

LAKE EYRE NATIONAL PARK

Visitor Information 2001



Lake Eyre salt pan
(Photo: G.Fitzpatrick)

Lake Eyre Flood History

Lake Eyre lies in the very heartland of the Australian Outback and the Australian identity. It is in some ways a mystical place, with overwhelming stark and evocative wilderness qualities. In summer it is a harsh and fearsome environment that is best avoided. In winter, a place where repressed urban spirits can soar under blue skies and warm sunshine. A giant basin where all the great inland rivers converge into a Lake of vast proportions, which can lay dry for many years on end, a vision of blinding white salt under an endless electric blue sky.

When the wild inland rivers flood Lake Eyre, it comes alive as a gigantic instant wetland system, boiling with newly breeding aquatic life and attracting water birds for thousands of kilometres, feeding renewed life into the desert.

Lake Eyre National Park covers an area of 8430 square kilometres. It has filled, or had water in it a number of times in the Twentieth Century, including 1956, 1971, 1974, 1976, 1989, 1997. The most extensive flooding occurred in 1974 when the lake filled to capacity with up to 34 cubic kilometres of water.

The main river systems which feed Lake Eyre include the inland river systems of the Diamantina/Warburton, the Thomson/Barcoo and Cooper, the Georgina/Eyre Creek, the Peake, Neales, Macumba, & Hamilton Rivers.

Situation Update at Lake Eyre – 26 November 2001 Situation Back to Normal

Currently very little water remains in either Lake Eyre North or Lake Eyre South. Certainly none that can be seen from shore. Hot early summer conditions are now beginning to cause the rapid evaporation of any small amounts of very saline water that are left on the lake surface. Unless there are further monsoonal rains over summer, Lake Eyre will return to its dry hard surface very soon.

The scene at Lake Eyre will, in all probability for the foreseeable future, be a bright, white salt surface under an electric blue sky.

For more details on the current situation, visitors should call the Desert Parks Hotline on 1800 816 078 for information.

When will the really deep water return to Lake Eyre? Who knows!!! It could be in a few weeks, next year or fifty years from now. Such is the nature of the wild, but unpredictable, outback desert rivers and climate. But keep a check on the Lake Eyre website and you will be the first to know when it happens.

Nature at its Wildest

The Lake Eyre Dragon and other small associated reptile species will now reclaim their homes near or on the lakes harsh salt surface as the remaining water quickly evaporates. It may now be a long time before we see Lake Eyre alive with water birds and aquatic life again.

Please also remember that Lake Eyre is a wild and remote place with blistering and severe temperatures over summer periods. People have died in this environment in recent times so avoid travelling in the area in summer and take precautions to be well equipped and prepared.

Travelling to Lake Eyre

Seeing Lake Eyre requires planning and preparation no matter which way you decide to travel. Here are some travel options to consider, **but remember avoid travelling in the hotter months from November to March inclusive each year.**

Option 1: Four Wheel Drive Vehicle

If you are fortunate to own a well-maintained four-wheel drive vehicle you can pack up your camping gear and provisions and make your way to Lake Eyre by road and track.

Option 2: Fly & Drive

If you are short on time and have a good budget, you can take a commercial flight from Adelaide to Coober Pedy (Kendall Airlines). At Coober Pedy hire a four wheel drive vehicle (Budget Rentacar Ph. (61 8) 8672 5333, and drive 227 kilometres to the lake shore at Halligan Bay via the settlement of William Creek. You can then camp at the lakeshore (bush camping, no facilities) or stay overnight at the William Creek Caravan Park Cabins or William Creek Hotel (Basic Outback Accommodation).

Vehicle Access into Lake Eyre National Park

There are two access tracks to the Lake. One goes north from Marree, through Muloorina Station (94km); the other turns off the Oodnadatta Track 7km south of William Creek (64km). Good views of Lake Eyre South can also be obtained from the Oodnadatta Track near Bopeachie, where the lake adjoins the road 90km west of Marree.

Viewing from the Air - Flights over the Lake

From William Creek:

Bookings: Wright's Air (Trevor Wright)
Phone: (61 8) 8670 7962
Website: <http://www.wrightsair.com.au>

From Marree:

Bookings: Oasis Cafe
Phone: (61 8) 8675 8352

Visitor Permits

Day (24 hour) visitor permits to Lake Eyre are \$18 per vehicle. They can be purchased from the **William Creek Store (Ph: (61 8) 8670 7746)** and **Marree Post Office Store (Ph: (61 8) 8675 8360)**.

For longer term travellers the Desert Parks Pass is also available. The pass is currently \$80, valid for 12 months and applies to all SA Desert Parks. The pass can also be purchased from the **Copley Tourist Stop (Ph: (61 8) 8675 2836)**, **Department for Environment and Heritage in Port Augusta**, or call the **Desert Parks Hotline** on **1800 816 078** for information on other agents Australia wide.

A self-registration station is also in operation on the Halligan Point access track to assist visitors to obtain day entry and camping permits. Day entry permits (\$10) and overnight camping permits (\$18) are available from this point.

Camping

Camping areas are available at ABC / Halligan Bay and near Muloorina Station. No facilities are currently available at Halligan Point but Toilets have recently been installed at the Muloorina Camping Area. Bookings are not required. Camping at Halligan Bay requires a \$18 day permit. A private camping area is available near Muloorina Station, with a donation camping fee.

A privately operated camp ground with facilities (showers / toilet) is also available at Coward Springs, 130km west of Marree on the Oodnadatta Track. Phone Coward Springs on (61 8) 8675 8336 or Email to pruecoulls@bigpond.com

Accommodation, camping and supplies are also available at:

William Creek Store & Caravan Park	Ph: (61 8) 8670 7746
William Creek Hotel	Ph: (61 8) 8670 7880
Marree Hotel	Ph (61 8) 8675 8344
Marree Caravan and Campers Park	Ph: (61 8) 8675 8371
Marree Town Centre Caravan Park	Ph: (61 8) 8675 8352
Roxby Downs Motor Inn	Ph: (61 8) 8671 0311
Leigh Creek Motel	Ph: (61 8) 8675 2025
Lyndhurst Hotel	Ph: (61 8) 8675 7781

Travel Safety

- You are responsible for your own safety. You should notify a responsible person of your itinerary and expected date / time of return. Please note neither the police, NPWSA or local people can offer a safety logging service. The responsible person should be someone you can rely on.
- If you breakdown, do not leave your vehicle. Stay with your vehicle at all times. If a search is started, it is much easier to find a vehicle than a wandering person.
- You should ensure that you carry adequate supplies of fuel, food and water in case you get stranded.
- Do not attempt to access the area following rain.
- Access to Halligan Bay from the Oodnadatta Track is 4WD only.
- Access from Muloorina to the Lake (Level Post Bay) is not recommended for 2WD.

- Use caution at creek crossings and washouts.
- We recommend you carry adequate communication (eg. satellite phone, HF single side band radio). Normal mobile telephones do not work in this area.
- Please ensure your vehicle is mechanically sound and roadworthy and you carry appropriate spare parts (including tyre repair equipment).
- Marree has limited medical and mechanical facilities, A higher level of facilities of this type are available at Leigh Creek or Roxby Downs.

Information and Road Condition Reports

Before you leave to visit the park, we suggest you contact us on:

Freecall **1800 816 078** to check the current track conditions.

Transport SA Road Report **1300 361 033** for general outback main road conditions.

The Northern and Western South Australia Road Condition Report is available at:

<http://www.transport.sa.gov.au/northern.htm>

Desert Parks Contacts:

Wendy Smith and **Pearce Dougherty** on the **Desert Parks Hotline:**

Phone: **1800 816 078**

Fax: **(61 8) 8648 5301**

Email: smith.wendyj@saugov.sa.gov.au

dougherty.pearce@saugov.sa.gov.au

Email Desert Parks Direct:

desertparks@saugov.sa.gov.au

Address:

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