

Trip Report – Victoria, NSW, QLD and Northern Territory 2021 Innamincka to Home in SA

Special points of interest:

- Strzelecki Track
- More Outback camping
- Clare Valley (Wineries!!)

This is the final leg of our trip. We leave Innamincka and



Innamincka Reserve and Township

We had arrived at the border!

Innamincka (it's only a handful of buildings, including a store, hotel and RFDS depot) as well as its campsites along the nearby Cooper Creek was about 30kms further on, and we moved on to the outskirts of Innamincka and camped for a couple of hours.

We knew the important thing was to establish that we had arrived in SA before imposition of virus restrictions like testing and quarantine were applied. So we bought fuel at 9.00am at the general store, and had a receipt as evidence of being in SA on that date.

We were right to be concerned as it happens. The next day the border was closed and the new quarantine and testing requirement applied. We were told by SA Health staff that in fact it was to happen at 11.00am on the day we arrived – so we made it by mere hours.

My head felt all buzzy after a day and a night of driving, and a heap of coffee which had kept me going, so we found a camp site along the Cooper just over the creek from the township and, booked it online (Innamincka now has great Telstra coverage).

Mostly we rested this day here. But in the afternoon we drove out to Cullyamurra waterhole, where we had previously booked a national park campsite for three nights, just to have a look and see if there was a free site which appealed. On the drive out there it struck us just how dry and dusty the landscape was, and noted that despite what we had thought to be a good year for rains, it was very sad. Cullayamurra was similarly afflicted so we decided not to go out there to camp but rather to pack up the next day and head Southwards.

But that night we had dinner at the Outtamincka Bar at the hotel, and enjoyed a good meal and drinks.

The hotel was firm about adopting mandatory mask wearing, which we realised was Government imposed restrictions. No arguments from us, we had our masks and were happy to wear them.

So, onwards we travelled, on the Strzelecki Track. The Strzelecki is a major route for trucks, mine workers and travellers, but it can be rough in places. On this occasion it was pretty good, with few corrugations and we met very little other traffic. This would no doubt be because the border with QLD was closed. The only other traffic we came across was other SA residents, and the odd truck or mine worker. (There are endless numbers of Santos gas works all across the area).

Montecollina Bore

About 2.00pm we arrived at Montecollina Bore. This was once a beautiful spot, with a waterhole created by a bore which poured warm water from the Artesian basin below. On our first couple of trips here we enjoyed sitting at the pool's edge and admiring the birdlife. The bore is now capped and the pool is a dry shell. Along with the absent birds was an absence in fellow travellers; we were the only people here. Montecollina looks like a moonscape with its chalky hills held together by vegetation. To

the left is a picture of the bore as it was on our last visit.



It was certainly a peaceful night there, as we were the only people there. Last time, there were quite a few other campers.

So, early the next day we pressed on. Our trajectory took us further along the Strzelecki Track to Mount Hopeless, where a minor track dropped further South from there to

near Arkaroola, where we wanted to camp for a couple of days.

The area marked in yellow is the route we took, as opposed to the usual route to Lyndhurst.



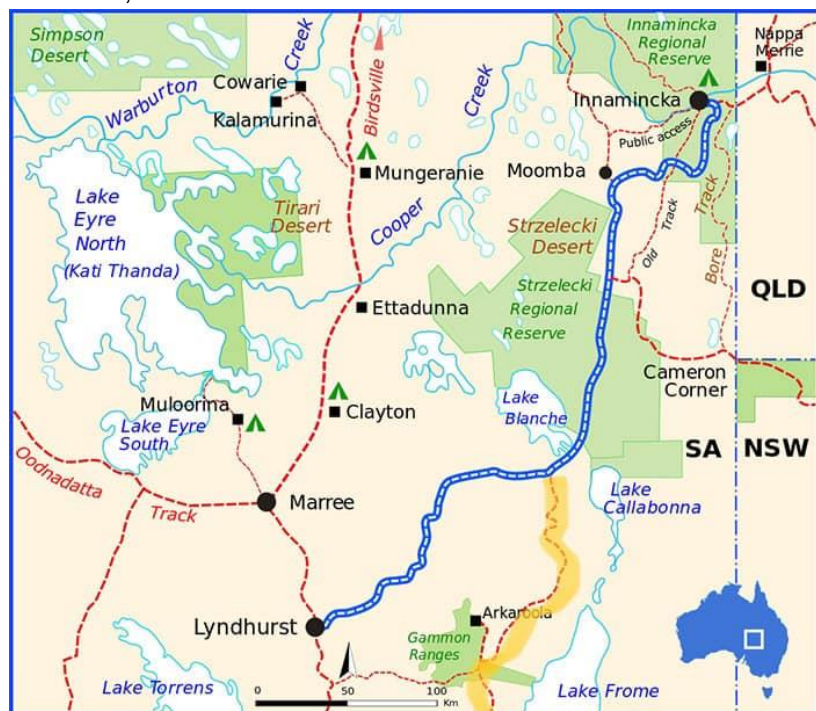
Weetootla

We camped at Weetootla campground in the Gammon Ranges. It was dry and dusty it is true, but we had a nice couple of days here and enjoyed a fire both nights. We visited Arkaroola Resort for a quick trip (60km round trip) as we needed fuel and it was good to check the emails and messages. Very few other travellers were

This monument was on the side of the road, and is a theme statue which can be seen at several Gammon Ranges locations.

Arkaroola as a place does not appeal, but it has fuel and internet so we knew we had to travel the 30 or so kms up from our camp. Why doesn't it appeal? Its dry and dusty and the staff are unfailingly distant and unhelpful. It has always been like this.

From here it was a reasonably short trip to our next campground, Aroona Ruins. Well it would have been a short trip except we missed our turnoff and added 60kms to our day's trip. Sigh.



Aroona Ruins Campground

Aroona is one of our favourite Flinders Ranges campgrounds. It has a view to die for (of the ABC Range), water taps at many of the sites and a drop toilet. On the downside, there is no phone reception, and it is accessed on gravel roads. The roads are well maintained, though.

Our favourite spot (site 11) was booked by others so we went to the site we stayed on our very first visit there (site 9).

As there is a tap on the site, with spring water, we connected the hose for long enough to do some washing in the machine and did the sheets and towels as well as the bedspread.



One day of our three day stay we did a day trip to Wilpena Resort to check emails and buy potatoes for our roast dinner the next night. Having a fire at night meant we could cook a roast and enjoy the extra special flavour added by campfire cooking.

We had booked for four nights but the fourth day

was the date nominated on our border crossing forms for arrival in SA and we expected an email from SA Police to confirm our arrival. We had no phone or internet reception at Aroona so needed to be in an area where we could confirm by reply to the expected email. That meant leaving and driving further South.

This border confirmation was related back to before crossing the border. We had to apply for a permit to cross the border, at least seven days prior. And we were required to give an expected date of crossing. In the event, things changed and we had to get back to SA earlier. I did notify SA Health of our earlier arrival as well as SAPOL, so all was good.



We downloaded the expected SAPOL email at Wilpena, responded, and kept driving.

Our next stop was at Farrell Flat, a small town between Burra and Clare, where they have a by-donation camp with water taps, toilets, a dump point and a nearby hotel for dinner. We stayed here for three lovely days, and took a photo of their new silo art work.

While at Farrell Flat we went to the hotel for dinner, and enjoyed an exceptional meal. The publican was a chef in a former life. On another day we visited a winery at Paulett's which is not all that far from the campground. What a superb meal we had!

After another three days at Farrell Flat (interspersed with day trips to Clare and Burra) we left for a further four days at Auburn caravan park.

The attraction of the caravan park at Auburn is the intimate feel and price. Aaaaand it is just around the corner from Terroir, an amazingly good restaurant. This time around we also went to the Auburn Hotel for dinner – and it was just superb too.

Our good friends Rick and Leah joined us here at the caravan park and were parked right next door. It was good to have a few chats with them around the fire in the late afternoons.



To top it all off we went to nearby Koonowla Winery (just three kms from the caravan park) and were amazed at what a charming place it is to visit. The buildings were worth the visit all by themselves, but the terrace to sit and have a tasting or platter was quite lovely too. The views of the grapevines and a creek were a pleasant backdrop to the visit.

We were lucky the weather was so nice for this stay in the Clare Valley and we were able to enjoy sunny, crisp days.

But all good things must come to an end and finally we bid goodbye to Rick and



Leah, and headed home, about an hour and a half away. It was raining most of the way but as we pulled up out front of our house the sun came out!