

NULLARBOR EAST TO WEST

A TRAVELLER'S GUIDE



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1. Introduction

Welcome to our guide on travelling and exploring the Nullarbor from east to west. I'm sure you've heard people say the Nullarbor is a monotonous and boring drive. Nothing could be further from the truth.

If you have a few days to spare, your Nullarbor crossing can be an unforgettable experience. There's so much to see and do. You just have to know where to look.

This guide aims to help you discover the wonders of the Nullarbor Plain. Whether it's a short diversion to one of the many caves, whale-watching from dry land or an adventure to the site of nuclear explosions, you won't be disappointed.

I hope you enjoy this guide. For more destinations in Outback Australia, check out our website at www.topwiretraveller.com

Happy travels!

Andrew Murray

P.S. A big thank you to Charlie Murray and Peta Murray for graciously agreeing to let me use their fantastic photos.

2. Ceduna to Nullarbor Roadhouse S.A.

Go West Young Man!

Leaving Ceduna and heading west – what a feeling! You’re about to cross the Nullarbor – 1,200km of flat, treeless plain... at least, this is the image portrayed in the travel guides.



THE NULLARBOR PLAIN

As you’ll discover, the Nullarbor has a lot to offer. And lots of trees... a little weird, since Nullarbor is Latin for “no trees”.

Firstly, A Word Of Warning

Be prepared, stock up with food and water.

If you’re using the Nullarbor simply to get from one side of Australia to the other, then don’t worry too much. There’s enough fuel and food stops to make the trip easily... and plenty of traffic if you break down.

But if you’re planning to deviate off the highway and explore, be prepared. This is especially true when you travel with kids. The amount of food they consume is unbelievable!

And summer temperatures can be insanely hot, as we discovered later in the year. It's difficult to make sandwiches in 46 degC heat – instant toast!

There are few provisions along the Nullarbor. Several roadhouses exist but they stock very little. What they do stock doesn't make much sense, eg flavoured UHT milk but no plain UHT milk. Not a criticism, simply an observation.

And don't forget – you'll lose all fruit and veges at the WA border. We even lost our jar of honey. So you need to consider other food options for the WA border to Norseman leg.

The biggest watchout is water. We started from Ceduna with about 120 litres and were unable to refill anywhere. Not surprising, but would be a major drama if you weren't prepared. There is not a "proper" shop between Ceduna and Norseman.

So, What's In Store For You?

Your first surprise is wheat crops. They stretch at least 150km west of Ceduna. Wait, isn't this supposed to be the Nullarbor?

About 1-1/2 hours west of Ceduna, turn off the Eyre Highway to Fowlers Bay. Huge white sand dunes tower over the town, threatening to engulf it. They are begging to be climbed, so of course we obliged.



THE ROAD INTO FOWLERS BAY



SAND DUNES ON THE EDGE OF TOWN



FOWLERS BAY JETTY



ONE OF THE LOCALS!



THESE DUNES ARE BIG...



...REALLY BIG!



A BIRDS-EYE VIEW OF THE BAY.

Fowlers Bay, Base Camp For An Epic Journey

Edward John Eyre was an explorer. He described the Nullarbor as, “a hideous anomaly, a blot on the face of Nature, the sort of place one gets into in bad dreams”... and then he decided to walk across it! From Adelaide to Albany in the searing summer heat. I think those early explorers were slightly mad.

In 1840 Eyre, John Baxter and 3 aboriginal guides - Wylie, Cootachah and Neramberein - set off from Adelaide with a plan to walk over 2,000km to Albany.

At the time Fowlers Bay was a favoured haunt for European and American whalers. Eyre had a supply dump established at Fowlers Bay, with supplies being dropped off by ship. This was to be Eyre's launching point for an epic journey.

Only Eyre and Wylie made it to Albany - the 2 others had killed Baxter and disappeared with the party's provisions. His Aboriginal companion Wylie had little experience in such an arid landscape. He was a Noongar man from King George Sound at Albany - vastly different country than the arid Nullarbor landscape. Very importantly though, Wylie had the language skills to seek help from other Indigenous people along the way.

Go [here](#) for a detailed account. It's a truly remarkable feat.

Fowlers Bay, Transport Hub Of Yesteryear

Mapped by Dutchman François Thijssen in 1627 and named by Matthew Flinders in 1802, Fowlers Bay was favoured by whalers in the 1840s. Southern right whales and humpbacks would come into the protected waters of the bay to rest. Of course the whalers followed.



IT'S EASY TO SEE WHY WHALES LOVE THIS PLACE - PLENTY OF PROTECTION FROM THE OPEN OCEAN

Proclaimed a town in 1890, Fowlers Bay had grown to become an important transport hub for locations west of the bay. Large sheep stations like “Yatala” needed a reliable transport link back to markets in Adelaide and further afield.

With the advent of efficient and reliable road transport, Fowlers Bay faded into obscurity. Now it's a picturesque settlement on the edge of a pristine bay. Recreational fishing, whale-watching and a laid-back atmosphere attract tourists.

Well worth a visit.

Head Of The Bight – Gentle Giants

About 200km (2-1/2 hrs) west of Fowlers Bay is Head Of The Bight. Between the two locations you'll drive through undulating tree-lined country.



BETWEEN FOWLERS BAY AND HEAD OF THE BIGHT, EYRE HWY



THE "OFFICIAL" BEGINNING OF THE NULLARBOR PLAIN THROUGH A DIRTY WINDSCREEN.

From May to October, Southern right Whales come to Head Of The Bight to mate, calve and just generally hang out together.

A fantastic viewing platform provides uninterrupted views of the whales. You feel like you could reach down and touch them. Yes you have to pay to watch the whales, but believe me it's worth it. An excellent Visitors Centre will teach you all you ever wanted to know about whales.

We were there in October, right at the end of the season – so weren't really expecting to see any whales. This particular season, 50 whales with calves had been living there. All the calves had grown and gained strength, ready for their epic swim south in the Southern Ocean. Pair by pair, Mum and bub had left the safety of Head Of The Bight for unknown perils and adventures. All but one pair...

One mother and calf were still there. This was highly unusual. Normally they would have all departed. What a sight. Such majestic creatures – and so big! Mum weighs in at up to 80 tonnes and around 15 metres long... while the "baby" calf is up to 1-1/2 tonnes and 6 metres long at birth. They were right in close to the shore. Mum was quietly floating around while the calf was playing – disappearing only to pop up behind Mum, in front of Mum – and several times lie on top of Mum. We were mesmerised.



SOUTHERN RIGHT WHALES ARE SO-CALLED BECAUSE THEY WERE THE “RIGHT” ONES TO HUNT – SLOW MOVING WITH HUGE SUPPLIES OF WHALE OIL.



THE CALF WAS IN A PLAYFUL MOOD.



THESE CREATURES ARE ABSOLUTELY ENORMOUS.



BUB DECIDED MUM WOULD BE FUN TO SWIM OVER...



... AGAIN AND AGAIN!



HARD TO BELIEVE THE CALF IS "SMALL".



THE CALF LOVING LIFE!



A QUICK WAVE GOODBYE AND WE WERE ON OUR WAY.

Nullarbor Roadhouse

20 km west of Head Of The Bight is the settlement of Nullarbor. Just a roadhouse and a dusty caravan park. One of only a handful of settlements on the Nullarbor Plain, it's a popular spot for travellers and professional drivers to pull up and have a break. Nullarbor Roadhouse has a professionally-presented [website](#) – well worth a browse.



WHALES IN THE DESERT.



WITH HEAD OF THE BIGHT JUST DOWN THE ROAD, WHALES FEATURE PROMINENTLY.



THE CARAVAN PARK. LOOKS DESOLATE BUT IS ACTUALLY VERY NEAT.



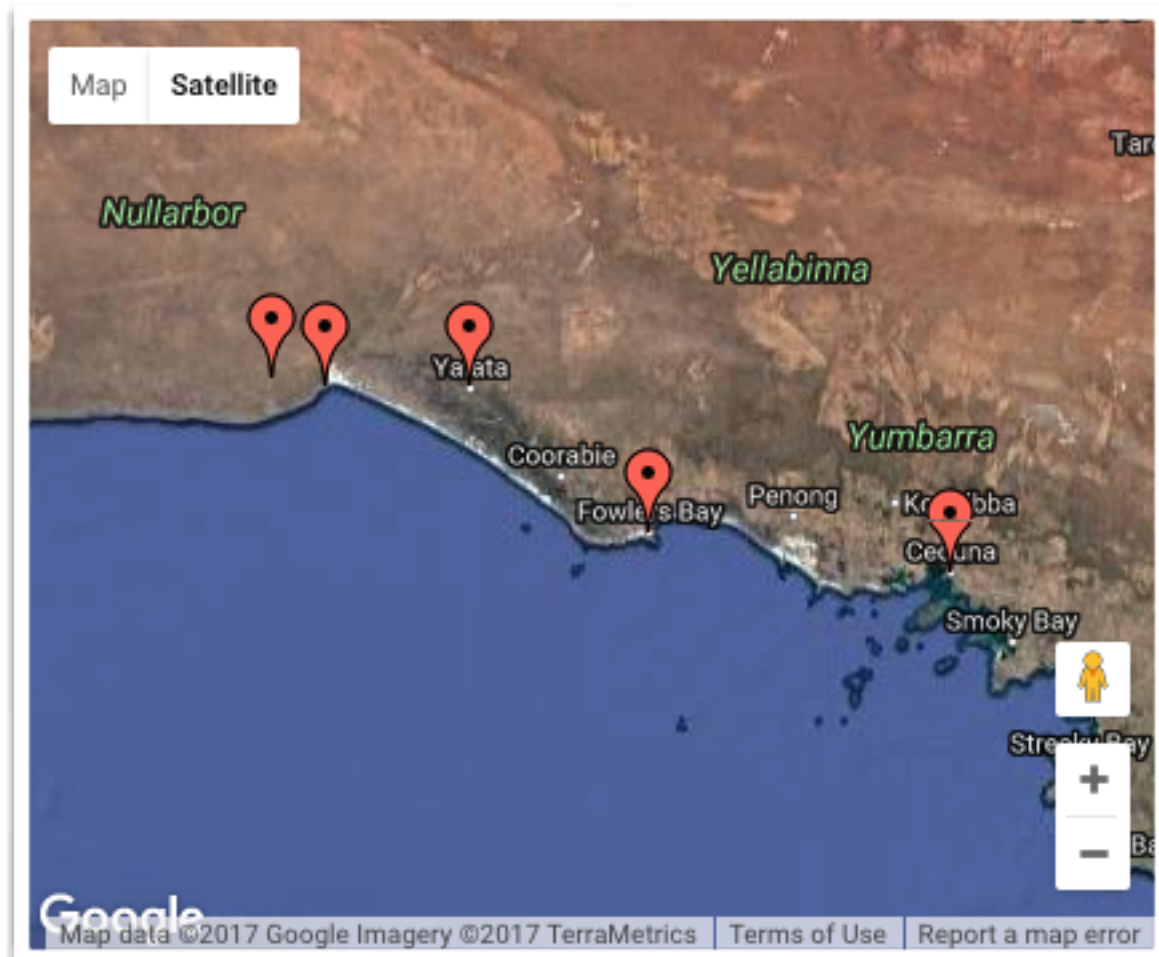
ANOTHER BRITZ TROOPIE HEADING EAST.



THE SIGN SAYS IT ALL.



BEAUTIFUL BANKSIAS AT NULLARBOR ROADHOUSE.



3. Koonalda Station S.A.



Rugged Coastlines And Crumbling Cliffs

The Great Australian Bight is famous for its rugged cliffs and wild coastline. The highway runs quite close to the edge of the cliffs in places. Numerous marked areas let you get off the Eyre Highway and check out the rugged coastline.

The cliffs are quite dangerous. They are unstable and tend to break off in enormous chunks. As a result, several rest areas are closed. You'd be well advised to heed any warning signs... and keep a good eye on your kids.

Actually getting out of your vehicle and walking around gives you a feel for the scale of this place. Looking south, next stop is Antarctica. Turn around and look north – all you can see is an endless flat, treeless plain. Awe-inspiring.



STANDING ON THE SIGN THAT'S STANDING ON THE BIGHT



THE GREAT AUSTRALIAN BIGHT



IT WAS PRETTY COLD AND WINDY



RUGGED CLIFFS AND WILD WATERS.

Isolation

About 100km west of Nullarbor Roadhouse is the turn-off to Koonalda Station. This turn-off is unmarked. A couple at Ceduna had told us where to turn off – vague instructions about passing the four hundredth camel sign and turn right just after the burnt out log or something like this! However with a decent GPS (HEMA or equivalent), you'll find it easily.

Follow the dirt road for 14km until you reach Old Eyre Highway. Cross the highway, continue for about a kilometre and you'll be there.

When we turned off Eyre Highway, I immediately had a strong feeling of remoteness. Completely illogical – the entire Nullarbor Plain is pretty darn remote! Perhaps seeing other vehicles on the highway reassured me we'd have help in case of a breakdown. Then to turn off into a vast open expanse, knowing we were 100% alone... well it was a little unsettling.

Strange. I'd never had this feeling before and it hasn't afflicted me since. Just saying.

Koonalda Station was to be our overnight rest stop. We'd covered over 400km since leaving Ceduna in the morning. Not bad, considering we weren't in a hurry to get anywhere. Situated in Nullarbor National Park, it was a working property until 1988.

The homestead is falling apart, the roof is caving in and of course there's dust covering everything. It looks sad and forlorn. The exterior is made from railway sleepers from the Trans Australian railway and some windows and doors are from the old Telegraph Station at Eucla.



NOTE THE FENCE: IRONBARK RAILWAY SLEEPERS!



THE ENTIRE HOUSE IS MADE FROM RAILWAY SLEEPERS.



THE HOUSE LOOKS SAD AND FORLORN.



KOONALDA STATION OUT-BUILDING.



INSIDE, THE HOUSE IS SLOWLY FALLING APART.

Victims Of The Old Eyre Highway

First impressions of Koonalda Station are that it's like an old scrap metal yard. Immediate thought? "Yuk, what a mess". Rows of old cars in various states of disrepair seem to be scattered everywhere. But once you realise why the cars are there, the place takes on an entirely different complexion.

You see, the Old Eyre Highway goes past the front gate. Koonalda was a service point for passing traffic – repairs, recoveries and fuel. Most of the old car bodies are wrecks of vehicles that didn't make it. Sadly, there's a fair share of mangled wrecks too. Clearly the Old Eyre Highway saw more than its fair share of bad accidents.



ONE OF THE ORIGINAL LAND-ROVERS, LOOKING WORSE FOR WEAR.



ALL BUT A FEW OF THE VEHICLES HAVE ROLLED. THIS IS A RARE INTACT EK HOLDEN.



EVEN KENWORTHS FELL APART ON THE OLD EYRE HIGHWAY!



NO DOUBT, BEHIND EVERY ONE OF THESE WRECKS IS AN AWFUL STORY.



A VC VALIANT USED FOR TARGET PRACTICE.

Remember, it was a dirt road all the way across. Rough and corrugated with reefs of rock and bull dust in the dry. In the wet, an ocean of mud. Breakdowns were common. Unreliable cars travelling

huge distances on such a notorious road was a bad combination. So when a vehicle expired – a common occurrence – it would be towed in and used for spare parts.

Ghosts Of The Past At Koonalda Station

Koonalda's a pretty spooky place at night. Wind rattling through loose corrugated iron roof sheets and doors banging on their hinges actually freaked me out a bit. While the place is fascinating and a stark reminder of hard times from our recent past, it's also full of ghosts.

Standing at the old fuel pump, you can almost see the old Holden trundling down the highway, smothered in a cloud of dust... an old bloke wandering out of the shed in his overalls... an oily rag in his back pocket... gazing at the billowing dust in the distance... waiting to see if the car turns in or continues on its way.



THE FUEL BOWSER AND "SERVICE STATION".

Nowhere To Hide

Late in the afternoon, a strong southerly change came through. Now a southerly in these parts can be savage – and it was. Fierce winds straight out of the Bight and no protection between the coast and our campsite.

We thought we were clever by setting up camp behind a shed. It worked a treat, until the wind swung around from the east in the middle of the night. All of a sudden, our little oasis was exposed to the full force of an easterly gale. All night the camper creaked and groaned... and the orchestra of old doors banging and corrugated iron flapping away continued.



WE THOUGHT WE WERE PRETTY CLEVER HIDING FROM THE WIND BEHIND THIS SHED - UNTIL THE WIND CHANGED DIRECTION IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT...

This was an initiation into the changeable weather and winds in this area. Be aware – strong winds can and do swing around a full 180 degrees in a matter of moments. You've been warned!



4. Koonalda Cave S.A.

Koonalda Cave – What Lies Beneath The Surface?

The Nullarbor is basically a huge slab of limestone. In places, the limestone has dissolved to form caves. Some of these caves connect with the ocean to form blowholes, while others contain drinkable water.



WATCH OUT FOR THE HOLE!

Koonalda Cave lies a few kilometres north of the homestead. Measuring 85 metres in diameter, this is a seriously large hole in the ground. The only indication of the cave is a fence. You won't see the sinkhole until you're right on top of it.

The sides drop vertically for about 20 metres – some parts are even undercut. From here, a steep slope leads down to the floor at about 70m depth. At this point, the cave opens into a giant 60 x 90 metre cavern. A domed roof towers about 40 metres overhead.



UNDERCUT WALLS. THE ENTRANCE HIDES A WHOLE OTHER UNDERGROUND WORLD.

More Questions Than Answers

Apparently, various caves branch off from the main chamber. Deep underground, Indigenous art dating back 22,000 years was discovered in the mid 20th century. Long lines of finger painting etched in the soft walls have given archeologists something to argue about... how they were created, given there's no natural light... what they mean... maybe they're just ancient graffiti... maybe they have cultural significance... maybe they point out where the flint mines are...

Koonalda Cave was explored by archeologists in the mid 1950s. At the time, it was thought Aboriginals had occupied Australia for "only" 8,700 years. This discovery turned accepted knowledge on its head. Go [here](#) for more details.

The local Mirning people used the cave to mine flint and as a source of drinking water. Being hard and durable, flint was ideal for stone tools. Remember, this was happening around 22,000 years ago.

More recently, Koonalda Cave was used as an initiation site. Modern cavers use ropes and ladders to descend the cave. But the Indigenous people have a pathway down the sheer walls – they have no need of ladders.

The Plain Lives And Breathes

Modern Indigenous people were afraid of the Nullarbor. They believed the magic snake Ganba lived below the surface. He would come to the surface and thrash around, causing dust storms. He would drink all the rainwater – as soon as it rained, the water disappeared. He ate all the trees. He ate people – many people entered the Nullarbor, never to return. He was an all-round bad dude.



GANBA'S TERRITORY. FORMIDABLE COUNTRY. STARVATION, DEHYDRATION OR DISAPPEARING DOWN A HOLE – VERY REAL TRAPS FOR THE UNWARY OR FOOLISH.

It's a great explanation of what these people witnessed. Think about it – there are many sinkholes descending into caves. A change in air pressure at the surface causes the air to either rush in or out of the holes. Small holes in the plain that appear to be breathing. Even worse, the accompanying sounds can send chills down your spine. Ganba's down there – it all makes sense.



ONE LONELY TREE LOOKS DECIDEDLY OUT OF PLACE.



KOONALDA CAVE DWARFS OUR 4WD.

Therefore the Indigenous people tended to live along the coast and not venture far onto the plain. Fresh water was found in soaks behind sand dunes. Given Ganba was lurking, Koonalda Cave was used as an initiation site – the ultimate test of manhood.



5. Koonalda Caves S.A. to Border Village S.A.

Wild Winds, Wild Ocean

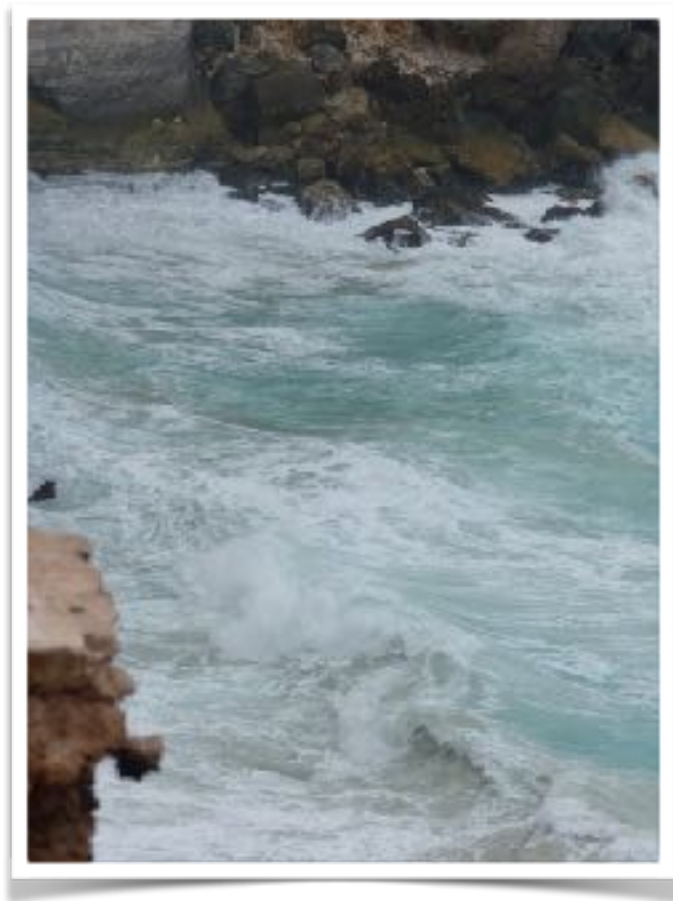
Clearly, the weather gods decided we needed an initiation. A ferocious Easterly gale overnight tried to blow us clean off Nullarbor Plain!

Back onto the Eyre Highway and travelling west again. At least we had the wind behind us. This part of the Great Australian Bight is feared by sailors. A couple of really good viewing areas showed us why...

The ocean was a boiling cauldron, smashing up against the giant limestone cliffs. The photos simply don't do it justice.



THIS IS WHY SAILORS HAVE NIGHTMARES ABOUT THE BIGHT. CERTAIN DEATH AWAITS THE INEXPERIENCED OR UNFORTUNATE.



A BOILING MESS...



...BUT STILL BEAUTIFUL.

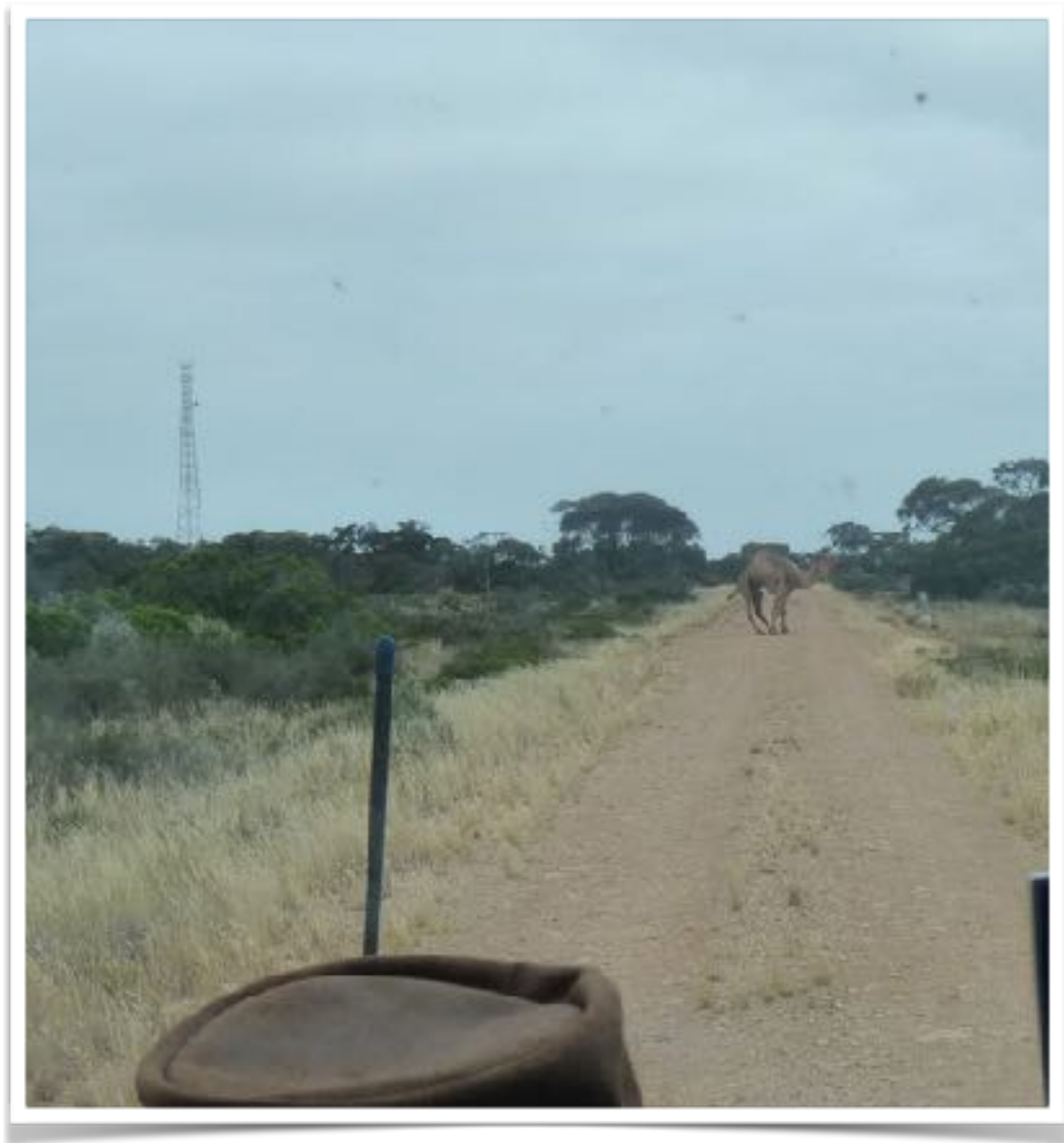
Old Eyre Highway – Rock, Tyre Tubes... And A Camel!

Turn right off Eyre Highway about 20km east of Border Village. This takes you to a short section of the Old Eyre Highway. It gives you a small taste of what road conditions were like.

We encountered a huge camel on the track. He ran in front of us for ages, wagging his oversized camel head from side to side. There was no way he was going to get off the track! His bottom lip was flopping around all over the place as he ran – looked hilarious and the kids were in hysterics.



THIS CAMEL DECIDED HE NEEDED SOME EXERCISE.



"OH MAN, WHICH WAY DO I GO? I'M LOST!"

Old Eyre Highway takes you to the eastern edge of Border Village. Its surface is hard rock all the way. When it was the main route, it would have been a nightmare journey – hard limestone rock for hundreds of kms, huge corrugations, bottomless pits of bull dust, then mud in the wet.

Old Eyre Highway was notorious for rollovers. The [car graveyard](#) at Koonalda Station is testament to this. Bull dust holes were the main cause. Almost impossible to see but when you hit one at speed, you and your vehicle would be launched into the air or whipped sideways. Cars and trucks often ended up on their roofs.

Old tyre tubes are still strewn along the road. It wasn't unusual to carry 6 spare tyres back in the days of cross-ply tyres and tubes. Then you'd be repairing tubes on the side of the road once they were all used up.

The old highway looks lonely now. Bushes and trees grow out of the surface and it has a slightly spooky and abandoned feel. One day we'll re-trace the old highway. If you decide to travel this road, be aware it's very remote and really is the "road less travelled". Be prepared.

Ray Gilleland has written a fascinating account of his daily struggles with the Old Eyre Highway. He was a long-distance truck driver from Sydney to Perth and return in the 1950's. Called "[The Nullarbor Kid](#)", it's well worth reading – a living history of times gone by.



THE OLD EYRE HIGHWAY. MUST HAVE BEEN AN EPIC JOURNEY IN ITS DAY.

Border Village – They Stole Our Honey And Messed Up Our Time Zones!

Back onto Eyre Highway at Border Village and through the fruit quarantine station. All fruit disappeared into the bin, along with our precious jar of honey. There's a business opportunity for a fruit shop here!

You'll need to turn your clocks back to Central Western Standard Time. We never even knew there was such a thing! Very confusing.

This bizarre timezone covers a small patch from Border Village to Caiguna in the west. It's 45 minutes ahead of the rest of WA. But WA is 1-½ hours behind SA. So Border Village to Caiguna is 45 minutes behind SA. Best you just ignore it all and hope for the best...

Border Village is a popular rest area for professional drivers... and a popular point for travellers attempting to eat thirty oranges before they cross over the border.



THE OBLIGATORY BORDER CROSSING PHOTO.



LAND OF THE LONG TRUCKS.



OUR NEMESIS – THE QUARANTINE STATION AT THE WA/SA BORDER.



6. Border Village S.A. To Caiguna W.A.

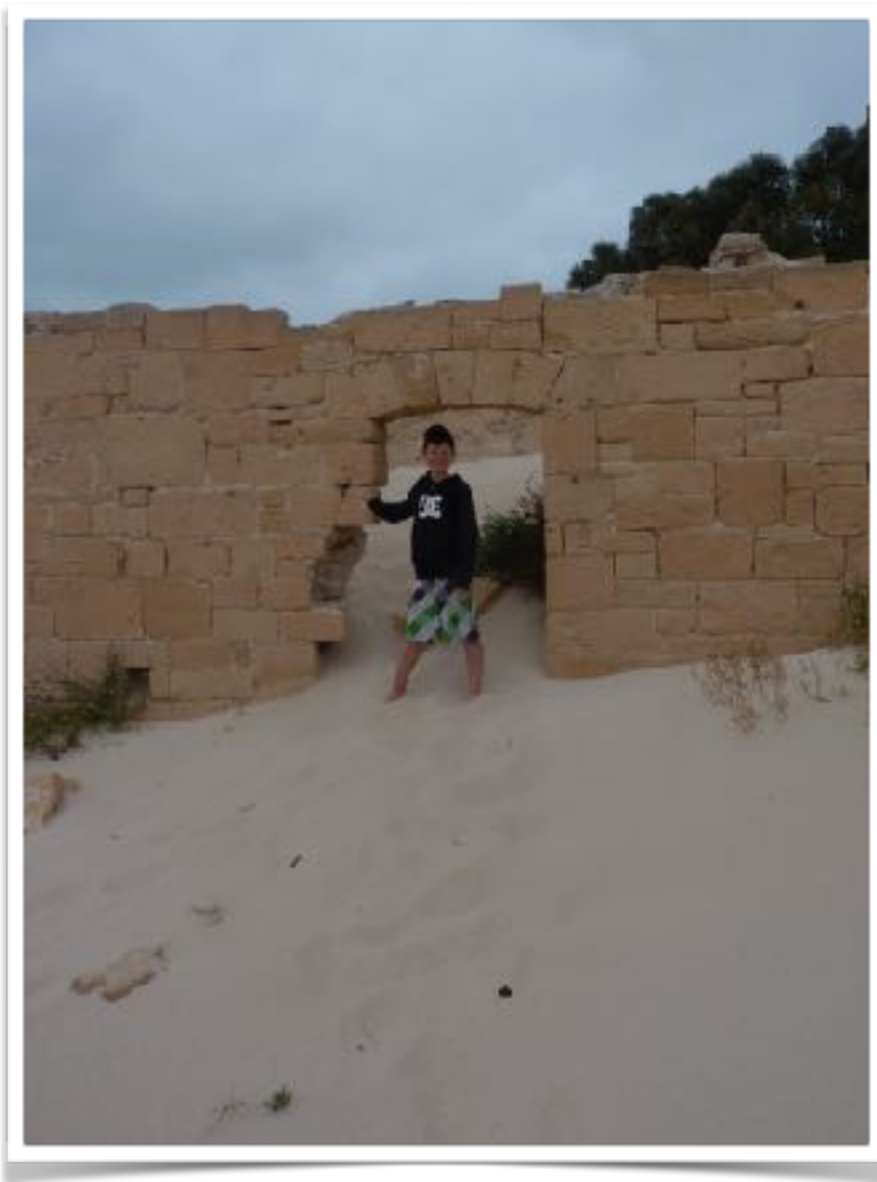
Eucla. In Western Australia At Last!

Just 12km west of Border Village is the settlement of Eucla. Eucla is the easternmost settlement in Western Australia. WA itself is massive, it covers about one third of Australia's landmass.

Eucla's claim to fame is the Old Telegraph Station. Construction of an overland telegraph line from Adelaide to Albany started in the 1870's. A manual repeater station was built at Eucla. An operator would receive a Morse code signal, then re-transmit it to the next repeater station.



THE OLD TELEGRAPH STATION. ALL BUT BURIED UNDER THE GLARINGLY-WHITE SAND DUNES.



THE FRONT DOOR OF THE OLD TELEGRAPH STATION.

A port was established to supply the township. A jetty and tram line were built from the port to the township.

The existing village of Eucla is on top of an escarpment. This escarpment runs about 300km westwards, forming the Roe Plains down to the ocean. You'll clearly see the escarpment if you zoom in on the map at the end of this post. The Eyre Highway drops down onto the plain via Eucla Pass – a surprisingly long descent.

Originally the township was on the plain and surrounded the Telegraph Station. However, a rabbit plague in the 1890's stripped the area of vegetation and de-stabilised the sand dunes.

Once this happened, the dunes began to move and swallow the settlement. Eucla was re-located to its present location. The disused Telegraph Station was left to be buried under the ever-shifting sand dunes.



STANDING AT THE OLD TELEGRAPH STATION, LOOKING NORTH TO EUCLA ON THE ESCARPMENT.

Remnants of the old jetty remain. It's possible to walk to the jetty from the Old Telegraph Station and dip your toes in the Southern Ocean.

Caiguna... What Time Is It?

Back onto the highway. We made it to Caiguna Roadhouse. Delicious-looking hamburgers were being served, so we all agreed this was a good place to stay for the night. You might not be very inspired by first impressions, but the place was friendly, the food was great and the amenities were clean. Can't ask for more than this!

We arrived sometime around 3pm. We were so confused about the hither-to unknown time zone (see [here](#) for details), so I asked the young lady behind the counter what time it was. She had no idea either!

It was freezing cold and windy. But we found a protected spot behind the main building, nestled under a small tree. Very cosy. We each had a hamburger in the Roadhouse for dinner and decided life was pretty good!



7. Caiguna W.A. to Norseman W.A.

The 90 Mile Straight

Caiguna is at the eastern end of the 90 Mile Straight – 146.6km of arrow-straight road. It's the longest stretch of straight road in Australia and one of the longest in the world. These facts give you something to look forward to as you start your drive along this straight. But after a while, reality sets in and monotony takes over.



WE MADE IT TO THE WESTERN END WITHOUT FALLING ASLEEP.

It's almost like Caiguna was established just to give people somewhere to pull over and recover from holding the steering wheel dead straight for 146km.

Actually, this is not far from the truth. Caiguna was established in 1962 to provide facilities for people driving to and from the Commonwealth Games in Perth.

Balladonia – The Sky Is Falling!

The settlement of Balladonia is 200km and just a few gentle curves west of Caiguna. Nearby Balladonia Station was established in the 1870s as a sheep station. Balladonia settlement was another link in the Overland Telegraph line. Today, travellers enjoy welcome break from their long journey in a [modern roadhouse and motel](#).

Balladonia's claim to fame is its connection to Skylab. For those too young to remember, Skylab was the United States' first orbiting space station. It orbited the Earth from 1973 to 1979. Skylab sustained damage at initial launch, which was patched up by the first group of astronauts to visit

Skylab. However, over time Skylab's orbit had been affected and eventually it re-entered the Earth's atmosphere.



EMUS EN ROUTE TO BALLADONIA – NOT THE SMARTEST CREATURES ON THE PLANET!

Skylab's re-entry made worldwide news at the time. Of course the tabloids went crazy with predictions of mass wipeouts in major cities. NASA frantically tried to steer it away from populated areas and it looked like Skylab would fall to Earth in South Africa.

On 11th July, 1979 Skylab came back to Earth in Western Australia, not South Africa as forecast. Balladonia was one of the places showered with space debris, prompting President Jimmy Carter to apologise for the mess!

Fraser Range Station – Trees Again!

[Fraser Range Station](#) is east of Balladonia, nestled in the granite hills of Fraser Range. You're back into the trees – in fact you're surrounded by the biggest hardwood eucalyptus forest in the world. Everything's big in Western Australia!

You're now a stone's throw – just 105km – from Norseman, the unofficial end of the Nullarbor. Fraser Range Station is a great place to put up your feet and chill out for a while.



STUMPY TAIL LIZARD. WELL CAMOUFLAGED ON THE GRAVEL.



LAVENDER THRIVING IN THE ARID CLIMATE.



GALAHS HANGING OUT AT FRASER RANGE STATION.



FRASER RANGE STATION, A WORKING PROPERTY.



GREENERY – A CONTRAST TO THE NULLARBOR PLAIN!



HILLS OF THE FRASER RANGES IN THE BACKGROUND.



OUR CAMPSITE. LOOKS A BIT SPARSE IN THIS PHOTO, BUT WAS ACTUALLY A GREAT SPOT.

We took this opportunity to catch up on the kids' schooling and do some washing. They loved the place. Rob the Manager took the kids to change over the generators and do various odd jobs. They loved riding around in Rob's old Nissan Patrol ute.

Norseman – North Or South?

Norseman is the unofficial end of your Nullarbor journey. Congratulations, you made it! Now you have a choice to make – North or South? Turn south – access to South-West WA... Esperance, Albany, the giant Karri and Tingle forests. Turn North – access to the Goldfields, Perth and the rest of Western Australia! The choice is yours...



8. Other Unusual Travel Destinations

What Else Can I See Along The Nullarbor?

Short answer – lots!

You have a choice of some quite unusual travel destinations... places rarely visited. We'll have a quick look at some of your options.



A LONE VEHICLE MAKES ITS WAY ACROSS THE VASTNESS OF THE NULLARBOR.

This list is by no means exhaustive. Rather it's a starting point to give you more ideas on what to see as you explore the Nullarbor Plain. We've not been to many of the places listed below – yet. We'll add them as we explore each and every one of them!

Let's get started.

Old Eyre Highway

You can follow the old Eyre Highway all the way from Nullarbor Roadhouse to Border Village in the west. We followed it from [Koonalda Station to Border Village](#). When the highway was re-aligned further south in the 1970s, the old highway was no longer maintained.

You'll get a feel for what an epic journey this was. Picture in your mind the mud, dust and corrugations for hundreds of kilometres.

For more detailed information on what to see and do, check out these [trek notes from exploreoz](#).

Nullarbor's Famous Caves

Caves are dotted all across the Nullarbor. A hole the size of your fist on the surface could well open into a giant underground chamber. Even caves that appear to be big on the surface can be many times larger underground. [Koonalda Cave](#) is one such example.

Many websites can give you a glimpse into the Nullarbor's magical underground world. just a few examples are [Australian Geographic](#), [The Wilderness Society](#) and [this video](#) from ABC Science Online. Although slightly dated (from 1993), it has some beautiful footage of the caves.

The Trans-Australian Railway

Stretching over 1,700km from Port Augusta in the east to Kalgoorlie in the west, the Trans-Australian Railway is a vital transport link. It includes the world's longest straight stretch – an extraordinary 478km. It was completed in 1917.

Access along the service track beside the line is strictly prohibited. People still run the gauntlet and drive or ride the access track. However, remember you are travelling through private property – I'm sure you wouldn't like random people driving through your back yard. Secondly, if you break down and the train has to stop you'll be paying a massive fine. This covers the cost of stopping and re-starting a huge train and the delays you've caused at the other end. You've been warned...

There are over 50 settlements listed along the line. They were established to supply and maintain the steam locomotives and the line itself. Most are now ruins or on private property. The remainder are ghost towns. Once the line was privatised, the few remaining residents left for good.

However, you can access a few of the settlements along the line from the Eyre Highway to the south. Information is sketchy, but if you're really keen, start [here](#). For a personal account of the "good old days" on the line, go [here](#).

[Kalgoorlie Tourist Information Centre](#) and [Wadlata Outback Centre](#) in Port Augusta are great starting points. They should have up to date information on access to settlements along the line.

Nullarbor Links – Fancy A Round Of Golf?

If you're desperate for a golf game as you cross the Nullarbor, you're in luck! An 18 hole golf course spans the Nullarbor. But bring your golf cart – it's nearly 1,400km from start to finish. Hole 1 is at Ceduna, hole 18 at Kalgoorlie. Enjoy!

Pedestrian.tv have a [light-hearted video on Nullarbor Links](#).

Maralinga – Ground Zero

In the 1950's the nuclear arms race was in full swing. Britain was desperate to catch up with the US and USSR. What better place to test nuclear weapons than the Australian Outback? After all, there's nothing out there... is there?

British colonial arrogance and Australia's simpering submission to the "mother country" were a bad mix. The effects of nuclear fallout on the local Indigenous population were ignored. A sobering account can be found [here](#). Be sure to watch the video at the end.

Accounts of servicemen being used as human guinea pigs and [numerous birth defects](#) have also come to light over the years.

Maralinga is a shameful chapter in our history.

Having said this, Maralinga is a [popular destination](#) for those wanting to see it for themselves.

Len Beadell Tracks

The [Connie Sue Highway](#) runs from Rawlinna on the Trans-Australian Railway to Warburton in central east WA. Built by the famed [Len Beadell](#), it can be accessed from Cocklebiddy on the Eyre Highway.

Be warned – it is a highway by name only. The Connie Sue is remote and unforgiving. Preparation is essential.

Nuytsland Nature Reserve

[Nuytsland Nature Reserve](#) is located on the coast, south of Cocklebiddy. It's best known as the site of the Eyre Bird Observatory. The observatory was actually Eyre Telegraph Station before it was moved away from the coast.

Last Thoughts

So there you have it.

Of course there's way more to see than what I've listed above. The Nullarbor's full of surprises – so much more than a treeless plain.

And always remember to have a yarn with the locals. The people are friendly and relaxed. Typical country people...