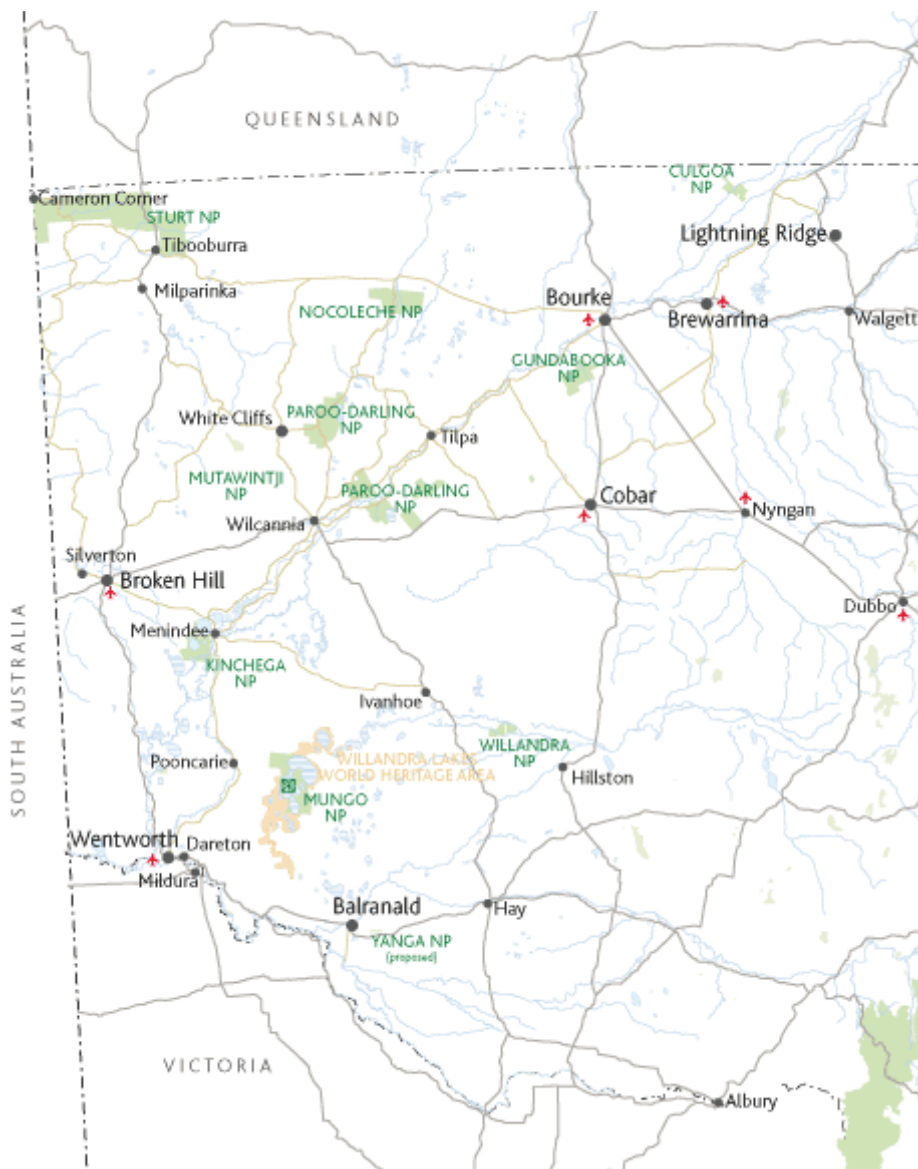




# Outback national parks

*Explore the Outback's national parks and you'll discover sun-baked sand dunes as well as lush wetlands teeming with wildlife.*



## An ancient land

The Outback might look timeless and rugged but it is actually a fragile environment, and the national parks of the region preserve the natural and cultural values of this special place. Spend some time exploring the back roads and walking tracks of these parks and not only will you discover the fascinating story of the plants and animals that have adapted to this harsh environment but you'll also walk in the footsteps of some of the earliest human inhabitants on earth.

## Mungo National Park

A journey into this wild, lonely moonscape of saltbush and sand dunes seared by the sun is an unforgettable experience. One of the first sites in Australia to be inscribed on the World Heritage List, the Willandra Lakes Area – including Mungo National Park – was described as 'a unique landmark in the study of human evolution on the Australian continent'.

The lakes that once existed here dried up 10,000 years ago and the crescent-shaped lunettes and dunes formed from quartz sands, cemented together by powdered clay, are now striking features of this landscape. The most famous of these are the Walls of China, which tower 30 m above the plain and run for 30 km.

The lakes provided a rich wetland habitat and a natural food supply for the Aboriginal people who lived here about 60,000 years ago. Over that time burial rituals developed – this is the oldest known burial site – and there is also



**Photographs**  
above left to right: Mungo National Park (Barry Skipsey); Kinchega National Park (Graham Robertson/Auscape); Mutawintji National Park (Tourism Broken Hill); Kultarr, a marsupial (C. Andrew Henley/Auscape)

evidence of one of the earliest uses of the grindstone in human history. The 65-km self-drive tour through the park, easily accessed via Wentworth, has 15 stops and takes in all the main attractions of the park.

### Mutawintji National Park

In the cracks and folds of the scorched sandstone peaks of the Bynguano Range, north-east of Broken Hill, the permanent water supply made this area a virtual oasis for Aboriginal people. Even in the worst drought, they could hunt rock wallabies and goannas, and gather berries and fruit. It was here that the totemic figures of hunting tales and Creation stories were inscribed on the rock. The finest examples of rock art are found in the Mutawintji Historic Site, a restricted area that can be visited on a guided tour with Aboriginal Discovery Rangers.

Mutawintji's landscape of red rock, saltbush and cypress pines is best explored on foot. One of the finest short walks in the park is the track leading along a creek from the original Mootwingee Homestead to Homestead Gorge, where water trickles from a fissure in the sheer red walls into a rock pool.

### Willandra National Park

Between Ivanhoe and Hillston, this national park is part of what was once Big Willandra Station. The early 20th-century homestead and its outbuildings have been preserved by the National Parks and Wildlife Service as an outstanding example of an Outback pastoral

property. The interior of the homestead looks much as it would have in its heyday, with books and letters lying open on desks and tables. The homestead is close to Willandra Creek, and the 20-km drive along the Merton Motor Trail is one of the best ways to explore Willandra's natural environment.

### Kinchega National Park

Once a large pastoral station, the 44,000-hectare Kinchega National Park offers archaeological sites, middens, stone relics and scarred trees left by the Paakantjii Aboriginal people. Close to the town of Menindee, a chain of natural lakes along the Darling River creates a sensational wetland habitat for huge flocks of birds.

Kinchega Woolshed stands as a monument in corrugated iron to the millions of sheep that were shorn here and also to the stout hands that worked the blades. Remnants of the brick homestead are nearby.

### Sturt National Park

In the far north of NSW, bordering Queensland and South Australia, the park's rolling red sand dunes and flat-topped mesas provide a habitat for wedge-tailed eagles, noisy corellas and bearded dragons, but most of all, for red kangaroos, the kings of the bush. At times you can expect to see thousands of big red kangaroos in mobs of anything up to several hundred. The park has four camp sites and the old Mount Wood Station offers accommodation.

### Paroo-Darling National Park

A rugged and isolated park in the Murray-Darling basin, the expansive lakes that form the Paroo River Overflow give a powerful sense of the astonishing wildlife riches of NSW Outback. When conditions are favourable, this pristine river system attracts waterbirds, including black swans and brolgas, in huge numbers. The natural attributes of this free-flowing river and the surrounding park are simply enchanting.

### Gundabooka National Park

Located 50 km south of Bourke, the rust-coloured cliffs, gorges and hills of the Gundabooka Range have enormous spiritual resonance for the Ngemba Aboriginal people. Some of the park's rock art sites can be explored via walking trails. The 5-km Little Mountain Track winds through mulga woodlands to the mountain summit, where the panoramas of the northern escarpment of the Gundabooka Range are outstanding.

### Yanga National Park

Opening soon, this park is less than 10 km east of Balranald. It features 150 km of Murrumbidgee River frontage, 17,000 hectares of red gum forest and an 1860s homestead.

**Be sure to call NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service for information on current road conditions before setting out for any national park. Telephone: 1300 361 967, or visit our website: [www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au](http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au)**