

The route to most of South Australia's outback tracks is the same - north to Port Augusta, along the western flank of the Flinders Ranges until the dirt road is reached just north of Lyndhurst.

The Strzelecki Track starts at Lyndhurst, about 600km north of Adelaide. There is a lot to see between Port Augusta and Lyndhurst, so have a look at previous articles in this series, particularly "[Oodnadatta Track Part 1 - Port Augusta to Lyndhurst](#)" for information about these attractions.

## Travelling the Strzelecki Track


The discovery of oil and gas in the Cooper Basin has had some dramatic effects on this area. Mining, pastoralism and tourism have to co-exist and for us travellers this brings advantages and disadvantages.

One major advantage is the condition of the track, especially as far as Moomba, 369km along the 494km to Innamincka. Because large mining vehicles very regularly traverse this section it is wide and very well maintained.

Past the turnoff to Moomba, a closed town with no public access, the conditions are not quite as good with some quite stony sections and areas prone to corrugations.

Despite the good road conditions always keep in mind that like any dirt road, rain can change conditions rapidly and roads are closed very quickly if continued travel will cause damage.

This track passes through some of the most inhospitable areas in South Australia so all of the precautions for travel in remote areas must be taken. Don't let the good track conditions lull you into thinking that 110kph is an appropriate speed.

Pot holes, sections of deep bull dust, massive road trains billowing dust and wandering stock still are hazards, all incompatible with high speed travel. More information about preparation can be found in part 3 of this article. 

There are no settlements along the way and the 500km can be travelled in one day, albeit a long one.

There are a few reasonable camping spots along the way at Blanchewater, Montecollina Bore and Strzelecki Creek crossing but keep in mind that there is no fuel, water or any other supplies along the whole distance of the track.

Never camp in a creek bed as a raging torrent can roar down these with no notice, the result of rain and thunder storms some distance away.

Once at Innamincka, fuel, water and basic supplies are available, but don't count on a big choice or lots of fresh produce. This is an extremely isolated outpost with the supply truck generally arriving weekly. It does not take much rain further south to delay the arrival of supplies so be well prepared and as self-sufficient as possible. Basic mechanical and tyre services are available.

## The original Strzelecki Track

The original Strzelecki Track followed the course of the Strzelecki Creek between Innamincka and where the track is currently crossed by the creek.

The discovery of oil and gas required the establishment of a town and processing facility and Moomba was born. This required a re-alignment of the track but there is still an opportunity

to see what it was like “in the old days”.

A section of the old Strzelecki can be traversed between Merty Merty and Innamincka. This requires taking the turn-off to Cameron Corner and travelling the 10km to Merty Merty homestead. At this point the old track heads north for 68km where it crosses the new track. Continuing north on the old track will see you at Innamincka in another 46km.

Although you pass a number of oil and gas wells along the way, this section of track is extremely isolated and not maintained. Now little more than a couple of wheel tracks weaving between trees and skirting the Strzelecki Creek, it is a great adventure for those with a well prepared 4WD.

## Things to See

The first distance shown is from Lyndhurst and the second from Innamincka.

### **0km/474km - Lyndhurst**

A tiny settlement, including a roadhouse, hotel and caravan park, this is your last connection with civilization until Innamincka is reached. Ensure your fuel is topped up before leaving on your trek.

Just out of town on the track is the home of the quirky Talc Alf. Pop in and have a look at his many sculptures carved from local talc stone and be prepared for a robust conversation about the state of the world and almost anything else.

It is also worth travelling a few kilometres north on the track to Marree to see the Ochre Pits. This ancient quarry has been the source of vibrant red, orange and white ochres for Aboriginal people for hundreds and perhaps thousands of years and still used today. Please respect this area by not going down into the quarry.

### **158km/316km - Blanchewater Ruin**

The remains of the Blanchewater homestead are to be found just off the track to the west. One of the very earliest attempts to establish a pastoral enterprise in this area, the famous South Australian names John Baker and Thomas Elder are associated with this very successful venture.

Sitting on a flat area next to Macdonnell Creek, the remains are crumbling away under the harsh conditions.

This is a good place for an overnight stop as you imagine the hustle and bustle that took place in this spot over 160 years ago.

### **222km/252km - Montecollina Bore**

This controlled bore releases a steady flow of hot water into a depression amongst the stark white sand hills.

The overflow forms a mini-wetlands attracting many bird varieties. An excellent place to camp with flat areas amongst the sandhills, this is an opportune time to break up the trip. You can even have a relaxing soak in the warm water.

### **275km/199km - Strzelecki Crossing**

Another spot providing camping opportunities along the creek, follow existing tracks to some flat and shady spots.

### **319km/155km - Merty Merty Turnoff**

This turn to the east leads to Merty Merty homestead and on to Cameron Corner. Turn here if undertaking travel on the old Strzelecki Track or using this as one of the possible routes

home (see Part 3).

### **369km/105km - Moomba Turnoff**

Moomba is a closed town with no access or services available to the public. There is a lookout and information board just off the track explaining the infrastructure that can be seen in the distance.

### **410km/64km - Old Strzelecki Track crossing**

This is the point where the old Strzelecki Track crosses the current road.

The current alignment was constructed some years ago to provide a more rain resistant path. The old track follows the line of the Strzelecki Creek and became impassable with even small amounts of rain.

The old track can still be travelled as explained earlier, but ensure there has not been recent rain.

### **426km/48km - Della Gas Field**

The current road alignment goes past the Della Gas plant. You can't miss the imposing structure and constant flame coming from at least one of the flame stacks.

### **474km/0km - Innamincka**

What a historic area to spend a week or more with the Innamincka Regional Reserve providing many camping opportunities along the Cooper Creek.

Other than camping in the town reserve, an area along the Cooper just out of town, you will require a [Desert Parks Pass](#) to camp in any other area. If you have not purchased this beforehand, see the store or Regional Reserve headquarters in town.

The package that comes with the pass provides comprehensive maps, notes on all the tracks throughout the reserve, lists all the camping spots and is full of useful information about the area. Some must-sees are:

- The Innamincka Pub - full of character and provides good pub meals.
- Burke's Grave - not actually his grave, but the spot where he died and was originally buried. His body was later returned to Melbourne.
- Will's Grave - again, the spot of his death but not his current resting place.
- King's Site - the spot where King was looked after by the local aborigines and later found alive.
- Cullyamurra Waterhole - a permanent, large waterhole on the Cooper and a great place to camp.
- Visitor Centre - at the Regional Reserve Headquarters in the re-built Elizabeth Symon Nursing Home. Thanks to the intervention of entrepreneur Dick Smith and readers of his Australian Geographic magazine, money was raised to re-build the old nursing home and

today it stands as a grand reminder of the past.

- The Dig Tree - made famous in the Burke and Wills saga, this tree still has the carved "DIG" message made famous through this unfortunate part of history. Visiting involves a quick 70km trip into Queensland, across the Burke and Wills bridge and onto Nappa Merrie station where the Dig Tree is located.
- Coongie Lakes - travel over the causeway at Innamincka and take the 106km trip to the expansive Coongie Lakes. A mecca for birds and other wildlife, this trip can be easily undertaken in a day, or camp at the designated campground.

***Now you know what to expect along the way, subscribe to receive Part 3 of this article for information on accommodation, preparation, facilities and general tips to make your trip safe and enjoyable. Part 3 will also look at alternatives for travelling from Innamincka, either back home or further afield.***