

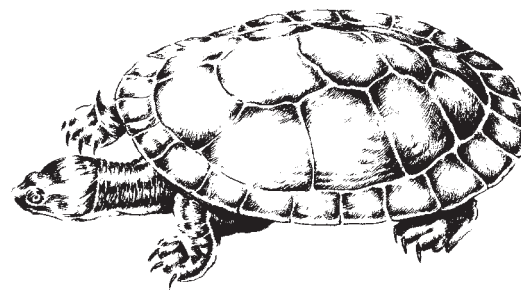
Innamincka Regional Reserve and Coongie Lakes National Park



Innamincka Regional Reserve

A reserve of contrasts, Innamincka Regional Reserve covers over 1.3 million hectares of land ranging from expanses of gibber rises to the thriving wetlands of the Cooper Creek system. The area was proclaimed a reserve in 1988 to protect the integrity of the internationally significant wetlands. The regional reserve classification permits conservation, grazing, petroleum exploration and mining, and managed recreation use to continue side by side, making it the first reserve of its type. The region has a remarkable cultural history, as the traditional home for Aboriginal groups including the Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people, as the scene for Burke and Wills' ill-fated expedition, and home to an Australian Inland Mission.

Visitors can enjoy Innamincka Regional Reserve by camping along the shady banks of the Cooper, fishing and canoeing in its cool waters. Take a walk along the creek to really experience this oasis in the desert, or discover the area by vehicle, visiting the many historic sites or studying the fascinating geology of the region. After all this you can then sit back for a well-earned drink and get to know the locals at the popular hotel.



Cooper Creek Turtle
Emydura macquarii emottii

Coongie Lakes National Park

Coongie Lakes is listed as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance. The waterbird diversity is high for an arid wetland and is a significant feeding, resting and breeding site for an enormous number of birds that migrate to the area. The contrast from sand dunes to vast wetlands is remarkable. The park is a true wilderness for visitors seeking a place of solitude to enjoy nature.

Take advantage of the wilderness – camp, canoe, enjoy photography, bushwalk, discover evidence of Aboriginal occupation and generally relax in the calm surrounds of the wetlands. The wetlands are a paradise for birdwatchers, with hundreds to thousands of birds in the region.

Motorboats, camp fires, fishing and generators are not permitted in the park, ensuring a genuine wilderness experience.

Heritage

Aboriginal culture and history

Cooper Creek was a major Aboriginal trade route, and the name Innamincka is believed to have derived from Aboriginal legend. Some say it means 'dark hole', others say it means 'meeting place'.

The Coongie Lakes and associated wetlands are a spiritual site for Aboriginal people and were crucial to maintenance of the Indigenous populations due to the availability of resources, particularly following flood events.

The Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people lived in this region for thousands of years, taking advantage of the prolific birdlife and seasonal wildlife. The groups retain a strong interest and presence in the area.



Government
of South Australia



Settlement

The town of Innamincka began as a police camp in 1882 and soon became a thriving commercial centre, with a hotel, police station, store, boarding house, blacksmith's shop and school. The Elizabeth Symon Nursing Home was opened in 1928. It was part of a network of outback hospitals set up by John Flynn and run by the Australian Inland Mission to provide medical services for people living in isolated areas. It closed in 1951 due to the declining population. In July 1994, following major restoration works, it was reopened as the Innamincka Regional Reserve park headquarters and information centre and is listed as a heritage site. The interpretive display is open to the public daily and gives insight into the natural history of the area, Aboriginal people and their culture, European settlement, outback nursing and the history of the building and the people who worked there.

Exploration

Innamincka was geographically destined to play a major role in the early exploration of Australia's interior. Its central location and reliable water supply made it an ideal base camp or resting place for expeditions to the north and west and later, cattle drives from the east and south. Riverbeds with their canopies of shade offered mid-summer relief for travellers and stock. There were plentiful supplies of fish and game most of the year.

Captain Charles Sturt became the first European to set eyes on these wetlands in 1844-45. Only fifteen years later, Burke and Wills died here. Their companion, John King, was eventually rescued by Alfred Howitt, only after receiving help from local Aboriginal people. Burke's Memorial, Wills' Memorial and King's Site are all found in the Innamincka Regional Reserve, while the Dig Tree is a short drive into Queensland.

Pastoralism

Between 1870 and 1890 the north-east of South Australia saw the arrival of sheep and cattle, leading to the establishment of the pastoral industry at the turn of the century. Sidney Kidman bought Coongie Station in 1902 and Innamincka Station in 1908. The two properties were merged in 1930 under a pastoral lease to become a productive cattle fattening and horse breeding run. Innamincka Station now covers 13 800 square kilometres of the Innamincka Regional Reserve and is still leased by the S Kidman & Co pastoral company. Early in 1996, Coongie Lakes and Cullyamurra Waterhole were fenced and cattle excluded from these areas.

Petroleum exploration

Since the first gas discovery in 1963, the Cooper Basin has become the largest onshore hydrocarbon production region in Australia. Innamincka Regional Reserve covers approximately 30% of the South Australian portion of the basin. Santos and other companies hold the licences to explore for and extract oil and gas from the basin. Hydrocarbons are processed at Moomba, 90 km south-west of Innamincka and from there gas is sent via pipeline to customers in South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland and the ACT. The latest development has been in geothermal exploration, which uses the hot rocks underground to produce energy. Coongie Lakes National Park was proclaimed in 2005 to protect the Ramsar-listed wetlands. Exploration and mining is not permitted in Coongie Lakes National Park.

Flora

Northern River Red Gums and coolibahs cover the banks and floodout areas of Cooper Creek, which flows into the Coongie Lakes system. Lignum often forms dense thickets beneath the River Red Gums. The gibber country has sparse vegetation, except for Mitchell-grass and some other grasses and herbs. The drainage lines are filled with Red Mulga and Gidgee.

Dunes in this area can be as high as fifteen metres. Dune vegetation varies, but visitors may see Whitewood, Narrow-leaf Hop-bush, Sandhill Wattle and Sandhill Cane-grass. Soil type and how often the area is inundated determines the vegetation type from grasses and herbs to low open woodlands.

Fauna

Over two hundred bird species have been recorded in the Innamincka and Coongie Lakes region. The wetlands are an important habitat for birds moving between northern and southern Australia, and in some cases, internationally. Species seen include wetland birds such as Australian Pelicans and Red-necked Avocets, and desert birds like Inland Dotterels and Gibberbirds.

The Coongie Lakes area is also known for attracting large congregations of birds – over 70 000 birds have been observed at one time. Twenty-four of the bird species in the area are classified as rare, vulnerable or endangered in South Australia. Ten wetland species and 45 waterbird species are known to breed in the area.

Many species of native animals are present in the parks including Dingoes, Red Kangaroos, turtles, and Water-rats, which are a delight to watch as they swim and dive along the banks of the Cooper. Snakes are rarely seen, especially during the cooler months of April to September, but should always be treated with respect and left alone. The area is home to the world's most venomous snake, the Inland Taipan.

Feral animals including donkeys, camels and pigs also inhabit the park.

Facilities

The township of Innamincka has campgrounds, a hotel, homestay, store, petrol/fuel, toilets, showers, phones, ranger station, information centre, rubbish disposal, and mechanic and tyre repairs.

Good camping sites can be found close to Innamincka at the Town Common, Policemans and Ski Beach - all have toilets. Cullyamurra Waterhole has lots of space and several toilets, while Minkie Waterhole and Kings Site are smaller with no toilet facilities.

In Coongie Lakes National Park, camp sites with toilet facilities are located at the creek. Camping is also available around the lake's edge. Kudriemitchie campground is located on the edge of the park, and camp fires and generators are allowed.

Things to do

Visit the sites of Burke and Wills' fatal expedition: Burke's and Wills' graves where their bodies were found and originally buried; King's tree, where John King, the sole survivor of the expedition, was found alive after being cared for by Aboriginal people; and the Dig Tree Historic Site just over the border in Queensland, where Burke and Wills returned to find their camp empty and a message carved in a tree telling them where to dig for supplies. The carving is still visible today.

Cullyamurra Waterhole is a beautiful spot on the Cooper, perfect for fishing, boating, camping or just relaxing.

Explore Innamincka township and its various features, including the Elizabeth Symon Nursing Home. Allow at least 30 minutes to view the interpretive display.

Desert Parks Pass

The Desert Parks Pass or a pre-purchased short-term entry and camping permit is required to enter and camp in Innamincka Regional Reserve and Coongie Lakes National Park. A Desert Parks Pass can be used for access to and camping in other Desert Parks including:

- Simpson Desert Conservation Park (DPP mandatory)
- Simpson Desert Regional Reserve (DPP mandatory)
- Witjira National Park (short-term entry and overnight camping permits available)
- Lake Eyre National Park (short-term entry permits available)
- Wabma Kadarbu Conservation Park (camping not permitted)
- Tallaringa Conservation Park (short-term entry and overnight camping permits available)

The Desert Parks Pass is valid for 12 months and is issued on a per vehicle basis. It includes the maps required to visit this area, information on the parks, and requirements for safe travel through the outback of South Australia.

A Desert Parks Pass is not required if visitors are travelling only on main public roads. If staying in the Innamincka Town Common, other fees apply.

Short-term entry and camping permits are available for visitors who wish to camp overnight at camp sites along the Cooper Creek in Innamincka Regional Reserve or Coongie Lakes National Park. A permit is required for each vehicle – available for purchase in Innamincka.

Fees collected are used for conservation and to maintain and improve park facilities for your ongoing enjoyment.

Boating and fishing

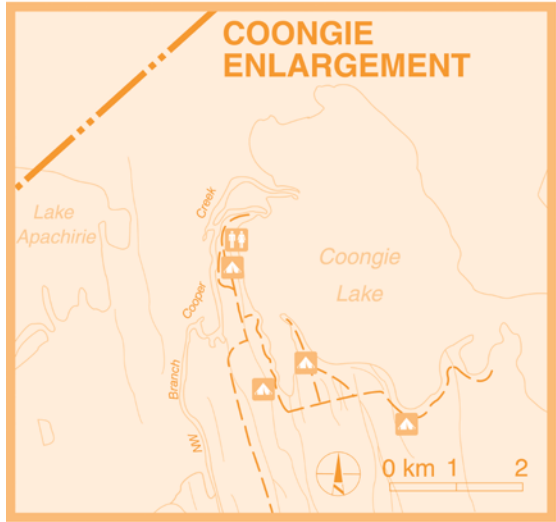
Motorised boats are allowed along Cooper Creek in Innamincka Regional Reserve provided the motor is less than ten horsepower and speed is kept below ten knots. All boats must be registered and a licence is required. Motorboats are not permitted in Coongie Lakes National Park.

No fishing licence is required in South Australia. However, bag and size limits apply under the South Australian *Fisheries Act 1982*. Only certain types of nets are allowed in the Cooper Creek. Check signs at Innamincka or call Fishwatch (PIRSA) on 1800 065 522.

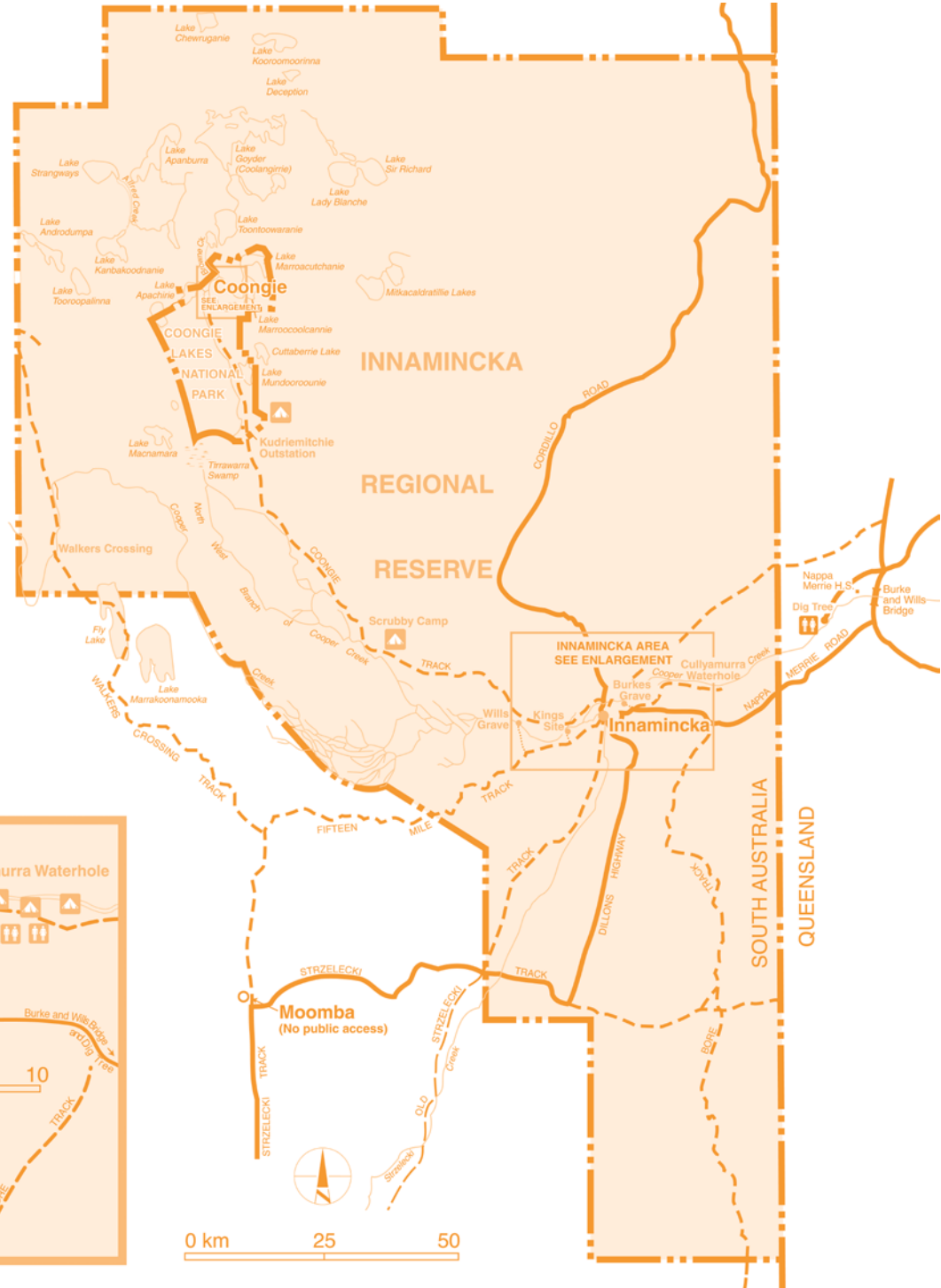
Fishing is not permitted in Coongie Lakes National Park.



Northern River Red Gums
Eucalyptus camaldulensis var. *obtusa*



- Park boundary
- Unsealed road
- Track
- Creek
- Campground
- Fuel
- Information
- Telephone
- Toilets



Outback safety

The outback of South Australia is a vast, wonderful and rewarding place to visit. To ensure that you get the best out of your experience it is important to obtain good advice and thoroughly prepare for your journey.

The Desert Parks Pass (DPP) contains detailed safety instructions, outback driving advice, vehicle and supply checklists as well as detailed maps for extended travel throughout Australia's unforgiving outback.

For shorter trips, where a DPP is not required pick up a *Remote Area Travel Information* brochure from Desert Parks Pass stockists. You can also download the brochure from www.parks.sa.gov.au or freecall the Desert Parks Hotline on 1800 816 078 to find out more.

All roads into Innamincka Regional Reserve are unsealed and conditions may vary considerably, particularly after rain. Be sure to check road conditions before beginning your trip.

Fire safety

- Wood fires are not permitted in Innamincka Regional Reserve during the Fire Danger Season. Please use liquid fuel or gas stoves only. Wood fires are banned in Coongie Lakes National Park all year round.
- On Total Fire Ban Days, all fires (liquid, gas and wood) are prohibited in the parks.
- Please do not collect firewood, as fallen timber provides refuge for small animals. It is preferable you use a liquid fuel or gas stove.

Where to camp

- Camp in designated areas along the Cooper Creek and remember it is an offence to clear any vegetation in a park.
- Be careful when camping along the Cooper Creek as some trees drop their limbs unexpectedly.

Minimal impact

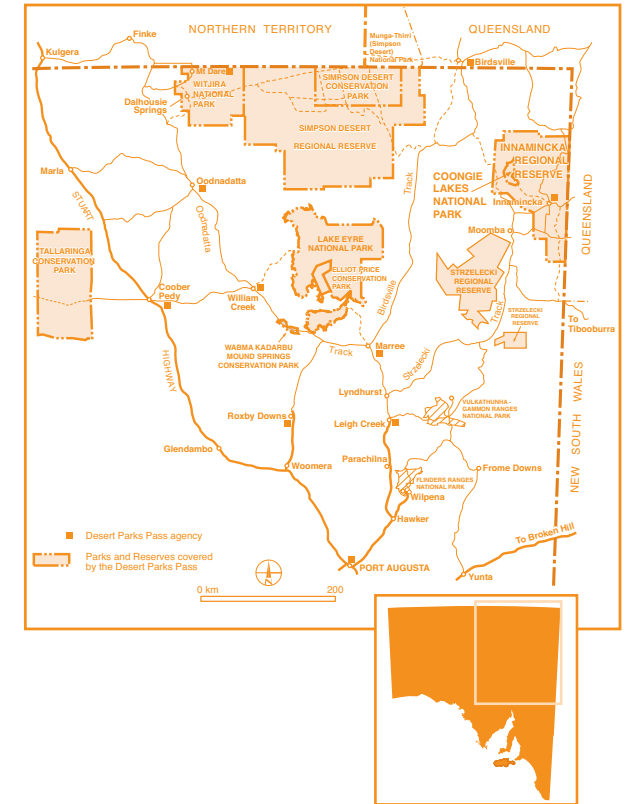
- Avoid washing close to water supplies, as even a small amount of soap or detergent will cause pollution.
- Bury toilet waste well away from water and burn toilet paper.
- Bag and carry out all rubbish. Do not leave rubbish bags unattended at camp sites, as crows destroy them and spread rubbish.

The National Parks Code

Help protect your national parks by following these guidelines:

- Leave your pets at home.
- Take your rubbish with you.
- Observe fire restrictions, usually 1 November to 30 April. Check CFS hotline 1300 362 361.
- Conserve native habitat by using liquid fuel or gas stoves.
- Camp only in designated areas.
- Respect geological and heritage sites.
- Keep our wildlife wild. Do not feed or disturb animals, or remove native plants.
- Keep to defined vehicle tracks and walking trails.
- Be considerate of other park users.
- Firearms and hunting are not permitted.

Thank you for leaving the bush in its natural state for the enjoyment of others.



For further information contact:

Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources

Outback Region
9 Mackay Street Port Augusta SA 5700
Phone (08) 8648 5300 Fax (08) 8648 5301

Innamincka Regional Reserve Park Headquarters

PMB 5, via Leigh Creek SA 5731
Phone (08) 8675 9909 Fax (08) 8675 9912

Desert Parks Hotline

Freecall 1800 816 078
Email desertparks@sa.gov.au

Phone Information Line (08) 8204 1910
Email dewnrinformation@sa.gov.au
Website www.parks.sa.gov.au

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