

Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre National Park

1,348,837ha



Credit: Jan McKenzie

Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre National Park presents a vast and contrasting landscape including both the north and south sections of Kati Thanda (Lake Eyre) and part of the Tirari Desert.

Australia's largest salt lake, Kati Thanda has a catchment area from three states and the Northern Territory. The lake itself is huge, covering an area 144km long and 77km wide, and at 15.2 metres below sea level, it is the lowest point in Australia. Flood waters cover the lake once every eight years on average. However, the lake has only filled to capacity three times in the last 160 years.

You may feel a sense of isolation standing on the dry lake edge and seeing nothing as far as the eye can see – yet with heavy rains and the right conditions the lake comes dramatically to life. When there's water in the lake, waterbirds descend in the thousands, including pelicans, silver gulls, red-necked avocets, banded stilts and gull-billed terns. It becomes a breeding site, teeming with species that are tolerant of salinity.

Away from the lake, the park features red sand dunes and mesas. They rise from salty claypans and stone-strewn tablelands.

When to visit

The best time to visit Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre National Park is between April and October. You are more likely to see water in the lake during these cooler months. In summer, temperatures in the area can soar to more than 50 degrees Celsius.

Opening hours

The park is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with the exception of Halligan Bay Point, which is closed from December 1 to March 15 in line with the Simpson Desert annual summer closure.

Getting there

Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre National Park is located 60km east of William Creek and 95km north-west of Marree. The park is accessible via two pastoral tracks, known as public access routes. Both cross properties and are suitable for 4WD vehicles only. You should travel in convoy and carry reserves of fuel, water and food. It is best to avoid travelling in the hotter months, from November to March.

From William Creek: Travel south-east on the Oodnadatta Track for 7km to the access track to Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre National Park. Travel along this track to Halligan Bay Point via Armistice Bore and ABC Bay.

From Marree: The access track turnoff is 3km west from Marree. The track runs 94km to Level Post Bay via Muloorina Station.

Mobile phone coverage

There is no mobile phone coverage in the park.

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Traditional owners

Kati Thanda is a very special place to everyone who bears witness to it, particularly the Arabana People who were living around the Kati Thanda region at the time of Aboriginal-European contact. Aboriginal people have been living around Kati Thanda for thousands of years, and it plays a central role in many of their stories and songs. This park is co-managed by an Advisory Board, comprising members of the Arabana people and representatives of the South Australian Government.

Friends of the Simpson Desert Parks

The Friends of Simpson Desert Parks is a community-based group of volunteers who work to protect and develop the natural and cultural heritage in the parks. Find out more about volunteering in parks at parks.sa.gov.au.

Fees

Fees apply to enter Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre National Park. Failure to display a valid permit on the designated vehicle may result in a fine.

Buy day permits at the self-registration station on the track to Halligan Bay Point. You will need the correct change.

Desert Parks Pass

A Desert Parks Pass is a 12-month permit that allows camping and entry to Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre National Park, as well as a number of other parks. The Desert Parks Pass is issued on a per vehicle basis. It includes the maps required to visit the area, information on the park, and requirements for safe travel through the South Australian outback.

Check visitor and camping fees and buy a Desert Parks Pass online at parks.sa.gov.au.

Things to see

You'll be overwhelmed by the vastness of this park. The whiteness of the salt lake and the surrounding low red dunes of the desert give you a true sense of the wilderness and remoteness of outback Australia.

If you are lucky enough to visit Kati Thanda during a flood, you may see the lake hosting a chaotic community of breeding birds. Many of these birds have flown thousands of kilometres, from as far as China and Japan. Under the water, bony bream, shrimp and perch begin their own breeding and feeding frenzies.

After heavy local rain the area becomes a blaze of living colour edged by verdant green. When these plants burst into flower, their nectar and seed attract insects and birds.

Rangers recommend:

- Seeing the vast lake by air (book a flight from one of the neighbouring towns).
- Lying in your swag at night, seeing the stars as you never have before.
- Photographing the spectacular lake and desert country at sunrise and sunset.

Things to do

A flight over the lake when there is water is an extraordinary sight. This huge lake attracts birds from thousands of kilometres away – how they know there will be a feast for them on arrival remains a mystery.

If you're there when the lake is dry and cracked, take a walk along the shore and look at its vast salty crust. You'll begin to understand the adaptability of the living creatures that fill the lake when water arrives.

Star gazing at night is a treat, with no pollution and clear skies you'll be able to see the stars and planets as you never have before. Satellites and shooting stars are commonly seen.

Camping

There is a campground at Halligan Bay Point on the shores of the lake. It is an exposed, flat campground with limited facilities – two toilets and two picnic shelters. However, if there is water in the lake, it can feel like beach camping. There is also a privately owned campground at Muloorina Station. No fires are permitted in the park.

Contact

Emergency: 000

Port Augusta Office
(+61 8) 8648 5300

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

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Know before you go

The Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre National Park is part of a harsh, desert environment. The summer heat can be dangerous, and rain can quickly change the environment making the terrain difficult to navigate. For current access and road condition information, see the latest Desert Parks Bulletin at parks.sa.gov.au.

Although the Arabana people prefer that no-one walks on the lake because of their spiritual beliefs, walking on the lake's edge is permitted providing that the local environment is not damaged.

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:

- leave your pets at home
- respect the lake – do not drive upon it
- do not feed or disturb animals (especially dingoes) or remove native plants
- ensure your 4WD is fully prepared with adequate spares, supplies, water and emergency provisions, and know how to fully operate your vehicle
- bring a satellite phone, EPIRB and/or UHF radio
- do not leave the designated tracks in your vehicle
- maintain the 40km/h speed limit. The public access routes leading to the park have a 60km/h speed limit.
- take your rubbish with you.

Park maps on your mobile

Download free maps of this park for your mobile device from [Avenza PDF Maps](#) while you have mobile phone coverage. Used within the app, the maps allow you to calculate distances and locate yourself within the park (GPS coverage required).

Fire safety

- No fires are permitted in the park. Please use liquid fuel or gas stoves only.
- On total fire ban days, all fires (including liquid and gas) are prohibited in the park.

Driving safety

You are responsible for your own safety. Notify a responsible person of your itinerary and expected date and time of return.

This park is 4WD accessible only. Up-to-date road conditions can be checked via the far northern and western road report, phone 1300 361 033. Alternatively, call the Desert Parks Administration Officer on (+61 8) 8648 5300.

- Before you leave home ensure that your vehicle is roadworthy and that you are carrying appropriate spare parts for most contingencies – including a strong jack, and if possible, two spare wheels.
- Carry adequate supplies of fuel, food and water in case of stranding.
- Use only public access routes and designated camping areas.
- Carry a satellite phone or an HF radio. Normal mobile phones do not work in most outback areas. It is also a good idea to carry an EPIRB.
- Do not leave your vehicle in the event of a breakdown.
- Check the conditions of outback roads before leaving the nearest major town.
- Take note of where petrol stations are en route and their hours of operation.
- Take frequent rest breaks and change drivers regularly.
- Obey road closure signs and remain on main roads. Substantial fines apply for travelling off track. Deviating from the roads can create tyre marks that last for decades.
- Do not drive on the lake. The seemingly hard surface can often hide soft mud underneath making it easy to get stuck, but hard to get out of.

Dingo safety

To remain safe and to keep dingoes wild, please:

- store rubbish, food, shoes and leather items securely and never feed dingoes – they are naturally lean animals
- always stay close to your children
- never encourage, excite, or run away from dingoes and if attacked, aggressively defend yourself.

No internet?
No worries.



Our maps are geo-enabled meaning you will always have your location dot no matter where you are*

*when used in conjunction with the FREE Avenza app and smart phone