle doesn't tear up the track as much. On sand, low tyre pressure will not damage your tyres.



kPa or psi?

Tyre pressure is measured in either kPa (metric) or psi (imperial) and most tyre gauges will show both. This guide uses psi, which is most commonly used by 4WD clubs.

Be warned though! Driving at a low pressure (15psi) on a hard surface (gravel or bitumen) will make your vehicle difficult to handle and dangerous to you and others. Travelling too fast on low pressures can cause heat build up in the side walls of the tyre which rapidly deteriorates the rubber and can result in blowouts. Turning suddenly or quickly with low tyre pressure can roll the tyre off of the rim. Therefore, having a portable air compressor in your vehicle is a must so that when you are finished sand driving you can stop and reinflate your tyres. If you need to reach the nearest service station without reinflating your tyres, it is essential to stay under 60km/hour.

STUCK IN SAND?

Take note...

Getting bogged in sand is likely, even for the most experienced driver. When your car loses momentum and the ground is soft, wheels dig in leaving your vehicle stuck.

If you become bogged

1.

Don't panic! Our first reaction is often to give full throttle in an attempt to drive out of our predicament but this usually makes the problem worse

2.

Get out of your vehicle and assess the problem

3.

Let your tyres down to 15psi and if necessary as low as 12psi

4.

Check your vehicle is in low range four-wheel drive with hubs engaged

5.

Clear sand from around and under the framework of your vehicle and from the projected wheel tracks

6.

Using steady, constant acceleration and avoiding wheel spin, move forward or reverse out. Roll backwards and forwards to compact sand around your wheels and gain traction

7.

If you need to, use your recovery gear, following the manufacturer's instructions

BEWARE

Never join snatch straps together with shackles. If the strap snaps the shackle becomes a potentially lethal missile. Always connect recovery straps to rated hooks or eyes which are properly attached to the vehicle chassis.



Beachport to Nora Creina



DRIVING ON BEACHES

In South Australia it is permissible by law to drive on most beaches. This provides people with the opportunity to visit out-of-the-way places that you wouldn't get to on foot. Many locals drive on the beach to reach their favourite fishing spot, to take family and friends for a drive or to spend a great day in the surf. However, be aware that driving on beaches can be treacherous and difficult, depending on the beach conditions, the vehicle and the skills of the driver. When considering driving on beaches there are some important things to keep in mind.

- **Not all beaches are safe to drive on** Just because you are allowed to, doesn't mean it is a good idea. Beaches are a dynamic environment and can change in a matter of days or even hours. You will need to use common sense to decide whether a beach is drivable or not and if in doubt, don't go. Please be aware that unsafe beaches are usually not signposted. Check with National Parks rangers and local Visitor Information Centres for up-to-date information on beach access.
- **Check out the tide times and weather conditions** Before you head onto a beach always check tide times and weather conditions and aim to drive on the beach only at low tide. These can be found at <http://www.bom.gov.au> or at local service stations and Visitor Information Centres.
- **Slush pools** Difficult to spot until you are in them, slush pools are seaweed filled ponds part way up the beach. On approach, the seaweed appears to be lying on the sand but is in fact floating over deep water. If that's not bad enough, often the floating seaweed can be harbouring maggots! Ick!
- **Beach closures** Some beaches are closed, either because they are unsafe or for the protection of shorebirds. These can be permanent or seasonal. Do not enter these areas.
- **Beaches are home to wildlife** As a driver on the beach, you need to be careful about where you are driving. Drive at low tide and stay close to the water on the harder sand. This protects birdlife that nests and feeds further up the beach towards the sand dunes. Remember, not every brown lump is seaweed. Sea lions and their pups are often found lazing on the beaches – take care!
- **A beach is a 'road related area'** under the Australian Road Rules. Generally all rules that apply to drivers on the road will apply on a beach as if it were bitumen. Wear a seatbelt, drive at an appropriate speed, don't drink drive.

- **Respect other users** Some of the beaches in the region, such as Long Beach at Robe and Browns Bay near Port MacDonnell in the south can have hundreds of people using them on a hot day. Slow down and take care.
- **Sand flags** Sand flags have prevented collisions time and time again and are a great investment. On crests of dunes it is sometimes impossible to see approaching traffic without sand flags. They can be purchased from four-wheel drive stores or alternatively be homemade, using a replacement tent pole (from a dome tent) with a piece of red or orange fabric attached as the flag. They can be easily mounted to the front of your vehicle using cable ties or tape.
- **Sloping beaches are unsafe** Avoid sections of the beach which are sloping, as you run the risk of rolling your vehicle.
- **Momentum, not speed** The secret to successful sand driving is not speed; it's about having the right momentum for the situation. Travelling fast on sand is not necessary in order to keep moving.
- **Towing** Towing trailers and caravans on the beach is not advisable under any circumstances.
- **Driving at night** Driving on the beach at night is not recommended. Driving safely on a beach requires being able to judge the conditions as you travel, which is not possible with headlights only.

LIMITED VEHICLE RETRIEVAL SERVICE

Should you get really stuck and need assistance your chances of being 'retrieved' vary depending on where you are and who you are able to contact. In some townships, the tow operator will retrieve you at a charge and some RAA agents may provide assistance. You might also be lucky enough to have someone passing by render assistance. Be aware that some areas do not have any type of vehicle retrieval service.

Mobile phone coverage is variable along the coast and very limited in Ngarkat Conservation Park. UHF and HF radios and satellite phones offer greater coverage in case of an emergency. In some parks track marker posts are numbered, which can be useful if directing people to your location.

PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

A LONG HISTORY

Aboriginal people and their descendants have lived in this region for thousands of years, witnessing sea levels rise, dry times, wetland flooding and the most recent volcanic eruptions in Australia. The communities moved with the seasons between the coasts and the inland wetlands where food was plentiful.

Traditional clan groups in the region were the Meintangk, Potaruwutj, Bunganditj, Tatiara/Ngarkat and Tanganekald. Ngarrindjeri is the name now held by Aboriginal people from the Coorong.

Aboriginal people today still hold a close connection to the land their ancestors came from, regardless of how far they have travelled themselves.

CONNECTION TO COUNTRY

Keeping a connection with 'country' is important for Aboriginal people. The Aboriginal concept of Connection to Country is based on the individual being part of, and not separate from, their environment.

The need to live in balance with available resources has been understood and practised for many generations of Aboriginal communities.



Canunda National Park (Photo John Gitsham)

WHAT'S THE STORY?

"People talk about Country in the same way they talk about the person; they speak to Country, sing to Country, visit Country, worry about Country, feel sorry for Country and long for Country. Country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, and is sorry or happy. Because of its richness, Country is home. Peace and nourishment for the body, mind, spirit and eases the heart."

Extract from Deborah Bird Rose, Nourishing Terrain, 1996

CHECK THIS OUT!

What is a Midden?

For Aboriginal people, the coastal strip was rich in food such as fish, lobster, shellfish, birdlife and plants. Communities moved with the seasons to where food, shelter and water were plentiful. Middens can be seen as you travel along the coast. These are large mounds of shell remains left by the Aboriginal communities over thousands of years of harvesting food from the sea. Sometimes they contain burnt rocks from cooking fires and flint fragments which were the off-cuts from tool making. Middens often contain turban shells, mussels, limpets, abalone, cockles and reef molluscs.





Left: Native foods can be found in Coorong National Park Aboriginal
Above: Focus Group member inspecting a midden (Photo DENR)

DO NOT DISTURB

Midden sites along the coast can be easily disturbed by vehicles and foot traffic. Not only does this disturbance cause physical damage to the midden but it also affects the spiritual integrity of the site. It causes a loss of heritage value and a diminishing sense of place for the local Aboriginal people.

To find out more about the local Aboriginal culture visit the regional museums or you may wish to visit Camp Coorong Cultural Museum, 11 km south of Meningie (08) 85751557

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE ACT 1988

The *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988* is the legislation designed to protect Aboriginal heritage. Under this legislation, all Aboriginal sites, objects and remains in South Australia that are of significance to Aboriginal tradition, archaeology, anthropology and/or history are protected. For this reason, it is illegal to remove shells, stones, bones or other artefacts. Any site found, believed to be a significant Aboriginal heritage site must be reported.

SOUTH EAST ABORIGINAL FOCUS GROUP

The South East Aboriginal Focus Group is made up of descendants of the traditional clan groups from within the region. Working closely with the South East Natural Resources Management Board, their combined knowledge and experience helps guide landcare activities relating to the protection of Aboriginal heritage through the Limestone Coast. The Aboriginal Focus Group is actively involved with natural resources management projects and encourages the wider community to preserve sites of significance. Working closely with the group is the Murrapeena Heritage Association which gives a voice to Aboriginal people in the region on matters relating to Aboriginal heritage and how it can be protected.

The South East Aboriginal Focus Group and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources are working in partnership to protect midden sites in the parks. These projects are giving Aboriginal youth the opportunity to work on the country.

LANDSCAPES

As you travel through the Limestone Coast, there are a myriad of landscapes to see. Each of these landscapes is home to a particular group of plants and animals, suited perfectly to the conditions in its 'ecological community' or 'ecosystem'.

Within the region there are two internationally significant Ramsar sites - The Coorong and Bool Lagoon - which are habitat for shorebirds and waterbirds.

Please observe the wildlife but do not interact with it. In particular, please do not feed any wildlife.



Animals Galore...

CHECK THIS OUT!

The Limestone Coast region has recorded:

- 55 mammal species
- 50 frog and reptile species (including the nationally endangered Loggerhead Turtle)
- 19 freshwater fish
- 275 bird species (including the well-known but rare Red-tailed Black cockatoo and the endangered Orange-bellied Parrot)
- 324 plant species

This huge range of animals and plants makes the Limestone Coast one of Australia's recognised biodiversity hotspots.

Visit the DENR website www.environment.sa.gov.au for more information about threatened plant and animal species in the region.

SEASCAPES

Beneath the waters of the Southern Ocean lies a vast array of sealife. The rich and complex ecosystems are home to thousands of species of plants and animals.



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WHAT'S THE STORY?

The Bonney Upwelling

The Bonney Upwelling is a curious oceanic phenomenon which occurs during the summer and autumn months, just off the southern coast. Cold, nutrient-rich water is brought to the surface where it feeds an explosion of life. The nutrient-rich upwelling stimulates the entire food web, from the smallest free-floating plankton to large predators, such as sharks, tuna and whales. Krill, a shrimp-like planktonic crustacean, is a particularly important part of the food web, breeding quickly and swarming on the surface in response to upwelling events. Krill are a food source for a variety of seabirds, arrow squid, fish and mammals, and in particular, the large migratory Blue Whale.



From top: Firebrick Starfish, Seals swimming in coastal waters; Blue Groper (Photos Ben Brayford); Gorgonian Coral (Photo Yvette Eglinton)

PROTECTING SHOREBIRDS

The beaches of the Limestone Coast support a range of rare and endangered resident and migratory shorebirds. These birds, including the resident Pied Oyster Catcher and Hooded Plover rely on our coast as breeding habitat with the migratory waders travelling thousands of miles to inhabit our beaches for several months of the year.

One of the key challenges to the success of these birds is avoiding disturbance or predation. Foxes and feral cats feed on the adult birds, the eggs and chicks, as well as disturbing adult birds from nest incubation and guarding duties. Vehicles and people on foot also disturb the adults and crush or injure the eggs and chicks.

Friends of Shorebirds South East (FoSSE) is a group of passionate volunteers who dedicate hundreds of hours each year to monitoring bird activity along the coast. Group members undertake bird counts which provide valuable data about health and behaviour of each species. As well, volunteers protect beach dwelling birds through fencing, signage and community education.

Through an Envirofund project, FoSSE produced a brochure which has been widely distributed around the Limestone Coast. The group has kindly allowed the information to be reproduced in this Guide.



WHAT'S THE STORY?

The Art of Camouflage

As a disguise from predators, the chicks, eggs and nests, or scrapes, of many shorebirds are cleverly camouflaged. Whilst this means predators have trouble finding them, it also means humans do too! When you are on the beach, avoid driving through seaweed and where possible, stay close to the water.



BEACH NESTING BIRDS

Why are beach-nesting birds in the Limestone Coast under threat?

- Some shorebirds nest directly on the beach, foredune or in the dunes. Nests are usually located above the high tide mark
- Most nesting activity occurs in the spring and summer when our beaches are busiest
- Nests are sometimes just a simple scrape in the sand, making them very hard to spot and their well-camouflaged eggs and chicks are very difficult to see
- Chicks are very small and camouflaged but they can't fly until they are 4 or 5 weeks old. They will generally sit still when disturbed but they venture onto the waterline to find food, placing them on a collision course with vehicles
- Because nests, eggs and chicks are so hard to see they are very easily trampled or run over by vehicles
- Adult birds will leave the nest when disturbed and not return until after the disturbance has gone. This leaves eggs or chicks vulnerable to harsh temperatures or predators
- Although dogs are not allowed in parks, shorebirds and their chicks and eggs are at risk from dogs on town beaches where dogs are permitted

How can you help to protect birds on our beaches?

- When driving on beaches keep as close to the water's edge as possible. This will prevent accidental crushing of nests or chicks. Whenever possible avoid travelling at high tide when the beach is narrow
- When walking your dog on the beach, keep it on a lead to prevent it from chasing birds or running onto the upper beach and disturbing the chicks and their nests
- When walking on the beach, keep to the water's edge to minimise disturbance to nesting birds
- The beach is an ecosystem as complex and important as any other. The health of the ocean and the land on either side of the beach is directly dependent upon it. Preserving this habitat is really important if we want to enjoy the benefits that it brings. Even the seagrass and algae that washes up on the beach as 'seaweed' plays a role in this harsh and unique environment
- Take care if you see temporary fencing on the beach. Local groups like the Friends of Shorebirds South East monitor bird activity and construct small protective fences around active nests

Which birds are likely to nest on beaches in the Limestone Coast?



Hooded Plover



Red-capped Plover



Pied Oyster Catcher



Fairy Tern

MIGRATORY SHOREBIRDS

Migratory shorebirds, which breed in the northern hemisphere, use our beaches for feeding and roosting. They too are adversely affected when disturbed.

How can you help to protect these birds on our beaches?

- When driving on beaches keep a look out for flocks of feeding or roosting shorebirds. Keep as far away as possible from these and drive slowly past.
- When walking your dog on the beach, keep it on a lead to prevent it from chasing birds or running onto the upper beach and disturbing them.



Ruddy Turnstone





Beachport to Nora Creina



National Parks Wildlife Service Ranger in Canunda National Park

GUIDE TO PARKS

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National Parks and Conservation Parks in South Australia showcase the State's natural and cultural heritage. They are where you will find nature at its best. Help protect our parks by following these guidelines:

- Keep to the tracks - it's an offence under the National Parks and Wildlife Act to drive off tracks and penalties apply – look for the marker posts to stay on track
- Take your rubbish with you
- Be considerate of other users
- Leave your pets at home
- Observe fire restrictions usually November 1 to April 30. Check CFS hotline 1300 362 361 for more information
- Conserve native habitat by using liquid fuel or gas stoves
- Camp only in designated areas
- Respect geological and heritage sites
- Keep the wildlife wild - do not feed or disturb animals or remove native plants
- Firearms and chainsaws are not permitted
- Maximum speed limits in parks is 40km/h
- There is no drinking water available in Parks

FEES AND CHARGES

Park entry fees apply in some parks around South Australia. Canunda National Park, Little Dip Conservation Park, Coorong National Park and Ngarkat Conservation Park do not have entry fees. However, camping fees apply in each of these parks. All fees and charges contribute to the conservation, maintenance and improvement of Park facilities for your ongoing enjoyment. Camping permits are available from self registration bays at most campsites. Refer to the facilities and activities listed under camping for each park in the following pages.



CAMPFIRES

If you're sleeping under the stars, having a campfire is the perfect way to cook and keep warm and we all know telling yarns is much easier by firelight.

In the non-fire danger period and in areas where campfires are permitted, the following conditions apply:

- BYO firewood or purchase it before arriving at the Park. Fallen timber must not be used for campfires
- Use designated fire rings, where available
- Always build your fire at least 4 metres away from vegetation
- Stay with your fire at all times
- Don't light a fire unless you have a means of extinguishing it
- Make sure its fully extinguished before you leave
- Cutting standing trees and shrubs is illegal
- Liquid fuel and gas stoves are permitted during the fire season, except on days of Total Fire Ban
- Please note, different rules apply in the Coorong National Park. Please refer to the Kingston to Murray Mouth section

TAKE YOUR RUBBISH HOME

We ask that you dispose of your rubbish responsibly. Plan to take your rubbish home with you as there are no rubbish disposal places in or outside of parks.

Do not bury rubbish as not only it is illegal, but it attracts foxes and cats.

Remember too, South Australia is a plastic bag free zone.

FRIENDLY FISHING

You can find great beaches for fishing all along the Limestone Coast. Be a friendly fisher:

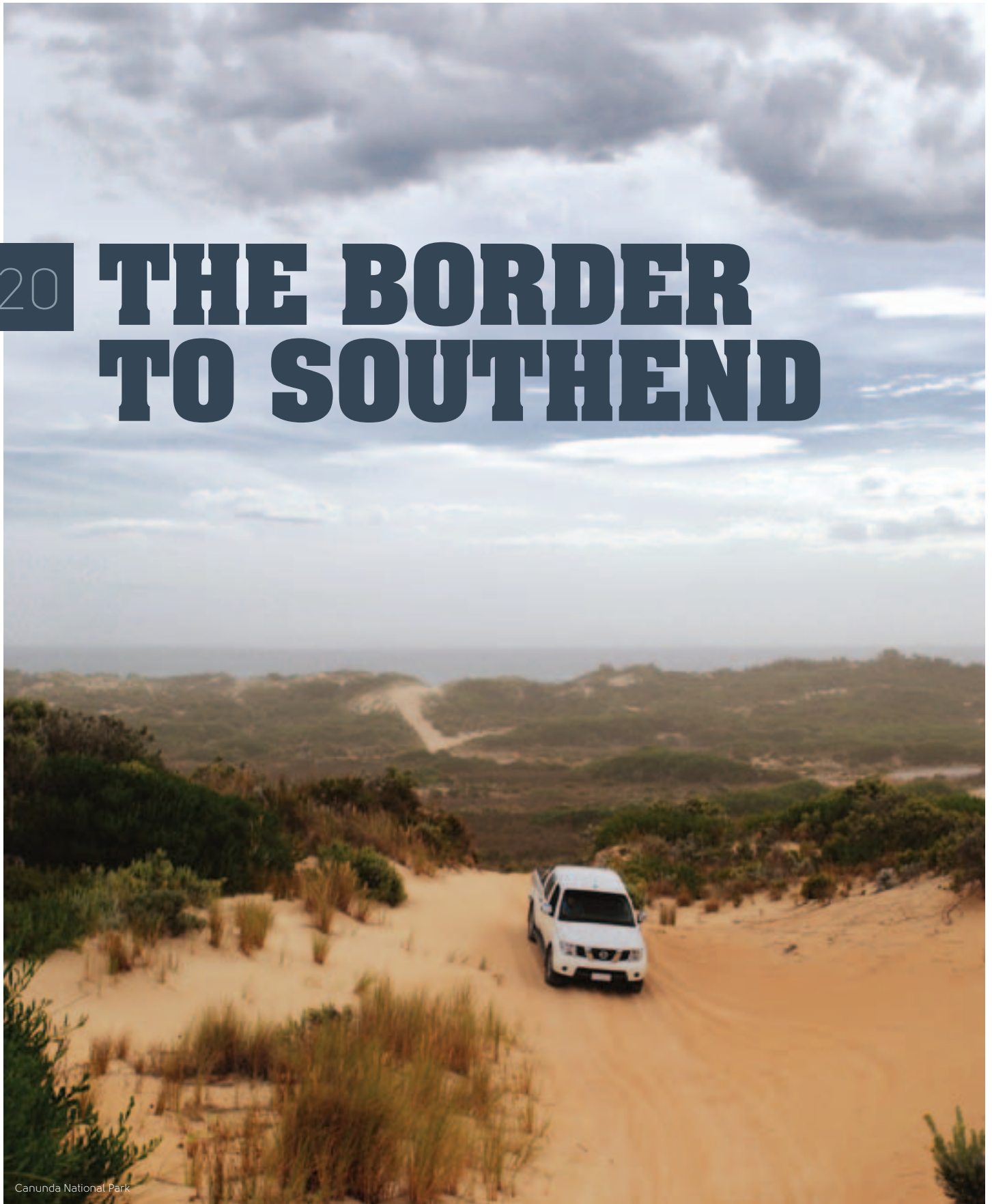
- Take all of your rubbish home (including cans, bottles, fishing line, nets, fish scraps and bait). Fish scraps and bait attract foxes and cats which prey on our shorebirds and please don't bury it!

If you have a beach campfire:

- Bring your own firewood
- Extinguish the fire before you leave
- No fires are permitted on days of total fire ban
- Fires are only permitted on the beach between the high and low water mark

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THE BORDER TO SOUTHEND



Canunda National Park

Between the Victorian border and Southend there is plenty to see and do, including the scenic and remote driving experiences of Canunda National Park. From the border to Port MacDonnell, don't miss the underwater wonderland of Piccaninnie Ponds, Port MacDonnell's colourful maritime history and explore, on foot, pristine beaches that are home to rare and endangered shorebirds. Through Canunda National Park you'll experience pristine beaches, sand dunes, limestone cliffs, sea stacks, reefs and large expanses of coastal vegetation. It is a mecca for fishing, bushwalking, bird watching, snorkelling and surfing and is a must for anyone visiting the Limestone Coast.

Southend National Parks Office
(08) 8735 6053

Mount Gambier DENR Office
(08) 8735 1177

Beachport Visitor Information Centre
(08) 8735 8029

Robe Visitor Information Centre
(08) 8768 2465

Millicent Visitor Information Centre
(08) 8735 6053

WHAT TO EXPECT

From Nelson, at the Victorian border through to Southend there is much to explore. Many beaches can be accessed from tracks off the bitumen, however, with the exception of Browns Bay east of Port MacDonnell and Geltwood Beach through Canunda National Park, most beaches along this stretch can be hazardous even in the summer months, so check with the locals before driving on them.

The drive from Carpenter Rocks to Southend will appeal to four-wheel drive enthusiasts and takes in Canunda National Park. Some parts of Canunda National Park require a high level of four wheel driving expertise. As with all of the parks, let your tyres down to 15psi to keep yourself from getting bogged and to help preserve the tracks. Protect the dunes and vegetation by staying on the tracks which are clearly marked with orange-topped posts. The weather will be generally cooler here than further north in the region. Even on fine days, pack warm clothes for the late afternoon sou'westerlies.

There are great stops along the way including Cape Banks Lighthouse, Lake Bonney lookout and Coola Outstation. You can follow the Admella Trail along the 'shipwreck coast' and enjoy the walking trails at Cape Buffon.

The Bunganditj (pronounced Bo-an-dik) inhabited the area now known as the Limestone Coast, from Nelson in Victoria to Beachport for nearly 10,000 years. They lived in temporary camps along the coast during summer, and for the rest of the year lived near inland swamps in huts called wurlas. Some Bunganditj descendants live in the region today and continue to have a close connection with the coast. Through the park you'll see evidence of Aboriginal middens.

SHARED ENVIRONMENT

On your travels through Canunda you may see wallabies, kangaroos, echidnas, wombats and snakes. It's also home to some more elusive characters - Swamp Antechinus, Rufous Bristlebird and the endangered Orange-bellied Parrot.

The beaches are visited annually by migratory shorebirds that spend the Arctic winter feeding on South Australian beaches. 'Local' beach nesting birds like the Pied Oystercatcher, Hooded Plover and the Red-capped Plover also inhabit the beaches.



Overlooking Lake Bonney, Canunda National Park

In winter, Southern Right Whales pass along the coast on their way to breeding grounds at the head of the Great Australian Bight. Occasionally these can be seen from Cape Buffon and Rivoli Bay. The waters of the Limestone Coast are home to Australia's largest Rock Lobster fishery. Giant kelp forests found nowhere else in South Australia, sway with the currents and provide food and shelter for many of the marine animals.

CAMPING

Canunda National Park has some great camping grounds just over the dunes from the beach. Camping fees apply and permits are available from self-registration stations within the Park. Camping is permitted in the Park at designated areas.

Conserve native habitat by using liquid fuel or gas stoves. Wood fires are prohibited from 1 Nov to 30 April. There are a number of caravan parks in Mount Gambier and the Woolwash Caravan Park in Port MacDonnell is situated on the Woolwash beach in the township.

	Camping	Campsite Self Registration	2WD Access	Small Caravan Access	Toilets	Walking Trails
Cafe Buffon			•			•
Kotgee & Nal-a-wort	•	•	•	•	•	•
Geltwood Beach	•	•	•	•	•	
Number Two Rocks	•	•			•	
Cape Banks	•	•	•		•	

CHECK THIS OUT!

How many miles can a small bird fly?

The Red-necked Stint, a small bird the same weight as a Milky Way Bar (30grams!) spends two months of the year in its Siberian home, then to avoid the Arctic winter, takes two months to fly south where it spends six months over the Australian summer feeding on beaches like those at Canunda National Park, before spending two months flying north again. How can a bird so small fly so far? With a life span of 20+ years, this 30 gram bird would travel around half a million kilometres in its lifetime.

→
1/2 MILLION KM's!



Above: Gambier 4WD Club Members in Canunda National Park
Left: Four-wheel driving in Canunda National Park

TRACKS & TRIPS

■ Around Port MacDonnell

With Port MacDonnell or Mt Gambier as your base, there are a number of places to explore. Discover the underwater wonders of Piccaninnie Ponds and Ewens Ponds, best revealed by snorkelling. Bookings are available through the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (08) 8735 1177. In summer, enjoy swimming and surfing at Browns Bay and take time to explore Danger Point and Stony Point on foot, home to Little Terns, Sooty Oystercatchers and Fairy Terns. Delight in sunset from Orwell Rocks and hear the music of the pebbles tumbling with the tide. Cape Northumberland near the Port MacDonnell lighthouse is home to a colony of Little Penguins and is the former site of the first lighthouse built on mainland South Australia.

Not all beaches in this area are suitable to drive on. Many are too steep, such as Fingerpoint Beach and some have slush ponds in which you can easily bog your vehicle. Danger Point and Stony Point are important habitat for shorebirds, so please keep your vehicle off of these and visit them on foot.

Just a short drive north is Mt Schanck, Australia's youngest volcano which boasts spectacular views from the rim of the crater. Mount Gambier is home to the internationally famous Blue Lake which at the end of summer when water temperatures rise, becomes an iridescent blue which has to be seen to be believed.

■ Carpenter Rocks to Southend

The drive from Carpenter Rocks to Southend through Canunda National Park is only possible in the summer months. Geltwood Beach must be traversed as part of this trip and the first high tides of winter alter the beach making it steep and the sand loose, rendering it impassable. Even in summer it may have washouts so take care. Access to the Park is possible via Bevilacqua Ford all year round. For up to date information, contact the Ranger at Southend.

This trip starts in the township of Carpenter Rocks, where you head westwards out of town into Canunda National Park. You may like to take a short detour to the Cape Banks lighthouse before reaching the Park. The information bay is a good place to let your tyres down. From here, follow the track right through the Park. Between Carpenter Rocks and Oil Rig Square, beaches are generally not safe to travel on at any

time of the year. However, they can be accessed from the main track to reach popular fishing spots.

At Oil Rig Square, follow the track onto Geltwood Beach which takes you to Cameron Rocks where the track restarts and leads you to Southend.

■ Carpenter Rocks to Oil Rig Square (winter months)

This is a great drive in the winter months when Geltwood Beach is impassable. It's the first half of the Carpenter Rocks to Southend trip, but at Oil Rig Square, head out onto the bitumen and in to Millicent. From there you can travel to Southend and explore the northern end of the Canunda National Park.

■ Around Southend

Around Southend township there are delightful beaches to explore. Don't miss the Cape Buffon coastal cliff top walk which offers stunning views that reveal how the natural forces of wind and waves of the Southern Ocean have shaped the limestone landscape.

WHAT'S THE STORY?

SS Admella

In the early hours of 6 August 1859, the Admella struck Carpenters Reef on its way from Adelaide to Melbourne. Within fifteen minutes the luxury steamer broke up leaving her passengers and crew clinging to the wreckage a mile from shore. Several early attempts to reach land were fruitless. Eventually two sailors struggled to shore and made a 20 mile trek to MacDonnell Lighthouse to raise the alarm.

It was not until the third day after the wreck that people heard of the disaster. Over the next few days, rescue attempts were made, but mountainous seas and severe storms continually drove the rescuers back. On day eight a lifeboat managed to reach the wreck to rescue survivors. 89 lives were lost, making the Admella one of the worst maritime disasters in Australia's history.

Extract from Admella Discovery Trail Brochure, available from the Port MacDonnell & District Maritime Museum and Visitor Information Centres.

CANUNDA NATIONAL PARK



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BEACHPORT TO ROBE



The trip from Beachport to Robe is a fantastic package. In one short stretch of coastline you can experience breathtaking scenery, vast beaches, giant dunes, gorgeous blue water and tracks that will test your mettle. Little Dip Conservation Park offers coastal flora and fauna at its best and has a rich heritage and history to be explored.

Robe National Parks Office
(08) 8768 2543

Robe Visitor Information Centre
(08) 8768 2465

Beachport Visitor Information Centre
(08) 8735 8029

WHAT TO EXPECT

The trip from Beachport to Robe along the coast is one of the most popular drives for locals and visitors alike. In summer months you can do the trip without hitting the bitumen. It is a journey through a mosaic of landscapes, as you travel golden beaches and vast sand dunes and pass through ever changing vegetation, from the low, coastal heathlands and samphire flats, through to the taller Mallee woodlands and thick groves of Melaleuca Teatree in Little Dip Conversation Park.

There is plenty to see along the way. Lake George, just outside Beachport is home to diverse waterbird communities, including ducks, swans and waders which can be seen from the viewing sites amongst the Paperbarks on the lakes edge. Take time to explore Five Mile Rocks and Big Midden at the north end of Beachport Conversation Park. Little Dip Conversation Park is a densely wooded coastal park, and offers great opportunities for fishing, camping and bushwalking.

A genuine four-wheel drive is essential, and be prepared for some tough tracks, particularly on the coast track through Little Dip Conversation Park. Be aware that in the winter months most beaches are not passable. There are alternative routes for the winter months. Check with the Robe National Parks office (including the notice board outside if the office is unattended) or the Visitor Information Centres at Robe or Beachport.

Much of the area north of Beachport Conversation Park is Crown Land or private land and in most cases there is nothing to indicate changing land tenure. The private landholders in most cases allow people to traverse their properties in good faith, so please respect that. Stick to the marked track, take your rubbish home and don't disturb fences and gates.

SHARED ENVIRONMENT

Wombats, wallabies, echidnas and kangaroos are frequently seen along roadsides especially through Little Dip Conversation Park. Be wary and drive with extra care at dawn, dusk or after dark. Be wary of snakes and avoid them if they are crossing the road. Occasionally sea lions and seals can be seen on or from the beach and little penguins make their homes in burrows on the rocky shores near Robe.

Little Dip Conversation Park is home to its namesake, the Little Dip Spider Orchid which flowers in spring. The endangered Hooded Plover nests on the beaches through this section of coastline and the coastal lakes provide an essential drought refuge for waterbirds.



CHECK THIS OUT!

A clever ruse – Little Dip Spider Orchid

In a sneaky and elaborate hoax, the Little Dip Spider Orchid lures the male thynnid wasp to its flower by releasing a scent very similar to that of the female wasp. Attracted by the scent and thinking it's a female wasp, the male wasp 'mates' with the orchid flower. Thanks to the orchid's clever design, the wasp unwittingly collects pollen on its abdomen, so after his brief but enthusiastic encounter with the orchid, the wasp flies away. The next time he's tricked into mating with an orchid, he will pollinate the flower. Sneaky, eh?

CAMPING

	Camping	Campsite Self Registration	2WD Access	Small Caravan Access	Toilets	Walking Trails
Beachport Conversation Park						
Five Mile Drift			●		●	
Rooney Point	●		●			
Three Mile Bend	●	●	●		●	
Woolley Lake			●			●
Little Dip Conversation Park						
Big Dip Lake						●
Stoney Rise	●	●	●		●	
The Gums	●	●	●	●	●	
Long Gully	●	●	●	●	●	
Old Man Lake	●	●	●		●	
Freshwater Lake					●	●

WHATS THE STORY?

Woakwine cutting

Just a few kilometres north of Beachport on the highway to Robe is the Woakwine Cutting, thought to be one of Australia's largest engineering feats ever undertaken by an individual. Built by grazier Murray McCourt and his offsider Dick MacIntyre, the project took three years to complete. One kilometre long and 28 metres at its deepest point, the cutting through the Woakwine Range drains water from the McCourt's property into Lake George. Using a D7 tractor and over 5000 hours of man power, 276,000 cubic metres of material was removed over three years. In May 1963, a dream became a reality when the water started to flow. The cutting has a viewing platform, information boards and machinery on display.

That's a lot of hard work!

TRACKS & TRIPS

■ Beachport to Nora Creina (Summer months only)

There is one main track through Beachport to Nora Creina which is marked with orange topped posts from one end to the other. The local Wattle Rangers 4WD Club members have installed the posts and maintain them as needed. They know the lay of the land and have come to the aid of many a lost and bogged visitor, so follow the track and keep an eye on the posts. The track takes in the best of the scenery and offers plenty of challenging driving.

Beware that wild weather and king tides take many of the beaches away for the winter. This leaves them unsafe to drive on and impassable in the winter months. The sand tends to be redeposited in late spring when the weather patterns change.

Starting at Beachport, take the Lake George Road through the Beachport Conversation Park. Heading north you will follow the track across some massive dunes giving you breathtaking views of the Southern Ocean. At the Five Mile take a short walk to the top of the headland, the view is amazing and you will find yourself amongst one of the most expansive middens in the region. From here follow the markers through some rugged flats and coastal scrub, to Ten Mile Rocks and Euro Point.

Along the way you will see signs indicating you are near the Millicent Sand Buggy Club which is located in the dunes north west of Lake George. The four-wheel drive track skirts around the buggy club grounds, and although there are tracks into it, for safety, the buggy club asks that four-wheel drives stick to the designated four-wheel drive track. A couple of near misses on race days when four-wheel drives have ventured onto buggy club land have prompted the request. For further information about the buggy club, or to obtain permission to travel through the buggy club area, you can email millicentsandbuggyclub@live.com.au.

During the summer months you can drive right through to Nora Creina on Stinky Beach (aptly named for the rotting seaweed there some of the time). Nora Creina is a privately owned holiday settlement and the owner graciously lets vehicles through, to allow access back to the bitumen. Leave gates as you find them and watch out for children on bikes and backyard cricket matches. From Nora Creina, follow the road to Little Dip Conversation Park, or reinflate your tyres if you are heading back to the bitumen.

Be aware that during winter months Stinky Beach is not safe to travel on, so return to Beachport and travel around the bitumen to Little Dip Conversation Park.

■ Little Dip Circuit

Little Dip Conservation Park offers some great drives in summer months when beaches are passable. Whilst the inland track through the park is suitable for all-wheel drives and two-wheel drives, the coastal track requires a genuine four-wheel drive and an experienced driver. Starting at the Robe rubbish dump (an unlikely beginning to such a spectacular drive) enter the park at Cape Lannes and follow the track for the length of the park, as it takes you onto beaches, through coastal heathlands and across rolling dunes. At the south end of the park travel across Errington Hole Track and head back to Robe on the inland track (Little Dip Road).

Whilst in the Park take the time to explore walking trails at Big Dip Lake and Fresh Water Lake and enjoy a break at the picnic sites at Freshwater Lake and Old Man Lake.

Information on beach conditions is available from the Visitor Information Centres at Robe and Beachport and from the Robe National Parks office (including the noticeboard outside if the office is unattended).



Bushwalking in Little Dip

BEACHPORT TO ROBE





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KINGSTON TO THE MURRAY MOUTH

Coorong National Park (Photo John Gitsham)

Famous for its long, shallow, salty lagoons that run for almost 100km alongside the Southern Ocean, the Coorong offers some excellent opportunities to enjoy out of the way places. The intertwining coastal lakes at the mouth of the mighty River Murray and the vast Ninety Mile Beach continue to draw people to the region for fishing, boating, sightseeing and bird watching. The coastal towns of Kingston and Meningie have a rich history and heritage to be explored.

Coorong National Parks Office
(08) 8575 1200

Meningie Visitor Information Centre
(08) 8575 1770

Kingston Visitor Information Centre
(08) 8767 2036

WHAT TO EXPECT

The Coorong is an iconic piece of Australia and takes its name from the Aboriginal word ‘karangh’ meaning ‘narrow neck’. Starting at the Granites in the south and running along the coast for some 100km to the mouth of the River Murray, the Coorong is an intricate network of shallow lagoons, sand dunes and large tracts of coastal vegetation. There is ample opportunity for fishing, canoeing, bird watching and camping. Much of the Coorong is remote so be prepared with fuel and emergency supplies.

Most beaches between Kingston and the Murray Mouth are passable in the summer months. However, high tides and wild weather leave the beaches unsuitable to drive on in winter months. Between 42 Mile Crossing and Tea Tree Crossing, some sections of the beach remain unsafe to drive on even through summer, so take care. Be aware of the shell grit sections of beach, which can be like quick sand and are notorious for getting vehicles stuck. Tea Tree Crossing is closed in winter months as water levels in the lagoon are too high, and is signposted ‘closed’ at the road entrance during this time. The beach between Tea Tree Crossing to the Murray Mouth is closed from 24 October to 24 December each year to protect the nesting Hooded Plover. Please contact Coorong National Parks office on (08) 8575 1200 or the Salt Creek Roadhouse (08) 8575 7021 for up-to-date information.

There is access to the Coorong by boat from Hindmarsh Island or by four-wheel drive from entrances off the Princes Highway between Meningie and Kingston. Stick on the tracks once in the park.

Around Kingston there is plenty to see and do. Take the time to visit the historic Cape Jaffa Lighthouse, moved from its platform at sea to its current location on the foreshore, experience delicious fresh lobster or take a walk around the parkland over Maria Creek, which is a great place for children to explore. There is a substantial fishing industry operating out of Kingston and boats can be launched from the boat ramp on the foreshore or from Cape Jaffa to the south.

Meningie, situated on the edge of Lake Albert, is known as the northern gateway to the Coorong. In its early days, Meningie was serviced by paddle steamers from Milang, which formed part of the original Adelaide to Melbourne route, with travellers taking the stagecoach to Kingston. Meningie today offers visitors a great place to stop for shopping, sightseeing and exploring the region’s history.

The Ngarrindjeri people have lived along the Coorong for sixty thousand years and continue to do so today. They have a rich heritage and their community is intrinsically linked to the coastal waters and lakes. The Ngarrindjeri community is involved in the current management of the park. Camp Coorong offers a series of captivating walking trails and nature tours which reveal the unique flora, fauna, and archaeology of the area and can be contacted on (08) 8575 1557.

SHARED ENVIRONMENT

The coastal waters of the Coorong create a unique environment for plants and animals. Over 230 bird species have been sighted in the Coorong, so it is a birdwatchers paradise. It has international significance as a summering area for migratory birds coming from as far away as Siberia and is an important drought refuge for many species of waterbirds.

Keep your eyes open for snakes and lizards. The Coorong is home to the largest permanent breeding colony of the Australian Pelican.

The Coorong is a sanctuary for native wildlife, and on your travels you may see kangaroos, wallabies, wombats, emus, echidnas. .

CAMPING

Camp sites are available throughout the Coorong National Park. Permits are required for camping and can be obtained from the self-registration stations, the DENR Office at Noonameena and from some roadhouses and information outlets. If you require water, power and toilet/shower facilities, caravan parks are located at Meningie, Kingston, Gemini Downs and Salt Creek.

Within Coorong National Park Camping is permitted anywhere along the beach between high and low water mark, but please be aware of tides and remember there may be other vehicles travelling along the beach. Camping behind the foredunes in designated sites offers greater protection from the wind. The entry points to designated sites are marked with a post, and the campsites are delineated with a polypipe fence. Behind the dunes is fragile vegetation and heritage sites, so please keep vehicles off these areas. Secluded camp sites can be found on the eastern shore of the Younghusband Peninsula but these are only accessible by boat.

Fires are not permitted in the Coorong National Park any time of the year, except for on the ocean beach (between high and low watermark). These are permitted all year round except on days of total fire ban. Collection of wood from the park is prohibited, so please bring your own firewood or purchase it from roadhouses or service stations before entering the park. Liquid fuel and gas stoves are allowed anywhere in the Park during the fire danger season unless there is a total fire ban.

	Camping	Campsite Self Registration	2WD Access	Small Caravan Access	Toilets	Boat Access	Walking Trails
Barker Knoll	●	●				●	●
Godfreys Landing	●	●			●	●	●
Pelican Point			●	●		●	
Mark Point	●	●	●			●	
Long Point	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Parnka Point	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Jack Point			●				●
Salt Creek			●		●	●	●
Loop Road	●	●	●	●	●		●
Tea Tree Crossing	●	●					
Chinamans Well			●	●			●
42 Mile Crossing	●	●	●	●	●		●
32 Mile Crossing	●	●					
28 Mile Crossing		●	●	●	●		



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TRACKS & TRIPS

■ Kingston to 28 Mile Crossing

The beach from Kingston through to 28 Mile Crossing is a great drive in summer months and takes in the spectacular giant boulders rising up out of the beach, aptly named the Granites.

■ 42 Mile Crossing

To experience the classic Coorong beach and to try your hand at catching a fish or two, this is a great destination. Access the beach at 42 Mile Crossing and head north towards Tea Tree Crossing.

Over the last few years this section of beach has remained impassable even during the summer, so be prepared to turn around when the driving conditions become unsafe. Please do not drive behind the dunes as these areas are protected.

■ Tea Tree Crossing to the Murray Mouth

This is a 220km return trip and is often tackled as a two or three day adventure, depending on tides and weather conditions. Plan to do this trip between Christmas and Easter when Tea Tree Crossing is open and the beach is safe to drive on. This route starts at the broad expanse of Tea Tree Crossing, a marked track across a shallow lagoon.

Before you head off, check with the National Parks office at Noonameena or the Salt Creek Roadhouse to check the crossing is open, as it is closed during the winter months when the lake level rises.

Once you are over the crossing, follow the track up the dunes and across to the beach. Be prepared to adapt your driving to suit the beach conditions.

WHATS THE STORY?

Working on the Barrages

The barrages linking the islands between Pelican Point and Goolwa were built to hold water in the lower lakes of the River Murray for stock water and irrigation. The construction of the barrages, in the desperate depression days of the early 1930s, saw 250 men employed at the peak of the massive project. Men had walked for hundreds of miles in the hope of finding work and although the work was exhausting, the men withstood the harsh conditions so as to keep their jobs, as work was so hard to find. There was always time for sport though; tales were told of boxing matches where less than willing volunteers would get a 'helluva hiding' while the entrepreneur made money, two up on Friday nights and football matches between the men of the barrages and the Meningie team.

Based on "More Tales of the Coorong" by E. Leta Padman, available at DENR Office Coorong.

CHECK THIS OUT!

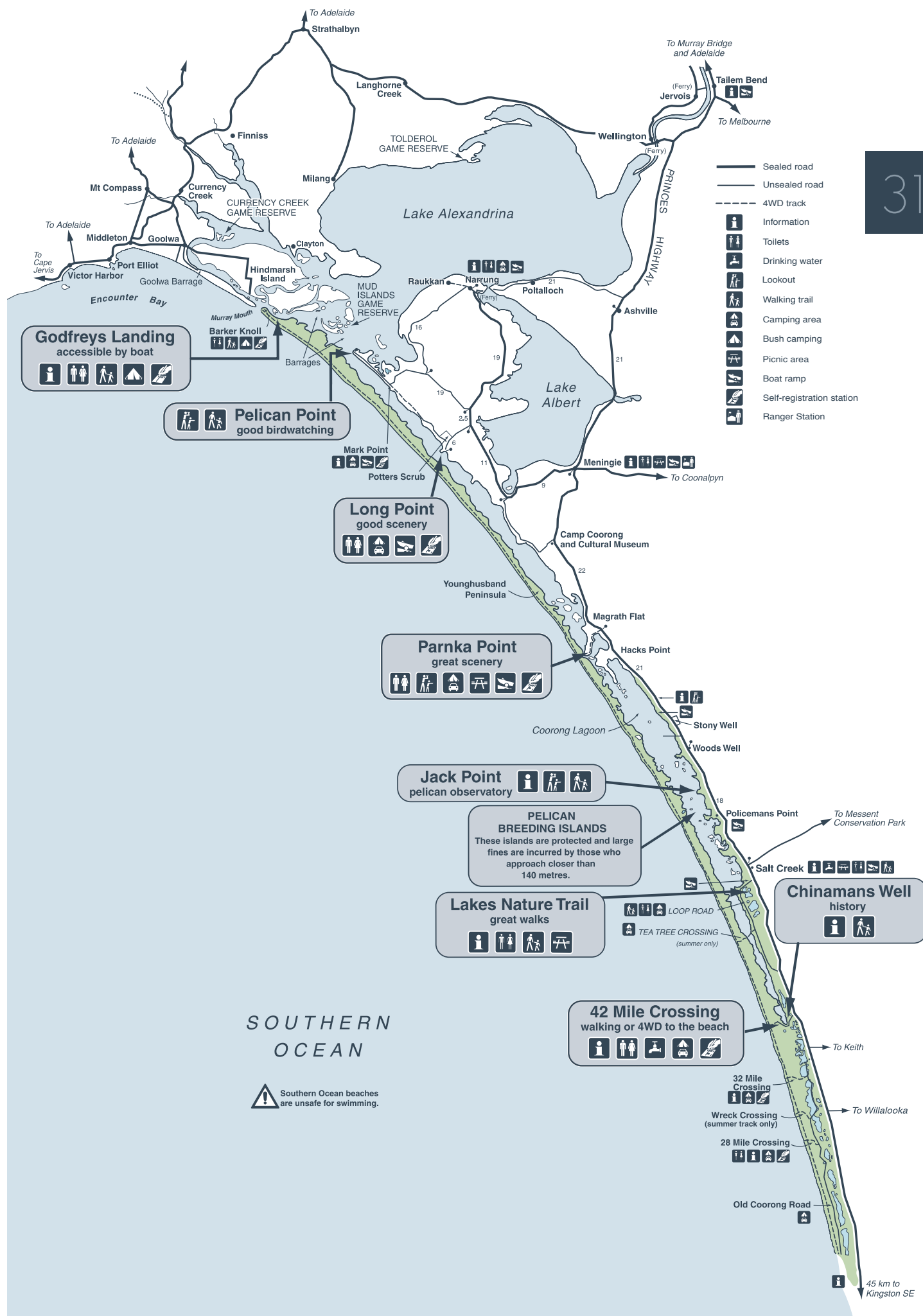
Is my beak bigger than my belly?

The Australian Pelican is highly symbolic of the Coorong and Lakes, where these majestic birds breed on islands in the Park, between Woods Well and Salt Creek. Known for their expansive bills, and the "pouch" that allows the bottom of the beak to stretch out, male pelicans can have bills reaching 460mm in length. About a month before breeding, birds concentrate near to or on their future nesting site, walking and flying over the area. Courtship rituals of the pelicans are intriguing, with groups of birds putting on displays while walking, swimming or flying near the nesting area and the "courtship walk" when the female leads a cohort of 8 suitors through the nesting area until the dominant male is chosen. Both parents take turns to incubate the eggs, which hatch after about 32 days. When chicks are 2 weeks old they emerge from under the brooding adult and with great delight, stand inside the pouch to take regurgitated fish and crustacea out of the gullet. 3 months after hatching, most young make their first efforts to fly with their wings and tail feathers completely developed.



Tea Tree Crossing, Coorong National Park

COORONG NATIONAL PARK



A wide-angle photograph of a sandy dirt road that curves through a coastal landscape. The road is light brown and shows tire tracks. On either side of the road are low-lying green shrubs and several tall, gnarled mallee trees with sparse green foliage. The sky is a deep blue, filled with large, white, fluffy clouds. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

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NGARKAT CONSERVATION PARK

Ngarkat Conservation Park region is a network of parks spanning some 270,000 hectares of dense mallee woodlands and heathlands overlying ancient coastal dunes. It offers some exceptional four-wheel driving opportunities, camping and sightseeing and has a rich history with ruins and relics of the past, still seen today.

Lameroo National Parks Office
(08) 8576 3690

**Bordertown Visitor
Information Centre**
(08) 8752 0700

Ngarkat...
Rich history,
Rugged landscape



WHAT TO EXPECT

Ngarkat Conservation Park in the region's north, between Lamerook and Bordertown, is a vast, rugged mallee wilderness. Pronounced Narr-kat, it is named after the Aboriginal people who lived in the region for thousands of years. There are a network of tracks winding their way through Ngarkat and neighbouring parks, like Scorpion Springs to the north east and the vast expanse of Big Desert Wilderness Park over the Victorian border to the east. There are spectacular views of the Park from higher spots, like Mt Rescue and Hensleys Trigg where you can truly appreciate the vastness of the place. Almost all the park is four-wheel drive only.

You can reach Ngarkat from the Bordertown- Pinnaroo Road which runs north-south through the park or from Snoswells Road which meets Dukes Highway about 15km north-west of Keith. Stick to the main tracks once in the park. There are many small, unmarked tracks, which are for fire access and not for the public, so stay off these.

Before you head into Ngarkat check out a map and make sure you realise how big it is. Keep in mind it will be slow going as most tracks are rugged. You will need to be well prepared with spare tyres, and enough food and water for your trip. Mobile phone coverage is limited, so a UHF radio or a satellite phone is essential in case you need assistance. There are a number of small, unmarked tracks through the park which are for fire access. These are not for the public, so stay off these.

If there is any chance of high fire danger weather, (you will know this from the weather forecast on the radio) stay out of Ngarkat. It's hot, remote and risky if you aren't familiar with it. Due to its isolation, emergency assistance won't come quickly. Please ensure you are not in or near the park on days of total fire ban or extreme fire danger. Head to the beach instead, there's plenty of that not too far away!

SHARED ENVIRONMENT

Ngarkat Conservation Park is home to an abundance of wildlife including Western Grey Kangaroos, echidnas, Pygmy Possums, Dunnarts, Mallee Emu-Wrens and Emus, along with 120 bird species including Yellow-tailed Black cockatoos, Mallee Ringneck-Parrots, Thornbills and the rare Malleefowl. Ngarkat Conservation Park contains at least three different types of mallee vegetation communities and included within these are thirty rare and endangered species including Lowans Phebalium.



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CAMPING

There are some excellent camping grounds in Ngarkat Conservation Park. Permits are required for camping and can be obtained from the self-registration stations. Wood fires are not permitted in Ngarkat Conservation Park through the fire danger period. Please bring your own firewood to help conserve fallen timber. Liquid fuel and gas stoves are permitted except for on days of Total Fire Ban. Caravan Parks in Lamerook, Pinnaroo and Bordertown offer campsites and shower/toilet facilities.

	Camping	Campsite Self Registration	Toilets	Walking Trails
Pine Hut Soak	•	•	•	•
Scorpion Springs				•
The Pines	•			
Hensley Trigg				•
The Gums	•			
Pertendi Hut	•		•	•
Comet Bore	•			
Doggers Hut	•			
Mt Rescue				•
Rabbit Island Soak	•			
Red Bluff	•		•	•
Bucks Camp	•			
Box Flat	•			•
Baan Hill			•	
Orchid Hike				•



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CHECK THIS OUT!

Malleefowl, *Leipoa ocellata*

Malleefowl are well known for building large mounds in which they incubate their eggs. The male scrapes together the leaf litter surrounding the mound, then waits for rain. He buries the wet litter inside the mound of sand, where it starts to decompose. When conditions are right, the female lays the eggs within the mound. Relying on heat from the rotting litter and from the sun to warm the eggs, the male uses his 'thermometer' beak to check the temperature within the mound. Each day for two months, he tends the mound to maintain the right temperature by opening it up or closing it. When the chicks hatch, they must dig through a metre or more of sand to the surface before taking their first breath of fresh air, and then must fend for themselves – the adult Malleefowl provide no parental care! Tell that to your kids in the back seat if they think they've got it tough.

Left: Country Fire Service and the Department of Natural Resources work closely to prevent and manage wildfires in Ngarkat Conservation Park, including prescribed burning and track maintenance.

TRACKS & TRIPS

The rugged Border Track runs along the eastern side of the park along the SA/Victorian border. Driving conditions on the Border Track are tough so don't try this track without four-wheel driving experience. Travel with other vehicles if possible and make sure you have a full set of recovery gear.

Over the years, the Border Track has been really knocked around by vehicles. Through an agreement between Department of Natural Resources (DENR) and the Border Track Committee of Four Wheel Drive SA (FWDSA), a one-way system has been put in place to help protect the sand dunes, track surface and vegetation. The one-way section runs from the north east corner of Ngarkat Conservation Park to 29km south, to the junction of the Centre Track. Here it reverts to a two-way system. Vehicles must travel north to south on the one-way section which means approaching it from the Scorpion Springs end. Vehicles must use the Centre Track if heading northwards.

Four Wheel Drive SA, through its Border Track Committee, organises working bees along the track each year. Four-wheel drive clubs from far and wide spend a weekend of hard yakka, maintaining and restoring the track.

There is a choice of great campsites along the Border Track, including the Pines, The Gums and Doggers Hut. At the southern end of the Park you can head west along Shaugh Track to meet the Bordertown – Pinnaroo Road or to Red Bluff Track which intersects the Murrayville – Nhill Road. Alternatively, head to Bordertown by continuing south on the Border Track to Emu Flat Road and Senior Road through to Bordertown.

■ The Border Track

The Border Track is closed throughout the fire season because of high fire danger risk and limited emergency vehicle access. Call the Country Fire Service hotline 1300 362 361 for more information.

■ The Centre Track

The Border Track is closed throughout the fire season because of high fire danger risk and limited emergency vehicle access. Check the CFS hotline 1300 362 361.

■ Mount Rescue Loop

Enter the Park off Snowsells Road in the south west corner of the Park. Travel north along Bucks Camp Track then take a right along Rescue Track. Take a left at the signs to Mt Rescue, follow the signs almost to the top where it is a short walk to the trig point where you will get an amazing view. Back on the Rescue Track, travel east to the Baan Hill Track then south to the South Boundary Track, westwards to Gosse Hill then back to camp. There are bush camp sites at Bucks Camp and Rabbit Island Soak with a walking trail to Goose Hill.



Above: Border Country 4WD Club members at the Border Track Working Bee.

NGARKAT CONSERVATION PARK



FEEDBACK FROM READERS



We would appreciate any feedback readers of this guide have so that we can improve and build upon this guide for future editions:

- Tell us your best experiences, to be included in the next edition
- Tell us things that could be improved

Email to Limestone Coast Tourism
admin@thelimestonecoast.com

THE LIMESTONE COAST 4WD EXPLORERS GUIDE

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