

# Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park 129,228ha



A rugged and remote park in the north Flinders Ranges, Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges is a park of contrasts, with deep gorges and chasms, towering mountains, tree-lined creeks and freshwater springs.

Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park was proclaimed in 1970. The park forms part of the traditional country of the Adnyamathanha people and is rich with cultural significance. The spectacular terrain in Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park can be explored by the many hiking trails and via the 4WD tracks that lead you deep into the heart of the rugged landscape. The park is a haven for many rare and endangered plants and animals.

## Getting there

Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park is 660km north of Adelaide, 100km east of Leigh Creek. All main access roads to the park are gravel and are suitable for 2WD vehicles, however most of the tracks within the park are 4WD accessible only.

Please check road conditions before leaving home. Closures may apply during and after wet weather. Up-to-date road conditions can be checked via the far northern and western road report (1300 361 033) or park headquarters (+61 8 8648 4829).

## Traditional owners

Since 2010, Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park has been co-managed by the traditional owners – the Adnyamathanha people – and the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources. This partnership arrangement allows for shared responsibility and decision-making in the strategic management of the Park.

The Adnyamathanha community manages the Nantawarrina Indigenous Protected Area, which adjoins the park's southern boundary. Access is by permit from the community. For further information, phone (+61 8) 8648 3764.

## Traditional Use Zone

The cultural use zone by Lake Frome is closed to the general public from 3pm-5am daily, to allow hunting in this area.

## Opening hours

The park is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

## Fees

Fees apply to camp in Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park.

Failure to display a valid permit on the designated vehicle may result in a fine.

You can buy camping permits from Balcanoona Park headquarters or from the self-registration stations near most camping areas. You will need the correct change.

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## Things to see and do

This is a national park rich in Aboriginal and European heritage. Take some time to learn about the fascinating history of this area. As you explore the creeks, freshwater springs, gorges and mountains of Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park, you'll see unusual and endangered plant and animal species and whole populations of yellow footed rock wallabies, or *andu*, in the Adnyamathanha language.

### Rangers recommend:

- Visiting Weetootla Gorge and enjoying its many hiking trails and 800 million year old rocks.
- Taking the Monarch Mine Hike past an abandoned copper mine.
- Exploring the Wortupa Loop Track in your 4WD, admiring the views of Mount McKinlay, The Wall, and the chasms of Blue Range.
- Enjoying an interpretive walk around the Indigenous carving and painting sites.

## Driving

Much of Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park is accessible by 4WD only. The Wortupa Loop Track is an 80-kilometre return journey from Balcanoona. It takes approximately five hours to complete and you can explore the park's rich Aboriginal and European heritage. You could see animals such as euros, red kangaroos, emus, and wedge-tailed eagles along the way.

Views of Mount McKinlay, The Wall, Mount John Roberts, and the chasms of Blue Range are a highlight along the one-way section of track between Gammon Yards and Lochness Well. There is also a 4WD track out to Lake Frome.

The only area of the park accessible to 2WD is the track to Weetootla Gorge. 4WD tours to significant sites are available from Arkaroola.

## Walking

The rugged hills of the north Flinders Ranges can often only be accessed along the stony beds of creeks that have cut their way through the ranges. Explore one of the linear hikes or create your own adventure by following sections of the different walking trails. All of the walking trails expose 800 million year old rocks that form a huge basin under the quartzite and sandstone of the Gammon Ranges.

### Weetootla Hike Network

Three trails make up the Weetootla Hike Network. They can be walked as one-way linear hikes or as the circuits shown on the map. You can access them from three places in the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park:

- **Weetootla Campground Trailhead** – 7.1km from Balcanoona. Turn off the Arkaroola Road at 1.9km from the signpost at Balcanoona. The track is 2WD accessible.
- **McTaggart Track** – 18.2km from Balcanoona. Turn off the Arkaroola Road at 8.2km from the signpost at Balcanoona. Continue approximately 10km along the 4WD track to reach the checkpoint.
- **Grindells Hut Trailhead** – 26.5km from Balcanoona. Turn off the Arkaroola Road at 8.2km from the signpost at Balcanoona. Continue for 17km along the signposted 4WD track.

The Walking Trails Support Group maintains these trails. Find detailed trail information at [walkingtrailssupportgroup.org.au](http://walkingtrailssupportgroup.org.au).

Hike (moderate)	Balcanoona Creek Hike	2.5 hours one way	6km one way
<i>A moderate hike is suitable for bushwalkers with an average level of fitness. These trails can be any length and may include moderate inclines and irregular surfaces.</i>	This hike meanders through the Balcanoona Range to the Weetootla Gorge and its network of hikes. The hike passes by Grindells Hut.		
	<b>Monarch Mine Hike</b>	2.5 hours one way	6.8km one way
	This hike takes you past an abandoned copper mine and over shale and magnesite hills.		
	<b>McTaggart Track Hike</b>	3 hours one way	7.6km one way
	A longer hike along the McTaggart Track, can be done in conjunction with one of the hikes above.		

Time is generously estimated for an average walking speed of 3km per hour. Allow extra time for resting and sightseeing.

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## Camping

Go bush camping in the heart of the South Australian outback. There are pit toilets at Grindells Hut and Weetootla Gorge campgrounds. There are no facilities at other campgrounds. Public toilet and shower facilities are available at Balcanoona (park headquarters).

**Grindells Hut (4WD, camper trailers)** – These campsites are located along the creek below Grindells Hut, a one-hour drive from Balcanoona, via Wortupa Loop Track. Camp in designated sites with a fire pit/barbecue only. Public toilets.

**Mainwater Well (4WD with camper trailers)** – A small camping area alongside the tea-tree lined Mainwater Creek. This camp provides a great base for exploring the northern areas of the park and for hikers to explore Mainwater Creek. A two-hour drive north-west of Balcanoona, via Wortupa Loop Track.

**Arcoona (4WD or high clearance 2WD)** – This camp is a great stop for people travelling through the park, and a base for hikers exploring Arcoona Bluff and the Gammon Plateau. A one and a half hour drive from Balcanoona via the Copley-Balcanoona and Umberatana roads.

**Weetootla Gorge (Wiriti Urdla in the Adnyamathanha language) (2WD with small caravans)** – This campsite lies along Balcanoona Creek among mallee, native pines and bullock bush. The campground is 20 minutes from Balcanoona, travel 2km towards Arkaroola and then 5km along the signposted track.

The campground itself is approximately 4km after the self-registration station. Designated campsites are set out adjacent to the toilets, and continue one kilometre further on, near the Weetootla Gorge trailhead.

**Italowie Gap (Ithala Awi in the Adnyamathanha language) (2WD with caravans)** – This campground is located on the north-eastern side of the Gap, off the access track behind the self-registration station. These sites are set among wattles and river red gums near the beginning of the Italowie Gorge hike. A toilet will be built in this location soon.

## Accommodation

There are three self-contained accommodation options in Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges, so you can experience the park from a comfortable home base in all seasons. Bookings are required: (+61 8) 8648 5300.

**Grindells Hut (4WD)** – Built in the early 1850s, Grindells Hut is in the heart of the park with spectacular 180-degree views of the ranges. The stone hut sleeps eight people and has three bedrooms. It has solar lighting, gas hot water, shower facilities, and a kitchen equipped with a fridge and cooking facilities.

**Balcanoona Shearers Quarters (2WD)** – The shearer's quarters have nine bedrooms located around the verandah, a communal lounge and a fully equipped kitchen. They sleep up to 19 people. You can book individual bedrooms, or the entire quarters. There are showers in the main building and toilets a very short walk outside.

**Nudlamutana Hut (2WD)** – Nudlamutana Hut is located in a valley near the boundary between the park and the Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary. It is a perfect base for exploring the walking trails and drives in the park. Nudlamutana Hut sleeps four people in one double bed and bunks. There's a fully equipped kitchen and a combustion stove to keep you warm on those cold winter nights. The shower and toilet is located a short walk outside.

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## 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 geological and heritage sites
- leave your pets at home (a proactive fox baiting program is ongoing in the national park)
- take your rubbish with you and bury toilet waste away from watercourses
- don't camp or leave your vehicle in a creek bed or floodway – these areas are prone to flash flooding at any time of the year
- camp only in designated areas
- keep to defined vehicle tracks
- do not bring firearms into the park
- 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.

## Park maps on your mobile

Download free maps of this park for your mobile device from [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

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 or park headquarters on (+61 8) 8648 4829.

- Gas appliances may be used during fire restrictions.
- No fires, gas appliances, or fuel stoves are permitted on days of Total Fire Ban.
- Camp fires are permitted at other times
- Bring your own firewood to help preserve the natural habitat.
- Collecting firewood from within the park is not allowed. No chainsaws.
- Ensure that all fires are extinguished before leaving the site.

## Bushwalking safety

- Ensure you take the relevant topographic maps (1:50 000), compass, and adequate supplies of food and water with you.
- Discuss your route with a ranger before you arrive.
- Inform a responsible person of your proposed route and expected time of return.
- Keep to defined walking trails and follow the trail markers (visitors are required to fill in trip intention forms outlining the route they plan to take).
- Wear sturdy shoes, a hat and sunscreen.
- Carry sufficient food and drinking water.
- Ensure you have appropriate wet weather clothing as weather conditions can change quickly.

## Mobile phone coverage

There is no mobile phone coverage in this park. A UHF emergency radio is located at Grindells Hut. Use channel six for Balcanoona Station or channel eight for Arkaroola Station.

## 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 park. Find out more about volunteering in parks at [parks.sa.gov.au](http://parks.sa.gov.au).

### Contact

#### Emergency: 000

Balcanoona Park Headquarters  
(+61 8) 8648 4829

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

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