

# Self Drive Tour

## Kinchega National Park



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Kinchega National Park is a vast landscape, rich in both Aboriginal and Pastoral history. An impressive diversity of environments from bluebush plains to spectacular lakes to the grandeur of the River Red Gums on the Darling River. The best way to take in the changing environment is via car.

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### The River Drive

The River Drive follows the meandering path of the Darling River for about 20km. Along its length you will find 34 shaded campsites, the remains of the PS Providence, scar trees and a fish ladder at Weir 32.

#### The Lake Drive

The Lake Drive follows the shores of Lakes Menindee and Cawndilla and the interconnecting Morton Boulka Swamp terminating at the Cawndilla Campground. Early morning and late afternoon trips along this 18km stretch of road is the best way to see large numbers of red kangaroos. Morton Boulka is a great spot for bird watching.

#### The Woolshed Drive

The Historic Kinchega Woolshed and Shearers' Quarters complex is located at the end of the 6.5km length of the Woolshed Drive. This is also the way to access Emu Lake Campground.

#### The Homestead Bend

This short stretch of road is located off the River Drive and is where you will find the ruins of the Old Kinchega Homestead and the Old Kinchega cemetery.

### GETTING THERE

Kinchega National Park is located 110km south east of Broken Hill on the Broken – Menindee Road. The township of Menindee is two kilometres from the park entrance.

### THE RIVER DRIVE

The River Drive is approximately 20km and commences at the Menindee Lake Outlet Regulator where Lake Menindee empties into the Little Menindee Creek before entering the Darling River.

It follows the meandering path of the Darling River amongst the River Red Gums. Along its length you will find 34 shaded campsites all with a bin and wood BBQ, some sites also have picnic tables. Pit toilets are located at campsites 2, 5, 20 and 34.

Look closely at the trees as you pass. Some bear the scars of Aboriginal industry with Coolamons (carry baskets) or Canoes cut from their bark. If you look closely some have toe holes for access up into the tree's canopy.

The trees also tell the stories of past floods with the height of the past massive floods etched into their bark. You can view the level of specific floods on a tree located south of the Homestead Bend turn off.

Many of the River Red Gums are hundreds of years old and have seen the passing of time. They are home to many different animals such as Pink Cockatoos, Possums and Murray Darling Carpet Pythons. It is estimated that it will take 150 years for a tree planted today to reach hollow bearing size of 50cm diameter at breast height. Imagine just how old some of the giant River Red Gums must be along the river.

### Weir 32

Weir 32 is a favourite fishing location especially when the water levels change and fish are on the bite. A fish ladder was installed here in 2009 to help native fish travel up the river for breeding events. The rocks of the Weir are occasionally used by locals to create a fish trap in the traditional manner used up stream. A maze of slow moving water is created and fish are thrown up onto the bank by a person standing in the water as the fish navigate the maze.

### PS Providence

The boiler of the ill fated *PS Providence* lies on the bank of the Darling River. It exploded in 1872 killing all members of the crew, who are buried in unmarked graves in the Old Kinchega Cemetery. The only person to survive the disaster was a passenger from Wilcannia travelling to visit family.

The explosion was so loud it was heard in the Kinchega Woolshed and so powerful that it threw supplies across the river and the ship's cook into a tree.

There are two stories about why the *PS Providence* exploded:

1. The boiler was faultily constructed, and from the day of the boat's first voyage was a time bomb waiting to go off.
2. After being stuck for several months due to low river levels the crew celebrated when they reached the township of Menindee. When they boarded the boat the next day they did not check the fatally low water levels before firing up the boiler and it exploded a short way down river.

## THE LAKE DRIVE

The Lake Drive is approximately 18km and it follows the shores of Lakes Menindee and Cawndilla and the interconnecting Morton Boulka Swamp.

It is a great way to sample the different vegetation communities of Kinchega with River Red Gums along the lakes edges, Black Box in the swamps and Bluebush plains in between dispersed with Prickly Wattles.

While you are driving keep a look out for the many Red Kangaroos which like to sleep during the heat of the day under a Bluebush.

### Morton Boulka Picnic Area

About half way along the Lake Drive you will find Morton Boulka Picnic Area on the channel connecting Lakes Menindee and Cawndilla. This is a well know bird watching spot with a good understorey layer for birds to forage in.

The Picnic area is well shaded and has a pit toilet, wood BBQ and a picnic table.

### Cawndilla Camping Ground

At the end of the Lake Drive you will find the Cawndilla Camping Ground. This campground is right on the shores of Lake Cawndilla with several shaded spots complete with picnic tables, wood BBQs, pit toilets and a free gas BBQ to share.

A short stroll along the shores of Lake Cawndilla will reveal numerous animal tracks in the pristine white sand. If you are lucky you may even spot a hearth site (Old Aboriginal campfire) or a midden site (cluster of old Mussel shells) in the dunes surrounding the lake. Please do not disturb these sites.



## THE WOOLSHED DRIVE

The Woolshed Drive is approximately 6.5km and it will lead you to the Historic Kinchega Woolshed and Shearers' Quarters complex as well as the Emu Lake Campground.

After rain large patches of Darling lilies bloom as they emerge from their underground bulb with large green strappy leaves and beautiful white flowers.

### Emu Lake Campground

This intimate little campground is located on the shores of Emu Lake, an interment lake that only fills when the Darling River is close to or in flood.

It has wood BBQs, bins and a pit toilet and is only a short walk away from the facilities located at the Shearers' Quarters complex located at the Historic Kinchega Woolshed.

## HOMESTEAD BEND

The Homestead Bend is a short 1.5km detour off the River Drive and will lead you to the Old Kinchega Homestead Ruins and the Old Kinchega Cemetery. A short walk though these sites gives you a feel for the isolation experienced by the early pastoralists.

If you want to stretch you legs you can follow the edge of the Homestead Billabong to the Darling River. It is about a 2 km walk around the entire Billabong.

Watch the distinct vegetation changes from Bluebush in the red sand plains to Black Box and River Red Gums as the soil changes to heavy black clay.

## OLD POONCARIE / TANDOU ROAD

The Old Pooncarie Road traverses the park from North to South over a 38.5km drive. It is a great way to experience "Big sky country" of red sand and endless blue sky.

It passes the southern edge of Lake Cawndilla and provides a great view of the vastness of this lake when it is full.

The vegetation changes as you travel south and enter Kinchega's dune fields where you can see stands of Belah and Rosewood rather than just Bluebush plains for as far as the eye can see.

When you leave Kinchega National Park you can follow the Tandou Road west to the Silver City Highway (60km) or the Old Pooncarie Road south to Pooncarie.

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