

# The Dutchmans Stern Conservation Park



Healthy Parks  
Healthy People



Government  
of South Australia



## The Dutchmans Stern Conservation Park

The main feature of this 3532 hectare reserve is the prominent bluff of The Dutchmans Stern. Visitors delight in exploring diverse landforms and habitats and conquering the summit on the self-guided walking trail.

### Access

Access is from Arden Vale Road. The signposted turn-off to the park is 6.5 km from the Port Augusta road intersection in Quorn. It is then a further 3 km to The Dutchman car park. All walking trails commence at the car park.

### Camping

Vehicle-based camping is not permitted in the park. Backpack camping is allowed west of the Dutchman range. There are no designated camp sites so campers must practice low impact camping techniques. Avoid camping under eucalypt trees as branches can fall unexpectedly. Note that wood fires are prohibited in this conservation park – use liquid fuel stoves, as fallen timber provides habitat for wildlife.

Backpack camping is not permitted during the Fire Danger Season, usually 1 November to 30 April. Plan day walks only during this period.

## Accommodation

The Dutchman Homestead and shearers' quarters are available for hire to visitors. The shearers' quarters can accommodate up to nine people and The Dutchman Homestead sleeps up to six people with all amenities provided except food and bedding. The homestead and shearers' quarters are an ideal base for families to explore the park. Contact the Southern Flinders District Office for bookings.

## Flora

Changes in vegetation reflect rock type, altitude and aspect. Sugar gums occupy the crest and upper slopes of the bluff, with stands of drooping sheoak scattered amongst them. White cypress-pines are found on cliff faces some distance below the crest of the range and blue gum covers the lower slopes. An attractive heath of common fringe-myrtle and needle bottlebrush on the northern slopes contrasts with the Christmas bush and curry bush on deeper soils of the southern and lower slopes. The park is home to great numbers of Quorn wattle, which are endemic to this region. The area comes alive after sufficient rain events with colourful wildflowers including the bright pink garland-lily found along creek lines.

Quorn wattle, *Acacia quornensis*, occurs naturally only in the hills around Quorn and Hawker



## Fauna

The diverse vegetation of this conservation park attracts a similarly varied range of birds. Over 51 species have been recorded, including several species of conservation significance. If you are lucky you may spot the uncommon chestnut-rumped heathwren, Gilbert's whistler or diamond firetail. Keep an eye out for the fastest animal on the planet - the peregrine falcon, which reaches speeds in excess of 320 km/h when diving.

Euros are common in the reserve. Western grey kangaroos can be seen in less rugged areas, while red kangaroos are common on the western side of the park. Conservation efforts have resulted in an increase in numbers of the endangered yellow-footed rock-wallaby, which may be glimpsed along gorge walls. Three species of bat have been recorded in the reserve. The observant visitor may also spot an echidna or at the very least discover some of their diggings.

The creek lines and watercourses of the park provide habitat for several amphibians, including a new subspecies of the brown toadlet. Several snake species are present in the park, so take care when bushwalking.



Short-beaked echidna, *Tachyglossus aculeatus*, digs into the ground for ants and termites

## Indigenous history

The Nukunu people are the Aboriginal group connected with this area. The Barngarla group to the west also have ties to the Dutchman region.

## European history

The park gets its name from the bluff's similarity to Dutch sailing ships of the eighteenth century. The rocky outcrops and slopes appear to resemble the reverse stern of these ships. The bluff was named by Captain Matthew Flinders who charted the nearby Spencer Gulf in 1802.

The Dutchman was a pastoral lease from the 1880s until it was acquired for conservation in 1985. Visitors may notice yards, tracks, buildings, fences and other reminders of the area's pastoral history. Despite over 150 years of grazing, biodiversity has been maintained. Woodcutting, wattle stripping and yacca resin collecting activities also occurred. Scars remain from where mining companies have undertaken exploration work throughout the ranges.

## Geology

Rocks in the Flinders Ranges have formed from the compression and folding of 500-800 million year-old sediments, which accumulated in the lakes and shallow seas of a massive depression known as the Adelaide Geosyncline. Two rock types are displayed at The Dutchmans Stern - hard, blocky ABC Range quartzite and softer Brachina Formation siltstones (both are also found further north in Flinders Ranges National Park). The Dutchmans Stern ridge is comprised of the hard quartzite, the lower slopes of the softer siltstone. Other different quartzites and siltstones also occur in this region.

## Walk safely



Be prepared when bushwalking:

- Wear sturdy shoes, hat and sunscreen.
- Carry sufficient food and drinking water. Allow four litres of water per person per day.
- Do not rely on tanks or creeks in the park for drinking water.
- Keep to the defined walking trail and follow the trail markers.
- Inform a responsible person of your proposed route and expected time of return.
- Weather conditions can change quickly. Ensure you have appropriate wet-weather clothing.

## Hikes

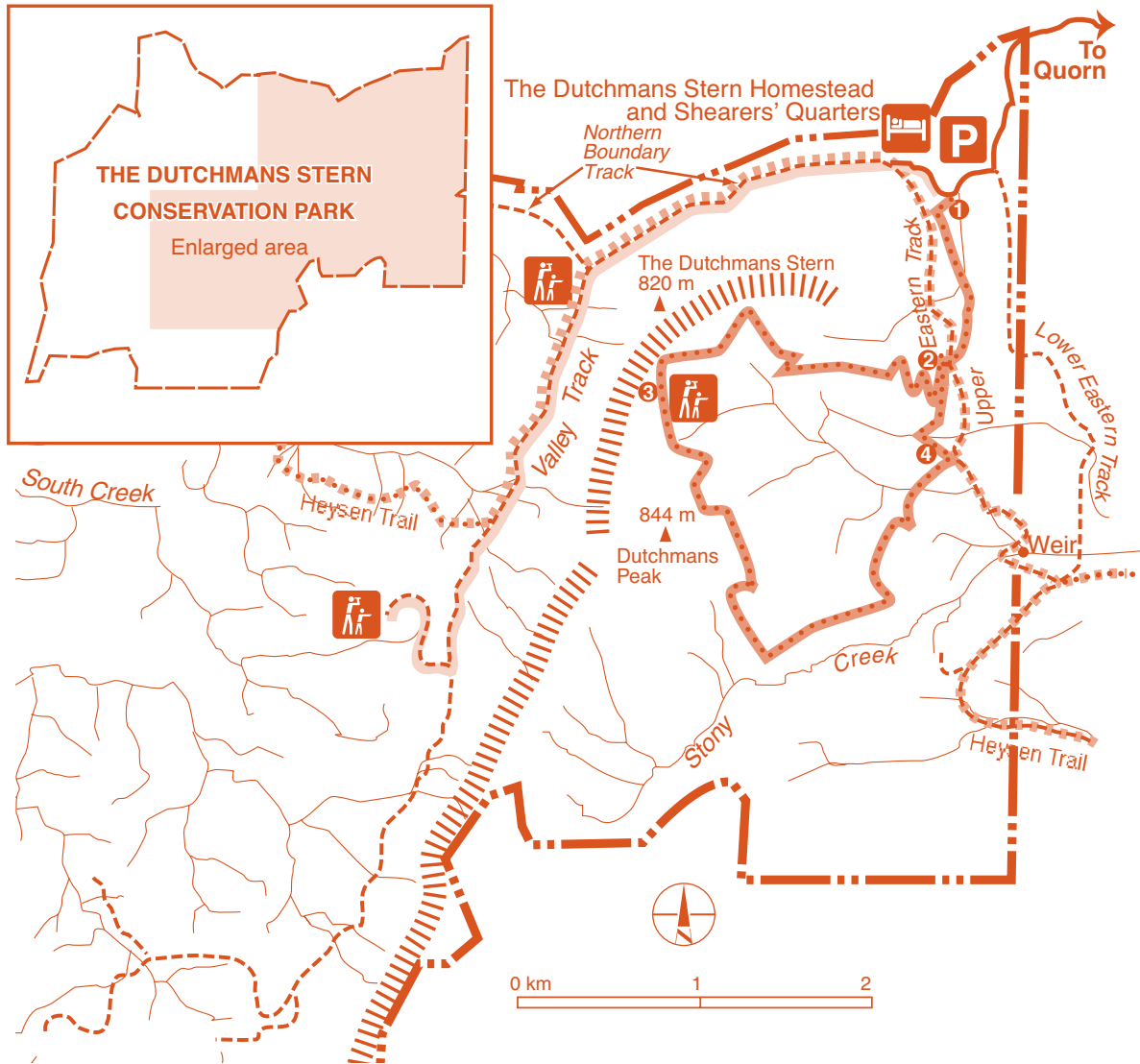


All hikes begin from Checkpoint 1 - the Dutchman Trailhead at the car park.

\*Time is generously estimated for an average walking speed of 2 km per hour - allow extra time for resting and sightseeing.

Flowers of the Mount Lofty grass tree, *Xanthorrhoea quadrangulata*, produce nectar which was savoured by Indigenous groups. They also used the gum as an adhesive.





- Park boundary
- Unsealed road
- Fire access track
- Walking trail
- Watercourse
- Rocky outcrop
- Checkpoint
- Car park
- Accommodation
- Lookout
- The Dutchmans Stern Hike
- The Dutchmans Valley Hike
- Heysen Trail

### The Dutchmans Valley Hike

10 km return \*5 hours return

This track takes you west of the Dutchman range to two lookouts with spectacular views down Spencer Gulf and north-west towards Lake Torrens. Follow the Northern Boundary Track for 1.8 km before turning south along the Valley Track. Trail markings end where the Heysen Trail leads off.

### The Heysen Trail

This section of the long-distance walking trail that extends from the Fleurieu Peninsula to the northern Flinders Ranges enters the park near the south-eastern boundary, turns north-west and exits through the northern boundary.

**Note: use of the Heysen Trail is prohibited during the Fire Danger Season.**

### The Dutchmans Stern Hike

10.5 km loop \*5 hours return

### To the Summit (Checkpoint 3)

8.2 km return \*4 hours return



This hike is one of a series of hikes in the Flinders Ranges first published by the Royal Geographical Society of South Australia. DENR acknowledges RGSSA for permission to use their copyrighted material.

## Trail notes for The Dutchmans Stern Hike

### Distance from trailhead in kilometres.

#### 0.0 Checkpoint 1 – The Dutchman Trailhead (map ref. 810 224)

Follow the narrow footpad and yellow markers, passing the gate that leads on to the Heysen Trail.

This paddock would have had heavy use when The Dutchman was a sheep station. It is now able to support the Quorn wattle *Acacia quornensis*, a rare species which is confined to the Quorn/Hawker area.

#### 0.2

These open areas of Quorn wattle are a good habitat for the Gilbert's whistler.

The small size of the blue gum trees suggest that they have regrown following fire or cutting.

#### 0.4

More native plants grow on the other side of the little creek including the spiny porcupine grass and the pink garland-lily, which has bright pink to maroon coloured flowers in March. An open woodland with blue gum, Christmas bush, curry bush and drooping sheoak brings you to a vehicle track (Heysen Trail) which you cross to reach Checkpoint 2.

#### 0.9

A small dam nearby attracts birds coming for water at the beginning or end of a hot day. These include the common bronzewing, yellow-faced honeyeater, red wattlebird and variegated fairy-wren.

#### 1.0 Checkpoint 2 – junction of walking trail with vehicle track (map ref. 811 214)

Take the right hand footpad up the hill (the left hand footpad goes to Checkpoint 4).

#### 1.2

View the Mount Arden reservoir east-north-east across the valley. Built in the 1880s to supply water for the Northern Railway, and Quorn, it is fed by

Stony Creek, seen later, which was channelled so that it fed the reservoir. The town now obtains water from bores and the dam rarely has water.

#### 1.4 to 1.8

The sugar gum woodland begins here at about 550 m altitude – the trees prefer the higher slopes where there is more rain and mist. Colonies of tree martins are especially evident here in spring as they dip and swoop, catching insects in mid-flight.

The underlying rock changes from siltstone to quartzite. Look out for rocks with blanket ferns growing in crevices - moisture in rock joints allow ferns to survive in these otherwise dry places.

Although the arid saltbush and bluebush plains are not far away, the higher rainfall in the hills means that the shrubs of these slopes are similar to those of the Mount Lofty Ranges near Adelaide.

#### 2.6

This open exposed aspect close to a cliff top has thin rocky soils and is rather different from the woodland through which you have just walked. This heathland, with its common fringe-myrtle, needle bottlebrush, drooping sheoak, prickly guinea-flower and rock wattle, hides redthroats and thornbills.

A multiple-stemmed sugar gum near the marker has had its main trunk destroyed by fire or lightning and has produced a number of replacement trunks from its base.

#### 3.3

Termite mound on the right; these are often still active, though they may not look it. Some termites exploit tree stumps or grass trees as the foundation for their mound. Termites are important recyclers of nutrients. Trees, dead or alive, are important sources of food and provide shelter for many animals.

#### 4.0

Ripple marks in the rock are a reminder of the shallow river deltas in which the sandy sediments were originally deposited.

#### 4.1 Checkpoint 3 – the summit (820 m) (map ref. 795 215)

There is plenty to take in across virtually treeless hills to the western plains and through the trees to the eastern plains.

See if you can pick out these landmarks (all bearings are magnetic):

Mt Arden	17 km	356°
The Bluff	9 km	20°
Yappala Range	55 km	29°
Elder Range	82 km	29°
Wilpena Pound	100 km	29°
Horseshoe Range	42 km	97°
Richman Valley	14 km	159°
Mount Brown	22 km	164°
Devils Peak	12 km	164°
Emeroo Range	10 km	211°

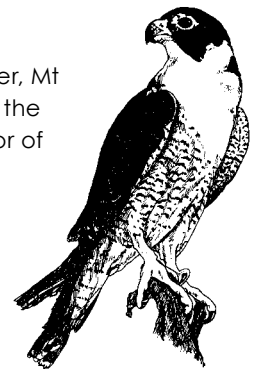
Port Augusta, South Tent Hill and Uro Bluff are also visible to the west.

Peregrine falcons nest in the cliff and will make noisy threats as you approach, while on some days wedge-tailed eagles soar overhead in the updraughts caused by the cliff.

From the summit, you may choose to turn around and follow the trail back to the trailhead, or continue on to complete the remaining 6 km of the loop trail.

#### 4.2

From a saddle below the marker, Mt Remarkable is visible (south) to the left of Mt Brown, above the floor of the Richman Valley.



The peregrine falcon, *Falco peregrinus*, is the fastest animal on the planet and makes its nests in the cliffs of the Dutchman range.

#### 4.8 to 5.0

The uniform size of a patch of drooping sheoak woodland on a slope of quartzite blocks suggests that they all regenerated at the same time following a fire.

#### 5.2 to 6.0

This slope has an eastern aspect and is quite different from the slope you walked up – the sugar gums are much larger, there is more Christmas bush, curry bush, rock wattle and native cherry, and, depending on the season, the ground is much more moist.

#### 6.8 to 7.0

Some of these big sugar ums have lost their tops from lightning strikes or fallen over during storms. Here there are birds that occur no further north – the scarlet robin, eastern spinebill, crimson rosella and grey currawong. striated pardalotes and weebills frequent the canopy.

Take in the great views across the plain – this steep gorge with its scree slopes is the valley of Stony Creek.

#### 7.2 to 7.6

The golden gorge walls are ABC Range quartzite. Its large blocks are resistant to weathering. Colours light up particularly during the late afternoon and early morning. Conservation programs have resulted in the increase of the yellow-footed rock-wallaby. You may be lucky to see some on the scree slopes.

#### 7.8 to 8.2

In places the ground underfoot is becoming redder in colour because of the increasing amounts of siltstone, recognisable by the flat fragments. The big sugar gums have gone, replaced by blue gums and mallee box.

#### 8.4

This minor creek is a tributary of Stony Creek. Twenty-five metres downstream from the corner marker is some conglomerate formed by the cementing together of creek pebbles with calcareous material, some thousands of years ago.

#### 8.8 Checkpoint 4 – walking trail meets the vehicle track (map ref. 811 208)

By the checkpoint are the remains of an old trolley or sled, which would have been used for transporting tan bark that was collected from golden wattle during the Depression years.

#### 9.0

From here the track bears left and the narrow footpad winds through blue gum and mallee box

woodland, typical of the lower slopes, with curry bush, clammy daisy-bush and golden wattle.

#### 9.5 Checkpoint 2 (map ref. 811 214)

Cross the vehicle track and retrace your previous path across the paddock to the trailhead. Elegant parrots may flash past here, while the southern scrub-robin frequents the Quorn wattle and curry bush.

#### 10.5 The Dutchman Trailhead

### Plant list for The Dutchmans Stern Conservation Park

**Blanket fern** *Pleurosorus rufifolius* – small fronds to 12 cm, three lobed leaves, brownish hairs

**Blue gum** *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* – tree to 15 m, grey/yellow streaked bark

**Christmas bush** *Bursaria spinosa* – medium shrub, white flowers in spring

**Clammy daisy-bush** *Olearia decurrens* – small white daisies, March

**Common fringe-myrtle** *Calytrix tetragona* – low bush, masses of pale pink starry flowers, spring

**Curry bush** *Cassinia laevis* – loose clusters of tiny white flowers, late summer

**Drooping sheoak** *Allocasuarina verticillata* – tree to 9 m, pendulous leafless branches

**Feathery groundsel** *Senecio anethifolius* – shrub 1 to 2 m, yellow daisy flowers without petals

**Golden wattle** *Acacia pycnantha* – golden balls of flowers in spring

**Hard mat-rush** *Lomandra multiflora* ssp. *dura* – small grass-like plant, clusters of creamy yellow flowers, spring

**Mallee box** *Eucalyptus porosa* – multi-stemmed tree to 5 m, dense shining green canopy

**Mealy saltbush** *Rhagodia parabolica* – grey bush, insignificant flowers

**Mount Lofty grass tree** *Xanthorrhoea quadrangulata* – trunk to 1 m, crown of long spiky leaves, 1.5 m flower head with cream florets in late summer

**Narrow-leaf hop-bush** *Dodonaea viscosa* var. *angustissima* – bronze/purple hops, spring

**Native cherry** *Exocarpus cupressiformis* – dense canopy of bright green 'leafless' branchlets

**Native cranberry** *Astroloma humifusum* – low shrub, small spiky blue-grey leaves, red tubular flowers in spring

**Needle bottlebrush** *Callistemon teretifolius* – shrub to 2 m, spiky leaves

**Pink garland-lily** *Calostemma purpureum* – bright pink to maroon flowers in March

**Prickly guinea-flower** *Hibbertia exutiacies* – low shrub, yellow flowers, winter/spring

**Quorn wattle** *Acacia quornensis* – rounded shrub to 2 m, blue-green leaves

**Rock wattle** *Acacia rupicola* – open prickly shrub to 1 m, cream flowers, spring

**Showy speedwell** *Derwentia decorosa* – low shrub, white flowers streaked with mauve, spring

**Silver daisy-bush** *Olearia pannosa* – shrub to 1 m, dark green leaves, velvety underneath, large white daisy flowers in spring

**Sugar gum** *Eucalyptus cladocalyx* – tall tree to 25 m, smooth bark with off white/buff patches, canopy characterised by clumps of foliage

**White cypress-pine** *Callitris glaucophylla* – cypress-like tree to 15 m

## The National Parks Code

Help protect your national parks by following these guidelines:

- Leave your pets at home.
- Take your rubbish with you.
- Observe fire restrictions, usually 1 November to 30 April. Check CFS Hotline 1300 362 361.
- Conserve native habitat by using liquid fuel or gas stoves/barbecues only. Solid fuel fires are prohibited.
- Respect geological and heritage sites.
- Keep wildlife wild. Do not feed or disturb animals or remove native plants.
- Keep to defined vehicle tracks and walking trails.
- Be considerate of other park users.

**Thank you for leaving the bush in its natural state for the enjoyment of others.**

## Fire Danger Season

The Fire Danger Season usually extends from 1 November to 30 April. Check CFS Hotline 1300 362 261. The following regulations reduce the potential for bushfires and enhance visitor safety:

- The Dutchmans Stern Conservation Park is closed to visitors on Total Fire Ban Days in the Flinders District.
- Wood fires are not permitted in the park. Use liquid fuel or gas stoves only.
- Backpack camping is not permitted during the Fire Danger Season. Plan day walks only.



## For further information contact:

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