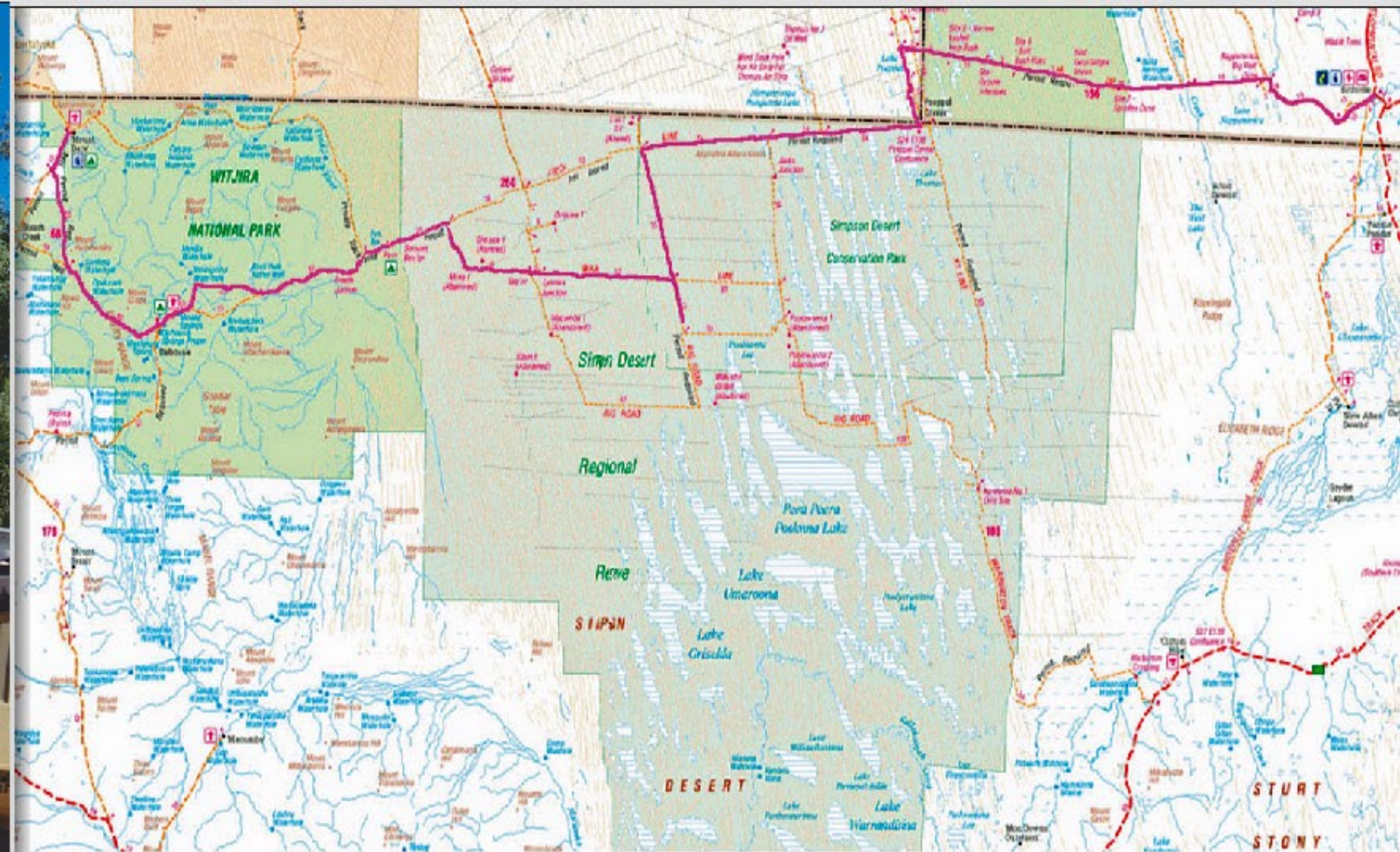




The Simpson Desert trip



## The Journey

Alice Springs to Birdsville, this route was the only way i could get to do this trip as the Oodnadatta track was closed due to rain.



# The Simpson Desert.

The Simpson Desert covers the corner of three states South Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland. The South Australian part is divided into three areas, the Simpson Desert Conservation park, the Simpson Desert Regional Reserve and the Witjira National Park.

There are around 1100 sand dunes running from north to south across the desert, so if you are crossing west to east or east to west you have them all to cross. Between the dunes are clay and saltpans, some of the crossings between the dunes can be wet after rains so it is advised to follow the tracks of previous travellers, i had two very muddy crossings to do in second gear low range.

Some of the sand dunes are challenging but if you are going from west to east Big Red is the last and biggest some 40 metres high, you can take a detour left or right of the highest part of big red, the dune is still big but not as steep.

The desert's normal rainfall is 130mm for the year this month it has had a lot of rain and is very wet. The desert is very green and full of wildflowers and water.

The French Petroleum Company built the tracks in The Simpson Desert in 1963 looking for oil and gas. The desert was known as the Arunta Desert or the Great Ribbed Desert, but in 1929 Cecil Madigan named it after Alan Simpson who was the president of the Royal Geographical Society in Adelaide.

# The Equipment.

My journey using a Toyota pop top camper with dual 90 litre fuel tanks, and a 50 litre water tank.

The plan was to go via the Oodnadatta track but due to rain the Oodnadatta track was closed, 5 days later it was still closed so i made my way to Alice Springs via Uluru, Kings Canyon and Palm Valley.

The road to Finke was closed for a few days due to the Finke races, so after the weekend in Alice Springs i leave and take the old Ghan track to Finke, the road to Mount Dare was closed so i detoured to Chambers Pillars, on my return the road to Mount Dare was open but very wet, i eventually arrive at Mount Dare fill up my fuel tanks and leave for Dalhousie Springs.

I arrive and stay at Dalhousie Springs, have a swim in the hot spring and leave next day for the Simpson Desert.

7 days later arriving in Birdsville.







Finke Desert  
3 day Race



Finke  
Aputula  
Footy  
Final  
On the Finke oval







## Chambers Pillar's

Left; Chambers Pillar, eagle rock

Top right; Window rock

Bottom right; Horizon

Bottom left; castle rock







Rainbow valley

Sunset





## Track to Mount Dare

Left; start of the track

Top left; water and mud

Top right; cows on the track

Bottom right; Mud mud and mud





## Mount Dare track

Mud mud n mud



## Witjiri National Park

very rocky track but dry





# Witjira National Park

The National Park itself 7,770 square kilometres of gibber, sand dunes, stony tablelands and floodplain country on the western edge of the Simpson Desert. The Pedirka desert covers 1,250 square kilometres of the Witjira national park, the Pedirka desert is said to be the smallest desert in Australia.

The road through to Mount Dare is very rocky and a single track.

There are places to stop at:  
Opossum water hole.  
3 o'clock creek.  
Charlotte Waters.



Right; Opossum Water Hole







Mount Dare Hotel

## Mount Dare Hotel

Mount Dare Hotel used to be part of a cattle station, the property was taken over by National Parks and Wildlife in 1984, when it then became the Witjira National Park. In 1989 the Homestead was leased out for tourism, the Pub was the old Station kitchen and was fast becoming derelict due to termites that had been left unchecked for years causing big damage.

David and Melissa Cox came to Mt Dare in May 2002 and it was very run down. It was decided that to build a new Pub from the ground up. An old machinery shed was chosen they started in January 2004, It wasn't until July 2006 that the new pub was finished and opened, the old Pub had lost its roof late the previous year and was only covered by a tarp.

Mount Dare Hotel has the only service available within the Witjira National Park and the Simpson Desert Conservation Park. No Park Pass is required if you only want to visit the Mt Dare Hotel, but a Pass is required for the Dalhousie Springs and the Simpson Desert.



Dave and Melissa ran the pub until July 2015 when they sold it to Graham and Sandra Scott who, with their family, will continue to provide hospitality and service to travellers to our little oasis in the desert.





Dalhousie Ruins

## Dalhousie Station Stock Yards

*Dalhousie Station is part of the Witjira national park since 1985*









## Desert Tracks

There are three main tracks: the French Line (the shortest), the Rig Road (the longest and southernmost) and the WAA Line, all converging into the QAA Line which goes to Birdsville.

The French Line is the most direct route across the Simpson Desert and most popular, further east the dunes become closer together, and there are numerous salt lake crossings. When these are dry they have a very firm base, however when wet they can become very sticky, in some cases impassable.



## Rig Road

The rig road is so called because it was clay capped to allow the movement of semi trailers hauling heavy oilrig equipment. Ramps were pushed up the side of the dunes. The dune crests were cut out, and the road was clay capped. The clay came from borrow pits in the interdunal corridors. The rig road travels through the southern desert, and eventually joins with the K1 line north to Poeppels corner.

## WAA Line

A line less travelled, the WAA is similar to the French Line but more remote. It crosses many clay pans, the Erebeena Track, the Beelaka airstrip, and a large salt lake shortly before it arrives at the intersection with the Knolls Track. The line is subject to very deep blowouts, mostly sloping to the north.



## QAA Line

The QAA line is accessed 18km north of Poeppels Corner. It is heavily used and badly scalloped. The line travels through Eastern Simpson Desert country, typified by wide swales and high well defined dunes. The swales are full of gidgee groves, and the sand is a deep orange. The swales are thick with Coolibah trees, and the whole flood plain can be extremely wet following floods. From Eyre Creek you travel through pastoral land leased by the Brooklands Pastoral Company.





## Simpson Desert

Left; Leaving Dalhousie Springs, with compulsory desert flag

Top left; water in the desert

Top right; 40km in the sky turns black

Bottom right; Freeth Junction an Aboriginal community







## Purni Bore

The French Petroleum Company drilled the bore in 1963, the depth of the well is 1880 metres. The well was capped, but after a few years the cap gave way and the water poured out to create the lake. The water flow started to effect the flow at Dalhousie springs so in 1987 the flow was reduced at the Purni Bore well so as to maintain the wetland. The wetland is busy with birdlife.







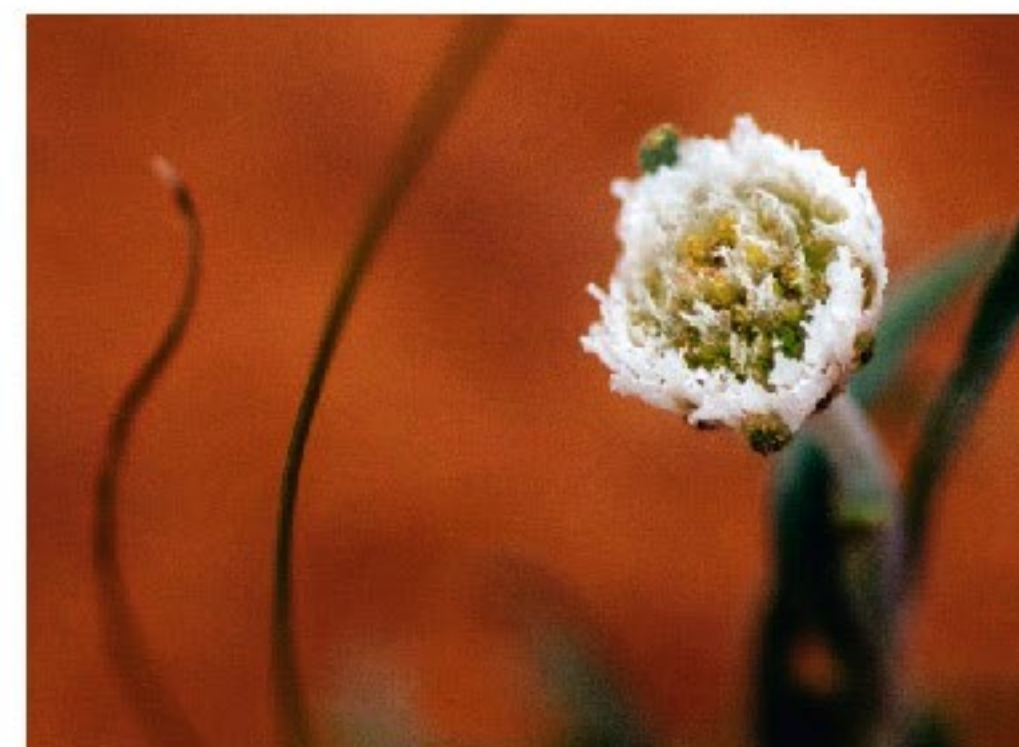
## Purní Bore

Top left; Zebra Finch

Top right; Lace Monitor

Bottom left; Dingo

Right; Wild Flowers





## Simpson Desert

Leaving Purni Bore



## The Tracks

I am taking the Rigg road to the WAA Line





# The Lone Gum Tree

Sunset



# The Lone Gum Tree

The Milky Way







## WAA Line

Top Left: In between the dunes called Swales

Top right; The WAA Line

Bottom right; Top of a dune on WAA track

Right ; The WAA Line







Wildflowers in the Simpson Desert







## Erabena Track

The WAA line is closed due to water and is impassable, so a ride up between the dunes on the Erabena track to the Frenchline is the way to go. The ride between the dunes is flat and no dunes to go up and over, a nice change.







## French Line

The French line is the busiest track through the Simpson Desert.





Claypan  
*A crossing between the dunes*







Claypan  
A Mud crossing between the dunes





Claypan  
A Mud crossing between the dunes





## Poeppels Corner

Top Left: Welcome to Country

Top right; New Marker for the meeting of the three states

Bottom left; New Marker for the meeting of the three states

Right ; The Marker for the meeting of South Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland







## Eyre Claypan

Glad of my new found friends as backup to get accross Eyre claypan

Top Left: Alternate route across Eyre claypan

Top right; Another mud crossing

Bottom right; Car after coming through the mud

Left ; The Eyre claypan crossing, had to wait for 2 cars to be towed out before we could go accross







*QAA Line*  
*Was wet, sometimes too wet*





## Munga Thirri National Park

Munga Thirri National Park is one million hectares and is Queensland's largest protected area. Once inside the park, you must keep to the QAA line, the remaining 170 km to Birdsville crosses loose sand dunes. The trip from Poeppel corner to Birdsville can take five to six hours so allow for an overnight stay, bush camping is permitted only within 500 metres of the QAA Line.

The track through Munga Thirri National Park is impassable when wet. Even small amounts of rain can make the track impassable, so always be prepared and have at least a week's worth of extra supplies in case of being stranded.







## QAA Line

The QAA line is 170km long and runs from Poepelle corner to Birdsville, when it is wet it can be a challenging, when very wet it can be impassable.

Top Left: Wet track

Top right; Sunrise on the QAA track

Right ; The last but one of the 1100 dunes across the desert







Claypan

Looking back from the top of Big



## Claypan

A Muddy claypan before Big Red



## Big Red

Said to be 40 metres high







## Big Red/Nappamerica Dune

Big Red is the largest in the Simpson Desert. It stands approximately 90 metres above sea level and 35 metres above the plain.

Top Left: 1st attempt, took me 3 tries to get to the top

Top right; Me coming up Big Red

Bottom right; Me at the top of Big Red

Right ; Big Red







## Big Red

Top Left: Big Red sand dune

Top right; Ripples in the dunes

Bottom right; Slack posing on Big Red

Left ; A well deserved beer at the top of Big Red,  
with friends from Victoria





Big Red

Sunset





Big Red  
Sunset in the dunes



Big Red  
Sunrise







Birdsville Pub

Left: At the pub

right: Having a beer at the pub







## Birdsville Race Club

Birdsville's busiest week of the year occurs in September. The population for Birdsville goes from 120 to some 7000 people, visitors come from all parts of Australia and the world for the Annual Birdsville Racing Carnival over two days.

The first race meeting was held in 1882 as an event for hack and stock horses with a few local spectators.





The trip through the Simpson Desert took 7 days.  
A total distance covered was 650 to 700 kilometers.

Fuel used was 75 litres.

Average speed was 20kph.

The Simpson desert was not as i imagined.

There were lots of wildflowers

Lots of water and mud.



7708563 7583