



40 THINGS TO DO IN PARA WIRRA CONSERVATION PARK

The second park to be declared in South Australia, Para Wirra is rich in Aboriginal, European, Geological and Natural History. The parks extensive grassy areas, relaxing lakeside, and beautiful bush setting have made it a well-loved gathering place for family and friends for generations.

The name Para Wirra comes from the language of the Kaurna people translating from 'Para' meaning river and 'Wirra' meaning forest. Although the name comes from Kaurna, the park is also connected to two other Aboriginal nations, Peramangk, and Ngadjuri, thanks to the South Para River area being used as a meeting place between the three nations.

This is a perfect park for immersing yourself in nature – the network of trails will lead you past geologically spectacular rocky outcrops, expansive valley views and along tranquil creeks and rivers. There are over 100 species of birds living in the park, including the inquisitive emus that frequent the picnic grounds and the noisy wattlebirds, galahs and rainbow lorikeets that all feed in the canopy of the gumtrees. Adventure deeper into the park and you can see kangaroos grazing at dawn and dusk, and on warm days bearded

dragons and sleepy lizards bask in the sunshine. If you're in luck you might also spot a short-beaked echidna, sand goanna, or a tiny yellow footed antechinus.

The park is also home to the Barossa Goldfield where gold was first discovered in the 1860's. At its height the area was populated by over 4,000 people and created two townships within the park. Visit the museum at Bowden's Cottage or explore the interpretive trails where you can discover the ruins and the history of a once thriving mining operation.

The park is maintained and cared for by Park Rangers, and the very dedicated Friends of Para Wirra and Barossa Goldfields Historical Society. For more information such as park maps visit parks.sa.gov.au

PARK PROFILE

Name: Para Wirra Conservation Park.

First established: 1962.

Location: 40km North east of Adelaide CBD.

Some endangered or rare species: Yellow-footed Antechinus, Diamond Firetail, Sand Goanna, Square-tailed Kite, Restless Flycatcher, Pink-lip Spider-orchid (*Caladenia behrii*), Great Sun-orchid (*Thelymitra grandiflora*), Stiff White Spider-orchid (*Caladenia rigida*)

AUTUMN



Autumn sees the days cooling down and the rains begin.

Seedlings begin to emerge from the soil and moss and lichen come to life.

- 1 Book a campsite at the Wirra Campground and watch the night sky. Try to spot the southern cross or a planet. (stargazing phone apps can help)
- 2 Look over the valleys as you hike the Devils Nose and try to spot the endangered Square-tailed Kite flying low over the tree canopy looking for prey.
- 3 When walking amongst old trees watch for hollows as the Yellow Footed Antechinus may be feeding on insects, nectar and small lizards.
- 4 Download a Geocaching app and try hunting down all 30 geocaches hidden within the park.
- 5 When hiking in the north of the park, you may be lucky enough to spot a Sand Goanna. They grow to 1.5m long with a distinctive pail coloured tip on their tail. If you spot one, snap a photo and report it to the local rangers as they are a rare find!
- 6 Spend a family day at Gawler View and let the kids explore the nature play forest and have fun building cubbies.
- 7 Grab your bike and ride the Scenic Loop. Once you reach the Knob Lookout you will be rewarded with 270 degree views of the parks dramatic valleys and high cliff faces.
- 8 The Phoenix Circuit will take you past the major mine sites of the Barossa Goldfields. Learn how material was transported along the horse drawn tram lines to the battery site for processing.
- 9 Stroll along one of the many tracks and look for diggings from a Short-beaked Echidna or if you're lucky, you may spot one. They are shy creatures whose diggings can be found near ant and termite mounds.
- 10 Investigate the water's edge at the Lake. Can you spot any fish and yabbies or bugs and insects?

WINTER



Winter sees the rains set in and the creek and rivers begin to flow.

The best time of the year for campfires and toasted marshmallows.

- 1 Sunrise and sunset are the best times to walk the park trails to see mobs of Western Grey Kangaroos quietly feeding. Pick a trail for your kangaroo spotting adventures!
- 2 For horse riders, the Horseplay Trail offers a beautiful 8.5km ride through the southern end of the park. Float parking is available at the corner of Bassnet Rd and Humbug Scrub Rd.
- 3 Visit Bowden Cottage Museum to learn about the parks gold mining history. The museum's open most Tuesdays and the third Sunday of every second month by the Barossa Goldfields Historical Society.
- 4 On a foggy morning stroll the Hissey Loop, and meander along the edge of the lake to see the mist hanging on the water.
- 5 Head along one of the parks trails and smell the yellow flowers of the Golden Wattle as they begin to blossom in late winter.
- 6 Take a historical hike starting from Bowden's Cottage and following the Lady Pearce circuit down to the South Para River and back up past the old goldfields battery site.
- 7 Hiking the Devils Nose Trail will reward you with sweeping views of the Barossa Ranges, Gawler District and the South Para Gorge. Don't forget to bring a camera to capture the perfect shot.
- 8 Head along the Treecreeper Loop and spot some of 60 species of orchids in the park as they begin to emerge in late winter. You may see Greenhoods and Mosquito Orchids.
- 9 Winter is a great time to book a campsite and toast marshmallows over a camp fire or cook damper on a stick.
- 10 If you love the park and have time to spare, why not join the Friends of Para Wirra and help to protect the parks amazing fauna and flora. Contact the local ranger for more information.

SPRING



Spring brings the wildflowers and orchids to full bloom.

The birds begin to nest and lizards make use of the sunny days.

- 1 Sit quietly on the edge of the South Para and listen to the water flowing along the river.
- 2 Head along the Mack Creek trail and keep an eye out for a Donkey Orchid blooming. Their yellow flowers have brown spots with two large distinctive petals shaped like donkey ears.
- 3 Gawler View is a great spot for a family lunch or kid's party. Use the BBQ's, and get the kids to run around, investigate the nature play forest, and spot emus, kangaroos or lizards as they explore the Nature Loop Trail.
- 4 For the experienced hikers, pack your lunch and take on the parks longest trail, the 10km South Para Grand Hike.
- 5 At night, use a torch to spot nocturnal wildlife around your campsite such as Brushtail or Ringtail Possums and Southern Boobook Owls.
- 6 Choose any hike in the park and you'll likely see Bearded Dragons and Sleepy Lizards basking in the sun.
- 7 Riding the Treecreeper Loop in spring is the best time to view the hundreds of Grass Trees (Yaccas) flowering. Some flower spikes are over 4m tall!
- 8 Follow the Mack Creek downstream through the valley of magnificent River Red Gums. Look out for the wildflowers blooming such as Spider Orchids and Blue Squill.
- 9 On a sunny day find some flowers you can quietly observe. Watch the different insects as they collect pollen or sip nectar. Can you spot a native Blue Banded Bee?
- 10 On a calm day, the lake can make for an incredible place to set up your camera and capture the reflections of the gumtrees on the water.

SUMMER



Summer sees the park dry out and animals seeking shade during the day.

Early morning walks will reward you with birds and animals feeding during the cool mornings.

- 1 Head to the hideaway picnic ground where inquisitive emus may try to join you for lunch. Enjoy their company, but remember not to feed them.
- 2 Take your dog for a walk on any of the parks trails but remember to keep them on a lead at all times.
- 3 Head to Lizard Rock and discover some of the plants and rock formations in the park. Take in the views over Wild Dog Creek Valley (Lizard Rock Hike brochure available for download).
- 4 Take a ride to Wild Dog Dam, sit quietly and photograph, sketch or paint the different plants and wildlife.
- 5 Walk the Victoria Hill Circuit Hike and take time to read the interpretive signs that tell the story of the Barossa Goldfields.
- 6 Have a game of cricket or football on the bush oval at Gawler View.
- 7 As you are walking on the one of the many trails try to spot the dark green Box Mistletoe hanging in the eucalypt trees. Look closely and you may spot the small mistletoe bird eating the berries or taking shelter from larger birds.
- 8 Stroll along the Lake Loop and spot various ducks, white faced herons, and even pelicans swimming on the lake (ideal for prams and limited mobility access if assisted).
- 9 Stop for lunch at the Hissey Picnic area, and you may see the resident family of noisy white-winged choughs digging for roots and grubs.
- 10 When hiking along the South Para River, look up to the cliff faces. There are plants growing out of the tiniest cracks in the rocks and peregrine falcons nesting on narrow ledges.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Yellow Footed Antechinus is a marsupial that looks a little like a rat. They carry their young in a pouch and live in tree hollows.

LOOKING AFTER THE PARK

- 1 Keep wildlife wild:** We must never feed wildlife (or leave food scraps) as it can be unhealthy for them and impact their natural behavior. Always keep a safe distance so you don't frighten them and keep your dogs on a lead.
- 2 Leave things as you found them:** If you discover ant mounds, decaying logs or bark hanging off trees they all provide important habitat and should be left undisturbed. Firewood needs to be brought in and never taken from the park as it is important habitat.
- 3 Leave nothing but footprints:** Always take your rubbish with you or pack a litter-free lunch. Stick to designated pathways to prevent damage to plants and natural, cultural and geological features.

- 4 Be careful on the roads:** There is plenty of active wildlife particularly at night so drive slowly & carefully.
- 5 Campfire Restrictions:** Wood & solid fuel fires are prohibited during fire ban season. Gas BBQ's are permitted in designated areas except on total fire ban days. It's important to check information online before you go.

The Park is closed on days of Catastrophic Fire Danger and may be closed on days of Extreme Fire Danger and Severe Weather.

This resource is part of the Park of the Month, an initiative run in partnership between Nature Play SA and the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources. Photos by Jason Tyndall (JT), Danny McCreddie (DMC) and Kym Smith (KS).

L: Sand Goanna (KS)
R: Xanthorhiza semiplana (JT)



L: Western Grey Kangaroo (JT)
R: Yellow Foot Antechinus (DMC)



L: Caladema behrii (JT)
R: Donkey Orchid (JT)



L: Emu (JT)
R: Square-Tailed Kite (DMC)

