



# DESTINATION SIMPSON DESERT South Australia

This trek follows a route laid out by NSW-based [4WD Off Road Driver Training and Tours](#). The route takes in popular and less travelled tracks across the dunefield, followed by a run through the Painted Desert, to Coober Pedy.

The desert section of this trip starts at the famous Birdsville Hotel. The town has ample fuel and mechanical supplies, but is a bit light on for camping tucker.

Doubtless, your vehicle will be loaded, with enough fuel, food and water for the 600-kilometre slog to Mount Dare, the next fuelling point. It's wise to mount your mast with red marker flag in Birdsville, for collision safety in the Desert.

The Simpson's infamous 'Big Red' sand dune is your welcome to the dunefield – the first of some 1000 sand hills you'll cross over the next few days. It's time to deflate tyres until the contact patches on the sand are about 300mm long.



French Line



Big Red

The steep eastern face of Big Red is always a challenge for loaded vehicles, but there's some respite halfway, in the form of a 'dip' between the first crest and the summit. For those whose machines just won't crest this whopper dune there's an escape route to the north.

Next day should see you at Poeppel Corner around lunchtime. The Corner area is a quite well organised these days, with a boardwalk to the Queensland-South Australia-Northern Territory border point and a replica of August Poeppel's marker post.

The original marker post was found by Ted Colson in 1936, but by 1962 it was in a bad condition, and is now in the care of the SA History Trust.

The afternoon is filled by – you guessed it - more dune driving, before a late afternoon camp.

The next day's drive varies somewhat, because 4x4ORDT's route runs south on the Erabena Track as far as its intersection with the WAA Line, before cutting across the dunes once more.



The Erabena Track runs down a dune valley and the easier going allows you to come out of low range for the first time in two days. The 30 kilometres down to the WAA Line passes quickly, but once heading west again on the WAA Line its dune climbing time once more. The WAA Line isn't used as much as the French and QAA Lines, so it's narrower and doesn't have as many of the weaving diversions that the more-travelled tracks have. It's what the busier tracks used to look like 20 years ago.



Purnie Bore

The next day's run sees a return to semi-civilisation: the surface water at Purnie Bore and its accompanying loo and shower. The bore flow at Purnie has been restricted in recent years, so the expanse of wetland has shrunk markedly, but there's still plenty of birdlife to enjoy.

From Purnie Bore to Mount Dare is an easy day's run, punctuated by the mandatory warm-water swim in the spring at Dalhousie and a tramp around the old station ruins.

The new tourist arrangement at Dalhousie is a great improvement over the previous free-for-all, park-anywhere situation. The spring pool edge is landscaped and vehicles are prohibited from parking near the water. There's a campsite that's marred only by smelly toilets and there's even an airstrip. Given this degree of civilisation, it would be great to see a subtle, low-key fuel installation somewhere near Dalhousie that would save the compulsory drive to Mount Dare before or after a Simpson Desert crossing. A fuel monopoly isn't good for the tourist business.

Next stop is Old Andado, after an overnight camp at Eringa Waterhole. The accommodation has been upgraded and visitors are more than welcome to stay at Old Andado. The station buildings are set in a wide dune valley and there are many 4x4 touring tracks around the property.

Eringa Waterhole is an unexpected oasis in this harsh country and helps explain why Sidney Kidman had a special feeling for the property that was actually the first one he bought on his own.



**Eringa Waterhole**

From Eringa the tag-along route takes you south to Oodnadatta and the Pink Roadhouse. Great hamburgers and chips, as long as you're not in a hurry!



**Painted Desert**

From the Roadhouse you swing right towards Coober Pedy, taking the road to Arckaringa Station and the Painted Desert, in time to set up camp and take the short drive to the awesome Mount Batterbee Lookout for a sunset sip and photo session.

From the Painted Desert the route takes the long way to Coober Pedy, doing The Breakaways circuit en route.



That evening sees you bedded down in Coober Pedy and the best accommodation choice is in one of the underground motels that are converted opal mines.



**Bridgestone's  
Dueler 683 HL**  
is our tyre choice  
for this trek

**BRIDGESTONE**  
*Your Journey, Our Passion*

## FACT FILE

### Where

South Australia

### Time required

Minimum two weeks

### Best time to go

Winter (park is closed 1 December to 15 March)

### What to do

Dune driving, camping, photography, bird and wildlife watching, historical pursuits, swimming (Dalhousie Springs)

### Maps

HEMA Australian Road Atlas and SA Desert Parks mud maps

### Camping

A [Desert Parks Pass](#) is required for entry and camping in the park. (Can be purchased online)

Bush camping, Purnie Bore and Dalhousie Springs camping areas have toilet and shower

### Permits

SA Desert Parks Pass is required  
[http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/Do\\_It\\_Online/parks\\_passes](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/Do_It_Online/parks_passes)

### Track closures

[http://www.transport.sa.gov.au/quicklinks/northern\\_roads/northern.asp](http://www.transport.sa.gov.au/quicklinks/northern_roads/northern.asp)

South Australian Desert Parks Hotline

Tel: 1800 816 078

[http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/parks/Find\\_a\\_park/Browse\\_by\\_region/Flinders\\_Ranges\\_Outback/Simpson\\_Desert\\_Conservation\\_Park\\_and\\_Regional\\_Reserve](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/parks/Find_a_park/Browse_by_region/Flinders_Ranges_Outback/Simpson_Desert_Conservation_Park_and_Regional_Reserve)

### Last fuel

Birdsville, Mount Dare

### Contact

<http://www.environment.sa.gov.au>