

Trans Australia Rail Access Road Trail

11 days



The Gunbarrel Highway was explored and surveyed by Len Beadell, with completion of the last section of the road in 1958. The road was the first east-west road to go across the centre of Australia. The Gunbarrel Highway (approx. 830 kms) is a popular 4WD route that directly connects Western Australia to many popular tourist destinations in central Australia.

The road travels through a very isolated and unpopulated part of the Australian outback, with towns and fuel stops far and few between. Should you travel the Gunbarrel, Connie Sue Highways you will very quickly learn two things: One is that it is more of a goat track than a road, and the second is that the track, despite its name, is rarely

gun-barrel straight. Plan to enjoy the outback experience at a leisurely pace, with stops for morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea and any photo opportunities along the way. Aim to end your travels early each afternoon for a relaxed camping experience. This (approx.) 1865 kilometre outback adventure is perfect for the confident four wheel drive enthusiast who can handle the challenge of washaways, heavy corrugations, stone, sand and flood plains.

Parts of the track are only suitable for high clearance four wheel drive vehicles and should only be attempted by confident drivers.

PLANNING

Supplies and services are limited and road conditions can vary, so plan ahead, stock up on food, water and fuel and contact the local visitor centre for up-to-date track information.



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Permits: Before heading off into the remote desert areas of Australia, you will need to obtain permits, enabling you to travel through private and Aboriginal Lands. Get more information about permits for Aboriginal Lands or visit the Australian National Four Wheel Drive Council. And to ensure you enjoy a safe and well-planned journey, be sure to take a look at road safety and important travel tips.

For additional information about the Gunbarrel Highway, check out Shire of Wiluna website.

Suggested itinerary

Day 1-3 » Perth to Kalgoorlie 600km

Perth To Kalgoorlie, travel along the Great Eastern Highway following the "Golden Pipeline Trail" if you have time explore the pipeline as it moves water from Mundaring Weir in the Perth Hills to Kalgoorlie in the Goldfields.

Kalgoorlie to Wiluna 535km See the "Golden Quest Discovery Trail" for more details.

Start of Gunbarrel Highway

DAY 4-8 » Wiluna to Warburton 885km

The town of Wiluna is 966 kilometres northeast of Perth and is situated on the edge of the desert at the gateway to the Canning Stock Route and Gunbarrel Highway. Travelling east of Wiluna the main stop prior to Warburton is Carnegie Station, approx. 290kms east of Wiluna.

Wiluna is an old gold rush town in the Murchison region of Western Australia's Golden Outback with a real bush atmosphere. At its peak the town was home to the biggest gold mine in Western Australia. Today, Wiluna is chiefly a Martu Indigenous community. It has an active

administrative centre and offers day trips and walks to various lookouts and historic attractions.

Any history of Wiluna has two threads, European that started with Surveyor Lawrence Wells in 1892 and the infinitely longer story of the Martu people. In 1896 gold was discovered, but Wiluna did not peak until the advent on new mining technologies in the 1930's. From a population of 600 it quickly boomed to and excess of 9000 people.

Unfortunately the boom times only lasted 'til the mid 1940's and by 1963 the town was down to 90 persons. Since that time it has increased again, mainly due to the growing number of Martu people coming in from their traditional country. The Wiluna Walk Trails are the very best way to explore the heritage of Wiluna. Pick up at brochure from the Shire office, post office, Caravan Park or shop and take a stroll around one of these new, fascinating, well sign posted and informative walks

Carnegie Station, 362.59kms West of Warburton. Named after a gold prospector, the station is a popular stopping point for refreshments, rest and refueling. The Station provides a limited range of packaged supplies - some fresh depending on availability. The homestead at Carnegie Station can offer homestead accommodation in cabins or you can put up your tent. Visitors can use the kitchen and take a hot shower. If need be, minor mechanical repairs can be done.

The Warburton (Ngaanyatjarra) Indigenous community lies 950 kilometres north-east of Kalgoorlie and 1000 kilometres south-west of Alice Springs. It's home to the largest of the Ngaanyatjarra Indigenous communities, the magnificent

Warburton Ranges and the red sandy plains of the Gibson Desert. A must-see is the Tjulyuru Cultural and Civic Centre, which features the Tjulyuru Regional Art Gallery and the Warta Shop. This Centre reflects the vivid colours of their homelands and exhibits an extensive collection of Indigenous art, including beautiful paintings, artefacts, spinifex paper, baskets, art and glassware.

Accommodation options include cabins at the Warburton Roadhouse and caravan park where meals and a general store are also available.

Once you arrive in Warburton the Connie Sue Highway takes you south towards Rawlinna.

Start of Connie Sue Highway

DAY 9-13 » Warburton to Rawlinna 650km

The Connie Sue Highway is an outback road that runs from Rawlinna on the Trans-Australian Railway to the Aboriginal community of Warburton on the Great Central Road. Approximately 650 km long and running north-south, it lies entirely in the state of Western Australia and crosses the Nullarbor Plain and the Great Victoria Desert. Though officially named the Rawlinna-Warburton Road, it is better known as the Connie Sue, after the daughter of Len Beadell, a 20th-century surveyor and bushman.

Approximately halfway along this route is Neale Junction. The name Neale in 'Neale Junction' came from Captain Frank Neale, a WW1 flying ace, who carried out private aerial surveys in the area from 1930 to 1935 for a Donald McKay from Wallenbean NSW. The map was named in recognition of his aerial work. Neale Junction is the junction of Connie Sue Highway and Anne Beadell Highway. Anne was Connie Sue's mother. This road, like many

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Len Beadell built, is a "highway" in name only. It is remote and does not carry regular traffic. There is no available ground water and it is one of the longest stretches in Australia between fuel pumps. This road is not considered suitable for unprepared travellers.

Rawlinna was the destination of Len Beadell and his Gunbarrel Road Construction Party when they pushed the Connie Sue Highway south from the siding through Neale Junction to Warburton in 1960.

Another dirt track to the south to Cocklebiddy is also gazetted as a main road. It was used as a supply route for material arriving by train via Rawlinna for use in the rush construction of the Eyre Highway during 1941-42. This lineside settlement marks the western extremity of the Nullarbor Plain and the end of scrub vegetation for trains heading east. The word Rawlinna is Aboriginal for wind.

Rawlinna is also the site of Loongana Lime Mine (there is no access to this mine) where the lime is extracted from the limestone that is prevalent in the area. The lime is mostly used in the gold production process at Kalgoorlie. There is no fuel for sale at Rawlinna. The closest locations are Caiguna and Cocklebiddy on the Eyre Highway, more than 100 km to the south.

The Great Southern Railway train, the Indian Pacific, which runs between Sydney and Perth, calls at the siding twice a week in each direction. Passengers can alight or disembark on request. After arriving in Rawlinna swings back along the Trans Access Road towards Kalgoorlie. This runs parallel to the Trans Australia railway line.

Trans Access Road

DAY 13-17 » Rawlinna to Kalgoorlie 330km

Along the Trans Access Road you will pass through the railway sidings of Naretha, Kitchener, Zanthus, Coonana and Karonie before arriving at the final destination of Kalgoorlie.

Naretha: a regular drop off point for mail to nearby stations and the occupants of an old ANR (Commonwealth Railways) guards van. Naretha was also known as the '205 mile' camp. It featured rock piles and a crushing plant for the creation of railway line ballast. A bakery was built at Naretha in the 1950s to provide freshly baked bread for the passenger trains on the Trans Australian line and workers along the route. Naretha is the local Aboriginal name for the saltbush.

Kitchener: The name honours Chief of the Imperial General Staff Lord Kitchener in 1911. During his visit to Australia in 1911, Lord Kitchener publicly criticised the country's bewildering railway gauges. He observed the railway network favoured an enemy invasion, rather than a defence. He stressed the importance of the Trans Australia

line in the defence of the nation to the Federal Parliament and urged them to commence its construction without delay. Hence following the introduction of a bill into Federal Parliament by the Minister for Home Affairs, King O'Malley, a vote for the new Transcontinental Railway was passed on 6th December 1911. Kitchener is 250 kilometres east of Kalgoorlie.

Zanthus: a remote outpost approximately 210 kilometres east of Kalgoorlie. The original stationmaster's cabin at Zanthus is now on display at Bassendean rail museum in Perth. The Trans Australian Railway was the main route for the movement of Australian troops during World War II. In the photograph, RAAF personnel enjoy a stopover, probably to allow the steam locomotive to take on water, at Zanthus circa 1940. On 18th August 1999 the westbound Indian Pacific train was accidentally directed into a crossing loop and collided with a stationary steel train in the loop. The name Zanthus is derived from the Latin genus name for the Kangaroo Paw (Anigozanthus/Anigosanthus), the floral emblem of the state of Western Australia.

Coonana: The highest point on the Trans line is between Chifley and Coonana (404 metres). Coonana Siding is named after a nearby hill that was first recorded as Coonaanna in 1890. Coonana was once a well-used loading point for the lucrative sandalwood trade.

Karonie: Sandalwood cutters discovered gold near Karonie in early 1963. Karonie has a rusty spur line that runs up to an old dam off the main line, once used to provide water for steam locomotives. The line to the dam is still intact but is not used. Cardunia Rocks, 5 km north-east of the Siding, is the name of the water catchment. The rock is terraced by stone walls constructed to channel water to a dam and a covered reservoir. The reservoir was covered to reduce evaporation - which can be as high as 2250 mm per annum - although the roof is now missing. The average annual rainfall in this area is only 300mm. The terracing work at Cardunia Rocks is similar to the constructions at Northam Army Camp - much of it being done by Italian internees from Cook during World War II. The origin of the name Karonie is unknown.

DAY 17+ » Kalgoorlie to Perth returntrip 600km

If time allows, explore Kalgoorlie to discover what is on offer to visitors and recovering adventurers, prior to your return home.

Highlights

- » The Golden Pipeline Heritage Trail
- » The Golden Quest Trail
- » Lake Ballard and the Antony gormley Statues
- » Gwalia and Hoover House
- » National Parks, Reserves, conservation parks
- » Salt lakes and gnamma holes
- » Wiluna Tjurkurba Art Gallery
- » Outback Pubs
- » Gold prospecting
- » Gunbarrel Highway
- » Wiluna Nomads statue
- » Wiluna Red Hill lokout
- » Clay Pans
- » Pioneer Cemetary
- » Wiluna Walk Trail
- » Carnegie Station
- » Warburton Ranges
- » Ngaanyatjarra community and other Indigenous communities
- » Tjulyuru Cultural and Civic Centre
- » Connie Sue Highway
- » Trans Australian Rail Access Road
- » Disused and rarely used remote railway sidings
- » Natural landscapes, scenery and bushland

Visitor Centres

Carnegie	(08) 9981 2991
Warburton	(08) 8956 7656
Wiluna	(08) 9981 8000
Warburton Tjulyuru	(08) 8956 7966
Laverton	(08) 9031 1361
Kalgoorlie	1800 004 653

Accommodation

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