

The annual winter pilgrimage north through the Flinders Ranges and onto the Oodnadatta Track goes past one of the most isolated bakeries in the world.

The stream of 4WDs flicking on the indicator is a pretty good signal to follow them into Farina. Home to a now-famous temporary bakery and crumbling historic ruins of a once bustling railway town.



The historic ruins of the outback town, Farina.

Do you need a 4WD for this trip?

The entire stretch between Maree and Lyndhurst has now been bitumenised which makes Farina more accessible. You may not need a 4WD but wherever you are it's always a good idea to ask advice from the locals to avoid getting stuck.



Spectacular desert region sunrise is a bonus for the early riser.

Feast on the history

Open between late May and July the bakery has new premises this year, Patterson House. Recently completed it's set amongst the ruins of the original township.



The famous underground Scotch oven where the goods are baked.

The building won't only house the café and retail outlet for hordes of tourists and visiting school groups, it is to include a library, museum and information centre.



There is no shortage of crumbling historic ruins to wander through in various stages of repair. Once a busy railway town and now a ghost town, Farina's residents suffered from the region's low rainfall and harsh temperatures. The final straw for most was when pubs and other businesses closed their doors and eventually, the railway relocated west in 1980.



Living history can be found at Farina.

A stable future

Farina Station is still operating, but it is the Farina Restoration Group established by Tom Harding in 2008 that is keeping the township on the tourist map.

Teams of volunteers work tirelessly 8 weeks a year, and when they set up the onsite winter camp a lively buzz returns to the place.



Almost done, volunteers complete the work on Patterson House in readiness for its opening. The program has grown in popularity and a decade on, in 2018, 205 participants donated 18,138 volunteer hours.

The group's objective, to restore Farina's past and ensure it retains a place in Australia's outback history has been achieved.



Visitors will no longer need to visit the temporary café with the completion of Patterson

House.

Restoring and maintaining Farina

Duties are varied and may include being on the tools or educating visitors about the work underway. There is also a roster to help behind the counter in the busy retail bakery and merchandise store. Volunteer skills range from rookie to professional and two paid stonemasons lead the restoration efforts using lime mortar and cement.

The volunteers work very hard to maintain and restore the town.

There's also a waiting list of bakers keen to assist to raise funds to support the group's ongoing involvement with the restoration project.

As popular as the pasties, pies and freshly baked bread is a tour of the underground woodfired Scotch oven. Revived after lying dormant for almost 100 years this is the heart of the operation.

The starry skies of Farina at night.

Overnight success

For those keen to explore further, the shady campground is past the township and under the war memorial. If you do decide to stay, make sure you place a pre-paid order for fresh bread to collect in the morning. The best way to avoid disappointment as the limited stocks have been known to run out early.

A shady campground has loads of space, there is no need to pre-book unless you are a large group.

Camping facilities available

Five dollars per person per night gives you access to BBQs, wood-fired donkey showers and flushing loos. You can bring your own firewood or buy some from your hosts at Farina Station to use in one of the many fire pits.

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Get a history lesson at the war memorial hill

The war memorial hill is perfect for stargazing and uninterrupted landscape views. The well-researched information boards share background on the local young men and women who served their country in both WWI and WWII.

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The short loop walking track

There's a well-signed short loop walking track to the eastern end of the campground and another around the railway precinct. These feature interpretive signs about local history, the wells that once serviced the town and tips on how to identify the prolific birdlife.

Once a busy railway town and now a ghost town, there are several self-guided walks throughout the old settlement and railway land.

Visit the historic cemetery

At the end of the day, follow the signs a couple of kilometres west to the historic cemetery for sunset. Get there in good time to gain an insight from the headstones and signage into the human cost of this harsh part of Australia. If you decide to walk, don't forget to bring a torch for the uneven pathway home.

See the human cost of this harsh part of Australia.

Well known for its clear star-studded night skies and spectacular sunsets Farina is as interesting in the evening as the daytime.

Have you ever visited the historic town of Farina?