

Trip to the Coorong (SA)

Parnka Point

In recent times we had been busy and had some stressful experiences to deal with and so we thought a few days away in the Coorong would be a nice and relaxing break. Our first visit to the area had been in the month of February (2006?) and on that occasion it had been very warm; but this time we had cooler weather and some rain.

Special points of interest:

- Wildflowers
- The higher water levels
- Pelicans

Trip report

It was nearly 9.00am when we left home in the Barossa and headed southwards. A light rain was misting the windscreen as we drove the landcruiser and van out the front gate and onto the main road. I was torn between being glad the region and our garden was getting a welcome shower, and disappointed at going away camping in wet weather.



Foreshore, Lake Albert, at Meningie

Our intent was to go to the Coorong via Strathalbyn and call in to the Potts Reserve camp ground on the way. As it happens, we quickly drove in to Potts Reserve to make a quick cup of coffee, and then had lunch at a nearby winery. Then we continued to the Coorong.

It was 12 noon when we arrived from Wellington at Potts Reserve, so we stopped and refreshed our travelling coffee mugs.

Frank Potts Reserve

139°2'32"E, 35°17'56"S

On the Wellington side of Langhorne Creek, and just off the Wellington road going past, this is a nice, shady and well grassed camp site which has recently had a composting toilet installed.

There are a few gum trees but you can pull well away from directly underneath them, and still have shade.

It is close to Langhorne Creek and near to wineries, an olive outlet, and other attractions. I believe it is walking distance to the nearby town, but can't vouch for that.

We only pulled in briefly, but it was quiet and peaceful, with a couple of other vans nearby. Dogs are allowed, and I saw a couple from a motorhome walking their doggy friend.

This would be a great place to stay for a couple of days (or even longer) to see the surrounding region. In future we will go down and stay here for a couple of days, to relax and enjoy the region's attractions (which include a couple of forum members) and not have to drive far afterwards.

I can certainly vouch for the winery and restaurant called Rusticana. We had lunch there and shared a lovely ploughman's lunch with a glass of a local red wine called "durif".

As we headed south we drove past the small town of Meningie and were amazed at the water levels. At the time of our last stay here the water was way out over a beach and now the water was right up to the edge of Lake Albert.

There are a couple of picnic areas close to Meningie, but the best one is a couple of kms north of the town on the lake's foreshore, and it is an area which can accommodate big rigs. It is certainly a nice spot to pull over for a short break – but obviously, no camping is allowed. We stopped at Meningie to pick up some groceries and then kept going.

Parnka Point

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There are two separate camp grounds at Parnka Point, as well as a headland with picnic facilities (which include covered shelters, useful in the ever present strong winds here) and toilets.



Headland at Parnka Point

The camp grounds are on the flat and lowered areas. Both can comfortably accommodate about four sets of campers in separate bays, recessed into vegetation. So far, there are minimal bollards! The first site in from the road is the spot we have always stayed at, and although it is further from the lake's edge, is more protected from wind if there is bad weather. The second camp ground is more appealing as the sites are right near the water's edge. But it is a lot more open than the spot we chose. The road is a good all weather gravel road about 3kms in from the Highway.

There were prolific wildflowers when we were there, little paper daisies which were everywhere

you could see. I felt like a criminal stepping on them but there was little choice....

The weather was relatively kind to us while we were here and there was little wind. But the weather forecasts said there were damaging winds and flash flooding at Victor Harbour...we saw little of that, just some minor high wind.

As there was relatively good mobile reception (with the external aerial), I was able to use the internet and able to be on call for work for the time we were here. Val connected up the satellite dish and we watched TV every night. The solar system was providing more power than we needed, as it always does.

We did a day trip over to the 42 Mile Camp site, further south in the Coorong, to check it out. It had been our plan to stay there for a couple of days after Parnka Point, but I soon realised that the 42 Mile does not have sufficient mobile phone reception. As I needed the phone for work, this was not an option for us.

But the park camp ground there is very appealing. The grass was green, there was shade from nice trees, good separation in the form of vegetation and a set of what appeared to be self composting toilets. The camp ground is set behind dunes separating it from the water. You can't see the water from the camp ground but there is a 4WD track which heads over to the beach. There was only one small motorhome there on the day we visited but there is room for quite a few big rigs.

I would love to stay here another time, when work is not intruding.

However, weather allowing, I think the best camp site is probably the second site at Parnka Point, right on the water's edge.

Generally, in the south of the Coorong the salt pans are usually dry and the crossings (28 Mile and 32 Mile, which are off the Old Coorong Road) are accessible by 4WD to the beach.

Clearly you need to lower your tyres if there is soft sand.... Tea Tree Crossing, the most northerly of the crossings, was closed when we were there, presumably because of water over the track. Again, it is rare for it to be closed, and this access to the beach is generally one of the more reliable tracks.

You are allowed to camp anywhere along the beach between the high and low tide marks, and at selected spots which are marked with a post and a track leads off the beach to protected camping sites back from the water and behind dunes or vegetation. This is not for vans, although we are tempted to take a camper trailer sometime.

We called in to Chinaman's Well on a previous trip (just to the North of the 42 Mile Crossing) and it was fascinating. There is a short walk in through the scrub to some ruins from earlier European settlement and a sandstone capped well. It is worth the walk.

The track into Chinaman's Well is well signposted off the loop road, running for about 10 kms parallel to the highway. There is a number of designated camp spots along the loop, but they will only fit small rigs or camper trailers. We checked them all!

And that was the extent of a few days camping on the Coorong.