

Gawler Ranges National Park 162,875ha



Gawler Ranges, credit SATC

With its ancient ranges, deep gullies, seasonal waterfalls and rocky gorges, the Gawler Ranges National Park is a majestic, natural wilderness to explore.

The Gawler Ranges National Park is a special place where history, conservation and Aboriginal culture come together.

Proclaimed as a national park in 2002, the landscape teems with wildlife and protects rare and threatened plants and animals, including Crimson Mallee and the Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby. The park is famous for the magnificent Organ Pipes, formed over 1500 million years ago as a result of volcanic eruptions, but you'll find equally stunning rocky outcrops at Yandinga Falls and Kolay Mirica Falls.

The Gawler Ranges sustains the living culture and stories of the Gawler Ranges Aboriginal Community. Barngarla, Kokatha and Wirangu – the Gawler Ranges people – have over 30,000 years of strong and ongoing connection to the country.

The Gawler Ranges and the surrounding landscape is fundamental to Aboriginal law, culture and beliefs. Traditional ceremonies and practices are carried out in the park to this day.

The Gawler Ranges people and the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources work together to encourage people to visit this beautiful place. They also manage and protect the:

- strong and ongoing culture of the Gawler Ranges people
- extensive and diverse vegetation, and animals of significance
- 1,500 million years of weathered landscape
- rich pastoral heritage.

"We welcome visitors to our country.

Gawler Ranges People ask you to respect this ancient landscape.

Everything you see is important to us."

Howard Richards
Gawler Ranges People

Gawler Ranges National Park is a co-managed national park.

Co-management arrangements recognise that Aboriginal traditional knowledge and land management practices can inform and improve contemporary approaches to science, management of parks and land and enhance the experiences of visitors to parks.

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When to visit

In late autumn and winter the park is green and cool, perfect for campfires and bushwalks. After rain, the creeks flow and most pools are alive with aquatic life. From late winter into spring, the park teems with wildflowers in incredible shapes, sizes and colours.

In spring you can see the brilliant flowers of our local Crimson Mallee, and the plains are carpeted with native grasses and bluebush. Summer can be very hot, but if you're prepared to work around the weather you'll have calm days, extraordinary sunsets, and clear views of the starry night.

Fees

Fees apply to enter and to camp in Gawler Ranges National Park. Failure to display a valid permit on the designated vehicle may result in a fine. Purchase day and camping permits from the park self-registration station at the main park entrance.

You will need the correct change. Check visitor and camping fees and buy park passes online at parks.sa.gov.au.

Opening hours

Gawler Ranges National Park is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The park may be closed on days of extreme weather risk (such as fire or flood) or for other land management reasons.

Getting there

A 4WD is recommended to enjoy all of the highlights of the park, although in dry weather much of the park can be accessed by high clearance 2WD.

Gawler Ranges National Park is located in South Australia's spectacular southern Gawler Ranges, approximately six hours drive northwest from Adelaide. The park is 40km north of the Eyre Highway and road access is from Iron Knob, Kimba, Wudinna or Minnipa. The Gawler Ranges are a great stopover for travellers crossing the Eyre Peninsula en route to Perth.

Things to see and do

Renowned for its unique landscapes and stunning wildlife, Gawler Ranges National Park offers fantastic opportunities for sightseeing, photography, 4WD touring, and the pleasure of bush camping under the stars.

Rangers recommend:

- Sitting around the campfire and sharing a meal or a drink and enjoying the remote tranquillity.
- Rolling out your swag or sleeping bag under the million stars that feel so close you could touch them
- Walking in to the Organ Pipes to admire the most dramatic rock formations in the park. Stand quietly and see if you can spot any faces looking back at you.
- Counting the many different types of animals you meet as you travel around the park. It's not all kangaroos and emus here – keep an eye out for wombats, goannas and lizards too.

"...you can really tell the difference here. You might find it a little bit different – relaxing.

The smells. A lot more birds and bigger kangaroos ... come and enjoy it "

Clifford Woodford - Gawler Ranges People

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Driving

Although the best way to explore this magnificent park is in a 4WD, in good weather you can visit much of the park in a high clearance 2WD (see park map). You'll see lots of wildlife on the tracks so look out for emus and kangaroos, especially at sunrise and sunset. Take the drive out to Conical Hill, the views out over ancient sand dunes are stunning.

When driving in Gawler Ranges National Park, please observe all track and safety signs. Standard road rules apply when driving anywhere in the park, including the laws for speed limits, drink driving, vehicle registration and seat belts. Do not take your vehicle off the designated tracks. Precious habitat and indigenous sites can be damaged, and wildlife threatened, by off track driving.

Plants and wildlife

The Gawler Ranges is the middle ground between southern mallee country and the arid zone to the north of South Australia. There are over 400 different plant species in the park and many are at the extreme of their geographical distribution. Others are found nowhere else, such as the Gawler Ranges Hop Bush and the Gawler Ranges Grevillea.

The Gawler Ranges is a haven for brightly-coloured wildlife such as the Australian Ringneck Parrot and Superb Fairy-wren. There are many rare and threatened animals in the park, including Australia's only protected population of the Short-tailed Grasswren. This shy creature lives on hilltops, ridges and slopes, relying on spiny shrubs and bushes for protection from predators.

If you move about the park quietly and keep your binoculars handy, you may be rewarded with a glimpse of a Yellow-footed Rock-wallaby, a Southern Hairy-nosed Wombat, a Central Long-eared Bat, or a Major Mitchell Cockatoo. In the afternoons it is common to see sand goannas crossing the tracks as they head about their business.

Bushwalking

The open landscape of the Gawler Ranges lends itself to informal walking through the true wilderness of this grandiose landscape. There are only a few marked walking trails in the Park. The trail from the Waganny campground takes you on an easy to moderate walk through woodlands and grasslands to a spectacular rocky outcrop with magnificent 180 degree views. Allow for 45 minutes each way.

The Organ Pipes walk requires a reasonable level of fitness as there are some loose rocks and slippery sections. The walk takes you through open eucalypt woodland to a magnificent natural amphitheatre surrounded by ancient rock formations. Allow for 30 minutes each way and take plenty of water.

There is only limited signage in the park, including some basic map signs at the self-registration station. Please wear clothing appropriate for the weather conditions. Sturdy shoes, long pants, a long sleeved shirt and a hat are the recommended minimum.

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History and heritage

Many local farming families have strong connections to this park as their descendants first arrived in this region in the 1850s and eked out a living. Even while this land was used for farming, the Gawler Ranges People always maintained their cultural responsibilities, often employed on Paney Station as shearers, trappers and stockmen.

Paney Homestead, Old Paney Homestead and Pondanna Outstation are reminders of early station life and the enormous struggles met in this remote and variable country. These sites and relics are stark reminders of human hardship, conflict and survival.

Pondanna Outstation has been restored by the Friends of Gawler Ranges and is available for short term stays. For more information and bookings please call (+61 8) 8680 2090.

Camping

Pitch a tent amid rocky gorges and valleys, at the foot of a granite hill, or on a grassy plain at one of our seven campgrounds. Relax under the stars at night and wake to the sound of birdsong, and the fragrant scent of the Australian bush.

Three of our campgrounds are accessible by high clearance 2WD in good weather, and Scrubby Peak and Waganny are also suitable for caravans and camper trailers in dry weather.

	Scrubby Peak	Waganny	Chillunie	Yandinga	Mattera	Kokodo	Kolay Hut
Description	Spacious & set amongst the mallee.	Great views to the Blue Sturts.	At the base of Mt Fairview.	Nestled in a gully.	Open valley surrounded by hills.	Camping in the mallee scrub.	Views of Mount Fairview.
Campsites are designated	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Access	2WD*	2WD	4WD	2WD	4WD	4WD	4WD
Caravan accessible	Y*	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Toilets	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y
Bring own drinking water	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Generator (9am – 9pm)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Campfires (in shared fire pits)	-	Y	-	Y	-	-	Y
Campfires (general)	Y	-	Y	-	Y	Y	-
Bring own firewood	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

*Recommended for high clearance 2WD in good weather only. Caravan access 4WD only.

Important information for campers:

- do not camp outside designated campgrounds
- fire restrictions apply
- do not leave fires unattended and ensure all fires are fully extinguished before leaving campsite
- please leave the park as you found it, and take all rubbish with you
- bring your own firewood, the collection of firewood (either dead or alive) is prohibited
- always carry adequate supplies of drinking water - do not rely on tanks or creeks for water.

Mobile phone coverage

Mobile phone coverage can be patchy and unreliable in national parks, especially if you are in a low-lying area (such as a gorge or a gully). To get a signal, you may have to drive to one of the higher areas in the park.

Gawler Ranges National Park 162875ha



Know before you go

Every national park is different. Each has its own challenging environment and it is important to understand how to stay safe while enjoying all the park has to offer. Please:

- respect exclusion zones, geological, cultural and heritage sites
- leave your pets at home
- take your rubbish with you
- camp only in designated campgrounds
- keep to defined vehicle tracks
- firearms are prohibited
- do not swim or paddle in waterholes or springs
- do not feed or disturb animals, or remove native plants
- be considerate of other park users.

Fire safety

This park may be closed on days of extreme fire danger. Listen to your local radio station for broadcasts, or call the CFS Hotline on 1300 362 361.

On days of total fire ban:

- all wood and solid fuel fires are prohibited
- the use of liquid and gas appliances is prohibited
- the use of generators is prohibited

During the fire ban season (usually from mid-November to mid-April):

- all wood fires and solid fuel fires are prohibited
- the use of liquid and gas appliances is permitted
- the use of generators is permitted

Outside the fire ban season (usually from mid-April to mid-November):

- small cooking fires are permitted in designated campgrounds, if fire pits are provided please use them
- the use of liquid and gas appliances is permitted
- the use of generators is permitted
- BYO firewood, it is illegal to gather firewood in the park.

4WD safety

- Keep to defined vehicle tracks at all times.
- Take extreme care when driving in the park – be aware of blind corners, crests and narrow tracks.
- In some parts of the park, driving conditions may be boggy. Know what to do if you get bogged and always carry a long-handled shovel.
- Make sure you have the right tyre pressure for the terrain, as per the manufacturer's instructions.

Walking safety

- Keep to defined walking trails at all times – don't try to take short cuts or wander off the trails.
- Pay attention to the weather – be extra careful in extreme weather conditions.
- Carry enough food and drinking water to be self-sufficient. The hotter the conditions, the more water you will need.
- Do not rely on tanks or creeks in the park for drinking water.
- Carry a map of the park at all times.
- Wear sturdy shoes, a hat and sunscreen, and make sure you have appropriate clothing for the weather conditions.
- For longer walks you should notify an emergency contact person who will know if you don't return at the designated time. Rangers are not available to know when walkers return.

Take care

- Feral bees in the park are attracted to water sources in summer
- Snakes and spiders also live in the park, some of them venomous. Generally they are more afraid of you than you of them. Be mindful when moving and lifting objects.

Contact

Emergency: 000

Gawler Ranges National Park
Phone: (+61 8) 8648 1883

General park enquiries: (+61 8) 8204 1910
DEWNR.CustomerServiceCentre@sa.gov.au
parks.sa.gov.au | facebook.com/parkssa

Friends of Gawler Ranges National Park

The Friends of Gawler Ranges National Park is a community-based group of volunteers who work to protect, preserve and maintain the natural, historical and cultural heritage in the park. Find out more about volunteering in parks at parks.sa.gov.au.