

# Onkaparinga River National and Recreation Parks



*Healthy Parks  
Healthy People*

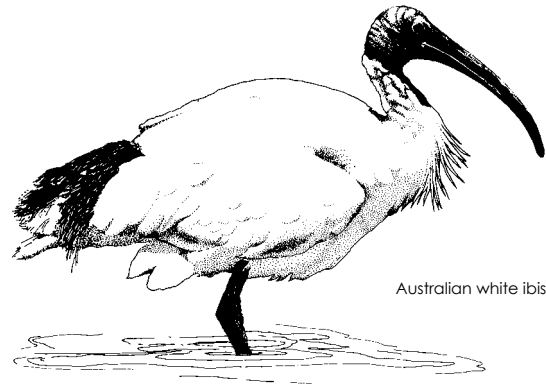


## Explore special places

The Onkaparinga River National Park (1544 ha) features rounded ridge tops, steep gorge slopes and the narrow river valley of the Onkaparinga Gorge. Here the Onkaparinga River's rocky and tumbling course connects the townships of Clarendon and Old Noarlunga.

In the gentle estuarine environment of the Onkaparinga Recreation Park (284 ha), the now quietened river spills on the plains, providing views of meandering riverbanks, wetland ponds and flood plains. At the western end of the estuary between the scenic Port Noarlunga cliffs, sand dunes, beach and reef, the river water completes the journey to the sea.

From the rugged gorge to the river plains, the parks provide a natural corridor for wildlife moving from the natural and recovering landscapes upriver to the wetland estuary, abundant in life.



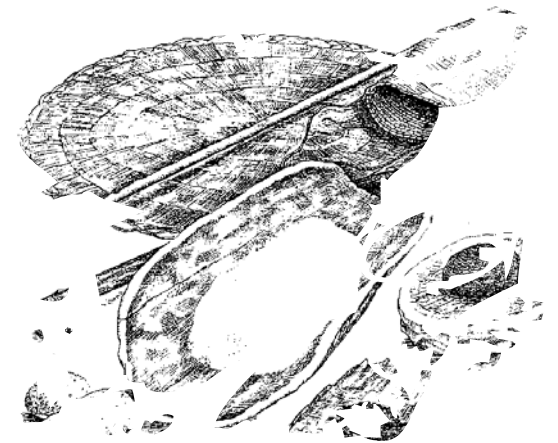
Australian white ibis

## The early custodians

Prior to and during European settlement these parks were undoubtedly important to the Kaurna ('Gar-na') people. Kaurna people still have strong ties to this area through cultural practices and religious beliefs. Many local place names such as 'Onkaparinga', 'Noarlunga' and 'Willunga' have their origins in Kaurna language.

## Wildflowers and wildlife

The park's bushland provides a colourful wildflower display during winter and spring. The changing environments along the river corridor are home to echidnas, kangaroos, and many bird and reptile species.



Aboriginal artefacts

## Saltbush, samphire and sedges

The estuary contains shrubland of samphire and saltbush, wetlands of bull rushes, club rush and cutting grass. These plants have the ability to survive in saline environments by special adaptations that help them expel salt. Records show that 180 bird species inhabit the park, with birds being found from the plains and backwaters to the highest cliffs. The park is a birdwatcher's paradise.

## Conserving bush treasures

Within the gorge, remnant woodlands of pink gum, river red gum, grey box, sheoak and native pine and significant grasslands have survived some 160 years of livestock grazing, timber harvesting and cropping. Since the protection of this landscape combined with revegetation efforts, large areas of native vegetation have prospered. Considerable effort has been applied by government and volunteers to control pest plants and animals, and revegetate.



Short-beaked Echidna

## Fishing

Fishing is permitted in the estuary waters of the recreation park but size and bag limits, and seasonal restrictions apply. Please remember that a healthy river relies on healthy riverbanks and water quality.

## Cycling

Cycling is permitted in the Onkaparinga River Recreation Park only (Estuary area). Ride around the estuary along the signed pathways. These trails are part of the M<sup>c</sup>Laren Vale to Marino Bikeway (refer to the Bike South map available from Onkaparinga City Council). Riders need to slow down when approaching pedestrians on the shared paths.

## Rock climbing

With views as magnificent as those in the park, rock climbing is an adventure. Climbing is permitted on the designated cliff area near Gate 15. Specific skills and equipment are essential. A booking system requires all climbers to contact the Belair Office on (08) 8278 5477.

## Picnicking

Barbecue, picnic shelters and toilet facilities are located at Chapel Hill (Gate 25) and Perrys Bend (Gate 30) or in Market Square Reserve in Old Noarlunga.

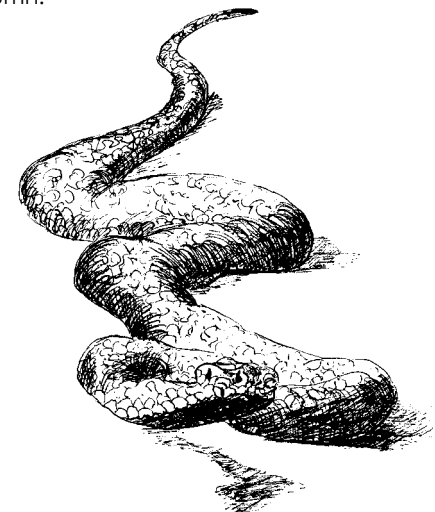
## Canoeing and kayaking

Explore the estuary channels with a canoe or kayak. Motorised boats are not permitted.

## Snakes

Snakes have an unfortunate reputation that they don't deserve! Generally shy creatures, they prefer to keep clear of human contact.

A snake will not harm you intentionally. Keep an eye out for them on trails, on fine mild days in spring and autumn.



## Walk safely



### Be prepared when bushwalking:

- Wear sturdy shoes, hat and sunscreen.
- Carry sufficient drinking water. Do not rely on the river in the park for drinking water.
- Keep to the defined trails.
- 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.

## Bushwalking

Onkaparinga provides a range of bushwalking experiences of varying difficulties. Trailhead signs are located at the beginning of each trail. Trails can be commenced at the gate locations listed for each site.



### Wetlands Walk

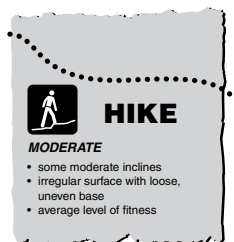
**2.5 hr loop, 4.5 km loop (Gate 12 or 15 in the RP)**

The Wetlands Walk is located on the estuary within the recreation park and provides an insight into the fascinating and complex life of a wetland. The trail offers the opportunity for walking, birdwatching and photography. Along the trail are interpretive signs that provide information about the flora and fauna of the area.

### Pingle Farm Walk

**2.5 hr loop, 4.5 km loop (Gate 10 in the RP)**

Built in 1862, all that remains of Pingle Farm is a group of limestone buildings on the fertile flood plains on the southern side of the Onkaparinga River.



### Hardys Scrub Hike

**2 hr loop, 4 km loop (Gate 16)**

This patch of native vegetation is a very important conservation area, despite a history of timber cutting, quarrying and grazing.

### Nature Hike

**2 hr loop, 3.5 km loop (Gate 11)**

The Nature Hike includes spectacular rugged scenery, while trails in the gorge provide you with an opportunity to view many species of birds and the occasional lizard sunning itself.

### Echidna Hike

**2.5 hr loop, 3.5 km loop (Gate 12 in the NP)**

The Echidna Hike features a narrow trail over moderate slopes through pink gum, grey box and sheoak bushland. Enjoy the winter and spring floral display that includes many orchids. The trail reveals ruins and great views of the gorge and gets your heart working!

### Sundews Ridge Hike

**2 hr loop, 4 km loop (Gate 11)**

Take a short hike to view the rocky outcrops and meandering river of the Onkaparinga Gorge from the Sundews Lookout. Continue your walk along the ridge top, returning to the car park without descending to the river.



### Tatendi Hike

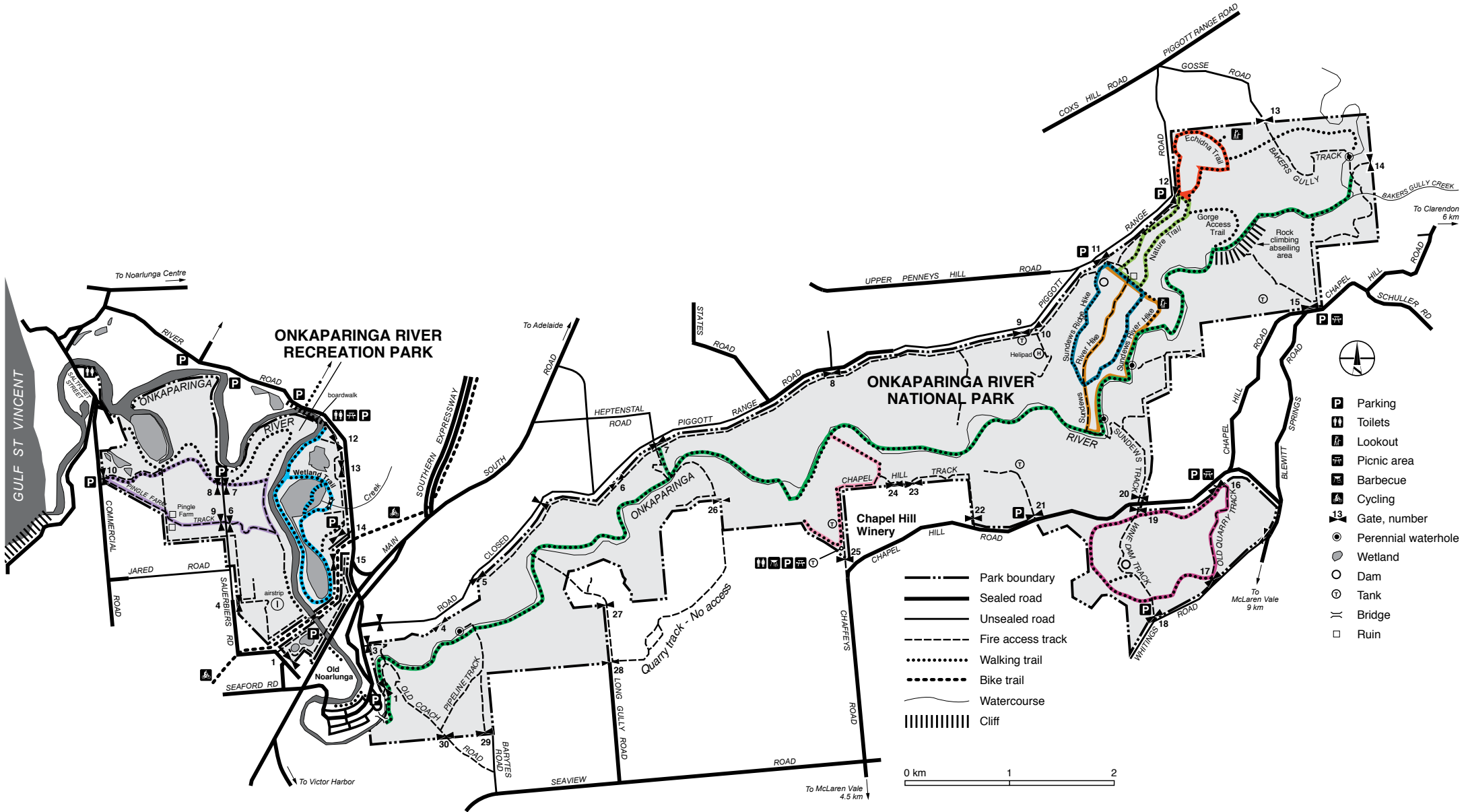
**4 hr return, 3.5 km return (Gate 25)**

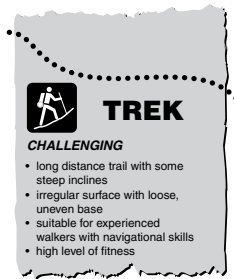
This hard trail takes you to gorge vantage points before descending steeply to the river.

### Sundews River Hike

**4 hr loop, 4.5 km loop (Gate 11)**

This hard trail descends steeply from the Sundews Lookout to the bottom of the gorge, and then follows the river downstream for a short distance before returning up the steep slopes of the gorge to the ridge and then the car park.





## Gorge Trek

### Upper Gorge

4-5 hr one way, 7 km one way  
(Gate 11, 13, 15, 20 all in the NP)

### Central Gorge

6-7 hr one way, 8 km one way  
(Gate 7, 11, 20, 25, all in the NP)

### Lower Gorge

4-5 hr one way, 6 km one way  
(Gate 1 or 7 both in the NP)

Experienced bushwalkers can trek the length of Onkaparinga Gorge in the summer months. Discover a sense of remoteness as you trek between commanding cliffs, tranquil waterholes and enduring river red gums. During winter and after rainfall events, the unmarked route is not accessible. Contact the Belair Office on (08) 8278 5477 for seasonal information and to lodge a *Trip Intentions* form.

Some sections of this trail are non-existent and will require diversion.



## The Friends Of Onkaparinga

The Friends Of Onkaparinga assist with the maintenance of the environment and facilities within this reserve. New members are welcome. Contact the Belair Office for more information.

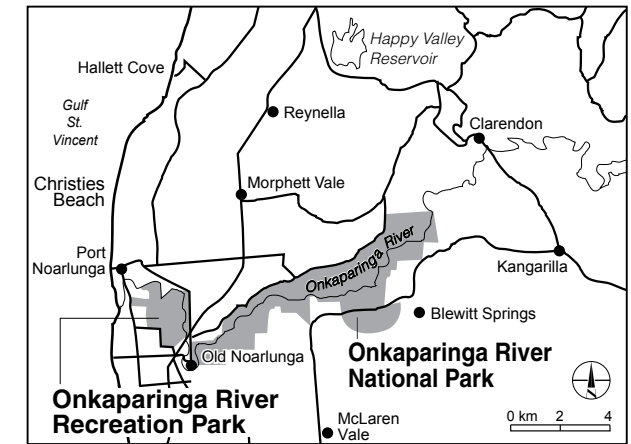
## The National Parks Code

Help protect your national parks by following these guidelines:

- Dogs are not permitted in the National Park.
- Dogs are permitted in the Recreation Park, but must be kept on a leash at all times.
- Fishing is not permitted in the gorge or wetland ponds.
- Take your rubbish with you.
- All fires including gas barbecues are prohibited.
- Camping is not permitted in the park.
- Respect geological and heritage sites.
- Keep our wildlife wild. Do not feed or disturb animals, or remove native plants.
- Be considerate of other park users.

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

## Location map



## For further information contact:

Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
Belair National Park Office  
PO Box 2, Belair SA 5052  
Phone (08) 8278 5477  
Fax (08) 8278 8587  
Website [www.parks.sa.gov.au](http://www.parks.sa.gov.au)

Emergency Duty Officer (24 hour paging service)  
(08) 8273 4161

Phone Information Line (08) 8204 1910  
Email [denrinformation@saugov.sa.gov.au](mailto:denrinformation@saugov.sa.gov.au)  
Website [www.parks.sa.gov.au](http://www.parks.sa.gov.au)

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