

Visit Witchelina Nature Reserve – Frequently Asked Questions

October 2024

Thank you for visiting Witchelina Nature Reserve, we hope you enjoy your stay. Here is some information to help you prepare for your visit.

Should you have any further questions, please speak with the Reserve Host during your stay, or email info@naturefoundation.org.au or call (08) 8340 2880 during business hours.

Further information can also be found on our website: www.naturefoundation.org.au

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SAFETY ON RESERVE

- You are primarily responsible for your own safety and the safety of your party.
- Be well equipped, prepared, and informed for travelling in remote locations. There is limited mobile coverage, and limited access to medical and other services. Check road conditions and weather forecasts to ensure you make the best travel decisions, and carry recovery equipment for your vehicle
- Road conditions may be highly variable. Please adhere to road rules and drive to conditions, especially when towing. Roads may be closed at short notice due to weather events, for your safety and to protect the integrity of the road.
- If you break down stay with your vehicle. Make sure you carry adequate water, food, first aid and medical needs for your travels. Snakes may be active on reserve. You should carry a snake-bite first aid kit when away from your vehicle.
- Telstra Mobile coverage is patchy on our reserves. We recommend visitors carry communication devices suitable for use in remote areas, that are capable of summoning assistance in an emergency, such as a Satellite Phone, GPS communication device (e.g. Garmin inReach) or Personal Location Beacon.

- In addition, a UHF radio is useful for communication between vehicles, but should not be relied upon for emergency use.
- We recommend that you establish an emergency response plan with a responsible person (family member or friend) who is able to monitor your travel plans and alert authorities should you fail to return as expected.

Bookings, Payments, and your visit

Do I have to pay an entry fee to visit the Reserve?

There is no entry fee for the Reserve. However, fees are payable if you want to stay on the Reserve and/or enjoy our Nature Drives.

You can book your visit here: www.visit.naturefoundation.org.au

Witchelina Nature Reserve is open between 1 April and 31 October to day visitors, campers and visitors staying in our accommodation. The reserve is closed to visitors during the summer months.

Accommodation and tours are subject to operational requirements (staff, contractors, researchers on site are given accommodation priority).

More detail on accommodation options is on our booking site:
www.visit.naturefoundation.org.au

The fees you pay for Accommodation and Nature Drives help fund the ongoing management and conservation of our Nature Reserves. There are no fees for Nature Walks.

About visiting Witchelina Nature Reserve

Are there Showers at the Campgrounds?

In the Witchelina Homestead Precinct, shared showers are available to those who have booked camping and accommodation and are a short walk and adjacent to the Shearers Quarter's. **Please ensure your showers are quick due to seasonal water restrictions.**

Can you accommodate RVs?

- While you can book and use the campgrounds with an RV please note there is no RV dump on site and all waste must be disposed of after leaving at an official RV dump site.

Can we camp anywhere on the Nature Reserve?

- No, only in the designated campgrounds in the Witchelina Homestead Precinct Campground and the Old Mt Nor'West (OMNW) Campground.

How far is Old Mt Nor'West (OMNW) Homestead and Campground from Witchelina Homestead?

- Approximately 1 hour drive.

What should I bring?

- All your food, personal, medical and care needs, and water for the visit
- All your bedding for booked accommodation, a towel and all your camping or caravanning needs for our unpowered and unallocated campsites.
- Sturdy, covered shoes are recommended for walking in the nature reserves and around the Witchelina Homestead Precinct.
- Layered clothing is recommended as the temperatures can be warm during the day and cold at night.
- Waterproof clothing is useful if rain is forecast.
- Insects (flies and/or mosquitos) may be present so flynets, long sleeves and trouser legs may be useful.
- As no external lights are present, a torch can be helpful when moving around at nighttime.
- Firewood and kindling if wanting a campfire.
- Plan well for your trip to minimise rubbish and ensure you take it with you to dispose responsibly.
- Camera to take photos and share your trip highlights with friends.

Can we top up our water tanks when we leave?

- No – please be self-sufficient with water due to season water shortages.

Is there mobile phone coverage on the reserve?

- Patchy Telstra coverage may exist, but it is not widespread or reliable.

Is there internet access on the Nature Reserve?

- Yes. There is limited internet access available for visitors. At the shearers' quarters area.

Are fridges and freezers available in the kitchens?

- Yes. The shearer's Quarters Kitchen/Dining has a well-equipped kitchen. Old Mt Nor'West Homestead has a basic kitchen powered by a generator.

Do the kitchens have cutlery, crockery, and basic appliances?

- Yes, all the kitchens on the Nature Reserves have crockery, cutlery, and basic appliances for guests' use. In consideration of all our visitors, these facilities should be kept tidy and clean by all users.

Can I have a campfire on a reserve?

- Yes. You can use the fire ring at our camping and accommodation sites for campfires. Please ensure that you fully extinguish your campfire whenever you are not attending to it.
- Observe fire restrictions (no wood and solid fuel fires usually 1 November to 15 April and check the Visitor Information Board for any changes to Fire Season.
- No fires are permitted outside the fire rings on our Nature Reserves.

Is firewood available on the reserve?

- No. If you want to have a campfire in one in our fire rings you **must** bring your own kindling and firewood.
- Do not forage for, or cut down, wood on the reserves or outside our reserves. Dead and fallen timber is important habitat for birds, animals, and insects.

Can we use fire pigs/webbers/gas stoves?

- Yes.

Can I dispose of rubbish on the reserves?

- No — Plan your trip well to minimise your rubbish.
- Bring garbage bags and take your rubbish with you when you leave to dispose of properly.

Is fuel available on the reserves?

- The closest fuel available to Witchelina is at Marree or Lyndhurst.

Can I charge my electric vehicle on the reserves?

- No. The reserves do not have facilities to charge electric vehicles.

Is food available on the reserves?

- No. Plan and bring all your food and water requirements for your visit.
- The closest stores to **Witchelina** are at Marree, the Copley bakery, Hawker store and Blinman. Nearby Farina Bakery does open during the tourism season from late May to mid-July. Contact Farina for more information.

Is power available in the accommodation?

Yes – please see our booking system for relevant information about or accommodation.

Can I bring my pet to the Nature Reserve?

- No. Pets are NOT ALLOWED on the Nature Reserve. This is for the protection of native wildlife and your pet. Baiting programs are undertaken on the Nature Reserves.

Getting there

What are the roads like for AWD, 4WD, towed campervans, trailers and caravans?

The roads into the Nature Reserves are AWD and 4WD accessible (subject to weather conditions). Some of the Nature Drives are not accessible to AWDs.

Depending on your off-road experience with towed campervans and trailers, they may be able to be towed into the Nature Reserves. Please check road conditions for caravans. The roads to the Nature Reserves may be closed due to recent rain and at these times there are additional restrictions on vehicles and/or towing.

For information on road closures phone Transport SA on 1300 361 033 or visit their website <http://www.dpti.sa.gov.au/OutbackRoads>.

What's the best way to get to the Nature Reserves from Adelaide by road?

- 4WDs are recommended for travelling to Witchelina. Some of the Nature Drives require high clearance 4WDs. Recent or impending rain will significantly impact access to and from Witchelina, and your safety while there.
- Weather conditions can be checked at <http://www.bom.gov.au/sa/forecasts/map.shtml> for weather in the Northwest Pastoral District.
- Check road conditions before travelling and be aware that significant penalties apply for travelling on a closed road.
- To check whether the roads are open phone Transport SA on 1300 361 033 or visit their website <http://www.dpti.sa.gov.au/OutbackRoads>. Check Marree to Lyndhurst Road and Farina to Mulgaria Road.
- You can also phone Witchelina Homestead on 08 8675 2001 to check road conditions into Witchelina.

How do I get to Witchelina?

- Allow a total driving time of 8-10 hours from Adelaide.
- Take the Outback Highway to Leigh Creek and continue 38km to Lyndhurst [sealed road all the way to Marree]. It is recommended that you fuel up here at the Roadhouse. If the road north is closed, accommodation is available at the Lyndhurst Hotel. Lyndhurst is the last reliable phone coverage. If possible, phone the Witchelina homestead from here so that your arrival is expected.
- Continue 25km to Farina.
- Turn in to Farina Township and drive through towards the campground on a **UNSEALED ROAD**. There is a sign pointing to the Witchelina Road.
- Distance to Witchelina is 27km of **UNSEALED ROAD**. Road conditions can vary. Please use detours where necessary and drive with caution.
- Note: the Witchelina marked on many maps is the old railway siding and not Witchelina Homestead so follow directions carefully and not your GPS road guide.
- There is no fuel available at Witchelina, so we recommend that you fill up at Marree or Lyndhurst. Food and fuel is also available in Marree.
- For information about approaching Witchelina from other directions, please call the Adelaide office on (08) 8340 2880 Monday to Friday 9am-5pm.

Emergency contact information Witchelina Homestead

- Phone (08) 8675 2001 UHF 03 duplex or UHF 20 simplex

Witchelina Medical advice

- Marree Health Service Phone (08) 8675 8345, 43-44 First Street, Marree
- Leigh Creek Hospital Phone (08) 8678 6022
- Royal Flying Doctor Phone 1800 733 772 (doctor on call 24/7)

Police or other emergencies

- Call 000
- Leigh Creek Police Station Phone (08) 8675 2004

Other information

- Please call Nature Foundation's Adelaide office on (08) 8340 2880 Monday to Friday 9am-5pm for any other queries.

Nature Drives

Nature drives are a great way to explore Witchelina. They follow former station tracks laid out when the Nature Reserve was operating as a pastoral property.

Drive information

- The drives are fully signposted, and track notes are available to borrow from the Visitor Reception at Witchelina Homestead (or you can download PDFs via the links on the booking site) and detail some insights into the remarkable vegetation and animals, geology and pastoral history of Witchelina.
- Some of the drives are accessed through locked gates, with access via the lock code in your booking confirmation available from Homestead at the time of your visit.
- Please refer to and additional information at the the at the Visitor Information area.

Important information for our drives

- Keep to the tracks as marked with the appropriate Nature Drive signs indicated on the track notes.
- **Off track driving is strictly prohibited.**
- **Avoid driving on boggy roads and if you get stuck, do not leave your vehicle.**
- The Nature Drives are suitable for properly equipped 4WD vehicles. If driving an AWD vehicle, check its suitability with Staff or Reserve Host volunteers at the Homestead before heading out on the tracks.
- **For your safety and the safety of our wildlife keep vehicle speed below 40km on all Nature Reserve tracks at all times.**
- The Old Mt Nor' West Gorge Loops can be undertaken from Marree or Farina or the Homestead. The, Dunes and the Wildflower Circuit are accessible from Witchelina.

How much does a Nature Drive cost?

- Pricing is available through our booking site with payment per vehicle and by number of days you wish to access drives: www.visit.naturefoundation.org.au
- We ask you to book prior to arrival or to book via the self-booking information at the Visitor information area.

Can we add extra vehicles to our booking when we arrive?

- Yes, and you will need to pay the additional fee through self-booking at Witchelina Homestead.

Can I do a Nature Drive if I don't have a 4WD?

- Some of the Nature Drives may be accessible to AWD vehicles – refer to the information at the Visitor Information area.

How long should we stay for?

- You can visit for a day drive or stay longer, depending on your interest and other travel plans. We suggest 2-3 days to enjoy the different parts of the reserve or longer if you want to unwind and relax in nature and explore more slowly.

Do I need keys to unlock gates on the Nature Drives?

- No. All locks now use a code which is listed in your Booking Confirmation when you book Nature Drive permits.

Overview of Drives

Download our Nature Drive Guides here:

<https://www.naturefoundation.org.au/what-we-do/nature-based-tourism/nature-drive-guides>

Marree –Old Mt Nor’West Gorge loop

- **Approximately** 123kms round trip starting from Marree.
- Allow 5 hours. Access key available from Marree Hotel.

Farina – Old Mt Nor’West Gorge loop

- Approximately 105kms round trip from Farina.
- Allow 5.5 hours. Access key available from Farina Homestead.

Witchelina Homestead – Old Mt Nor’West Gorge loop

- Approximately 35kms round trip from Homestead.
- Allow 3 hours. Access key available from Staff or Reserve Host Volunteers at Witchelina Homestead.

Drives 1-2 pass under two alignments of the old Ghan railway line and onto a flood plain, home to birds at certain times of the year.

Drives 1-3 climb into the hills of the eastern Willouran Range, through the rocky Old Mt Nor’West Gorge and past a campground, the restored homestead, and a ruined woolshed from when Old Mt Nor’West was a pastoral lease in its own right.

Ridge Top Nature Drive – **CLOSED FOR 2024**

- Approximately 94kms round trip from Witchelina Homestead.
- Allow 5 hours. Access key available from Staff or Reserve Host Volunteers at Witchelina Homestead.

Starting from the Homestead and turning west for approximately 24kms along the Farina-Mulgaria road, this drive branches north-westwards, passing one of several dams and crossing a plain with a number of interesting geological features. It climbs steeply on to the

rocky ridge that gives the drive its name, offering spectacular views over the Reserve. The drive then winds through hills, descending into the Mirra Creek floodplain, and reaching the historic Mirra Weir, before turning back southwards. Passing by some interesting ruins near Kingston Dam, the route arrives back at the Witchelina Homestead precinct.

Dunes – Wildflower Nature Drive

- Approximately 117kms round trip from Witchelina Homestead.
- Allow 6-7 hours. Access key available from Staff or Reserve Host Volunteers at Witchelina Homestead.

Starting from the Homestead and turning east for approximately 1.5kms along the Farina-Mulgaria road, this drive turns southwards just before the Witchelina airstrip, winding its way through hills until it reaches the boundary fence with Farina Station. It then runs along the fence, parallel to the magnificent Termination Hill range, past a restored hut, and westwards into dune country.

At its southernmost point, it doubles back through the dunes, emerging on a plain to the south west of Termination Hill, and heads along the fringes of dune country. Following good summer and autumn rains, this country can offer spectacular wildflower displays during the mid to late winter and early spring. From the Black Hill Dam, the route climbs into low hills again, re-joining the main road approximately 7kms west of the homestead.

Bungarider Nature Drive

- Approximately 90kms round trip from Witchelina Homestead.
- Allow 5-6 hours. Access key available from Staff or Reserve Host Volunteers at Witchelina Homestead.

This drive passes through a variety of landscapes, mostly in the more remote parts of the Reserve towards Mount Nor'West, with outstanding geological features. It incorporates a short optional return walk (30 minutes each way), to a spectacular stone dam in the heart of the range. The route passes several sites illustrating Nature Foundation's conservation work and recalling the Witchelina's history as a sheep and cattle station. The drive proper starts just beyond the Witchelina dump, and ends nearly 60kms later, at a junction with the Farina-Mulgaria Road, approximately 32kms to the west of the Homestead.

Getting there — Map and Environs



Quick reference — Useful information for planning your travel

www.naturefoundation.org.au

<http://www.dpti.sa.gov.au/OutbackRoads>

[North East Pastoral District Forecast \(bom.gov.au\)](http://www.bom.gov.au)

[Far North South Australia - Port Augusta, Destination Information...](#)

[Outback safety & travelling in arid landscapes](#)

Witchelina Homestead Precinct

