

Mount Augustus National Park

Mount Augustus dominates the landscape in the eastern Gascoyne and lures visitors from afar.

The towering hulk of Mount Augustus soars 715 metres above the surrounding plain deep within the red heart of the Gascoyne. You can see it from afar, a slumbering geological giant which changes hues with the path of the sun, from shades of purple at dawn through to greens, browns and brilliant red in the late afternoon light.

History

The mount and the surrounding Mount Augustus National Park are rich in Aboriginal history and significance. The local Wajarri people know the mount as Burringurrah in reference to a Dreamtime story. During this mystical age, a young boy called Burringurrah escaped the rigours of his tribal initiation only to face the consequent wrath of his tribesman. They tracked him down and speared and clubbed him to death. The Wajarri people say the shape of the mount is the boy lying on his belly with his left leg bent up beside his body. The rock formations to the west of the mount show his wounds.

Ancient Aboriginal art adorns many of the mount's caves. Some of the art is so old its meaning has been lost to



time. Wajarri believe a spirit continues to live on the mount today. As such, they treat it with great respect and advocate that others do the same.

The mount earns its European name from explorer Francis Gregory who scaled it in June 1858 and named it after his brother, Augustus.

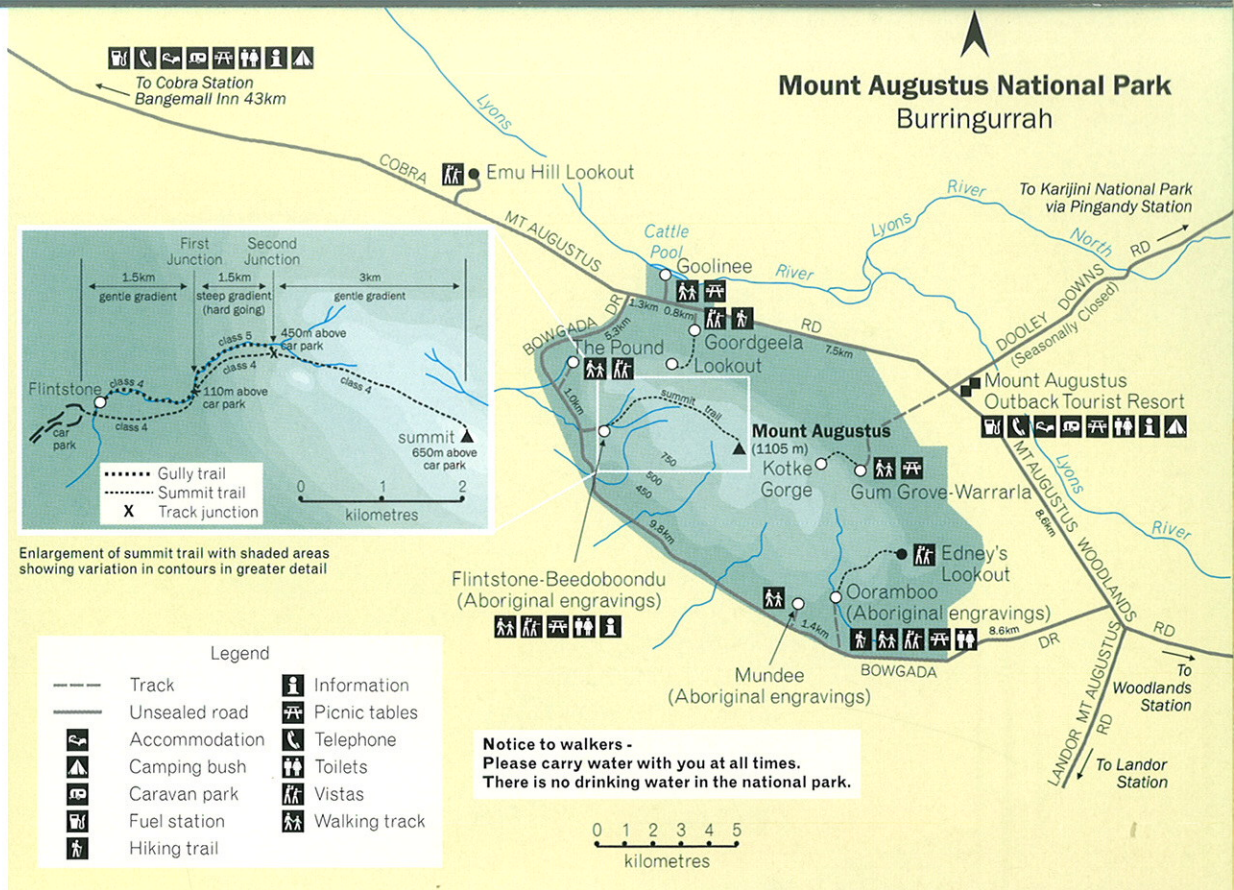
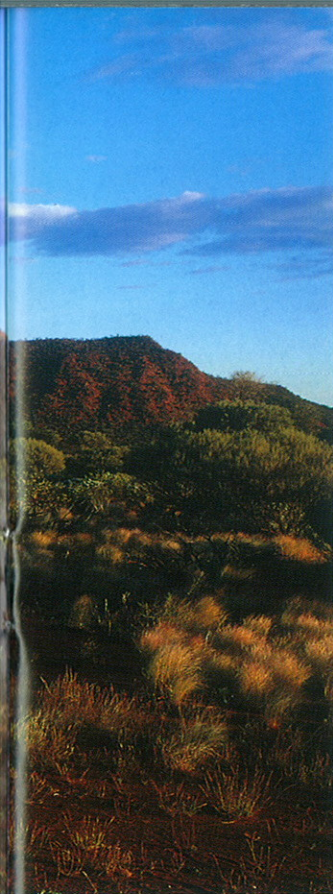
Natural attributes

Mount Augustus is often marketed as being the biggest rock in the world—twice the size of its famous cousin Uluru. But Mount Augustus is not a rock, as such. It's a sandstone and quartz massif with the rather unwieldy geological title of an asymmetrical anticline. This refers to the rock layers that have been folded into an arch-like

Above Mount Augustus.
Photo – David Bettini

Opposite page
Right Aboriginal engravings.
Photo – Rob Olver

Far right A stream cascades down through Kokte Gorge on Mount Augustus.
Photo – Brett Dennis/Lochman Transparencies



structure, which Mount Augustus was about 900 million years ago, before erosion created its current form.

The mount stretches about eight kilometres along its uppermost ridge and covers an area of 4,795 hectares. Water drains from the rock and seeps beneath the surrounding sands to feed groves of white-barked river gums while elsewhere mulga, myall, gidgee and other wattles adorn the red sandplain.

Animal life is varied, ranging from prehistoric-looking goannas to red kangaroos, euros and birds of prey circling on the thermals above. Nearby Cattle Pool is a bird watcher's paradise. Here riotous flocks of budgerigars explode from the branches of trees, and water birds such as black cormorant, swans and ducks adorn the permanent waters.

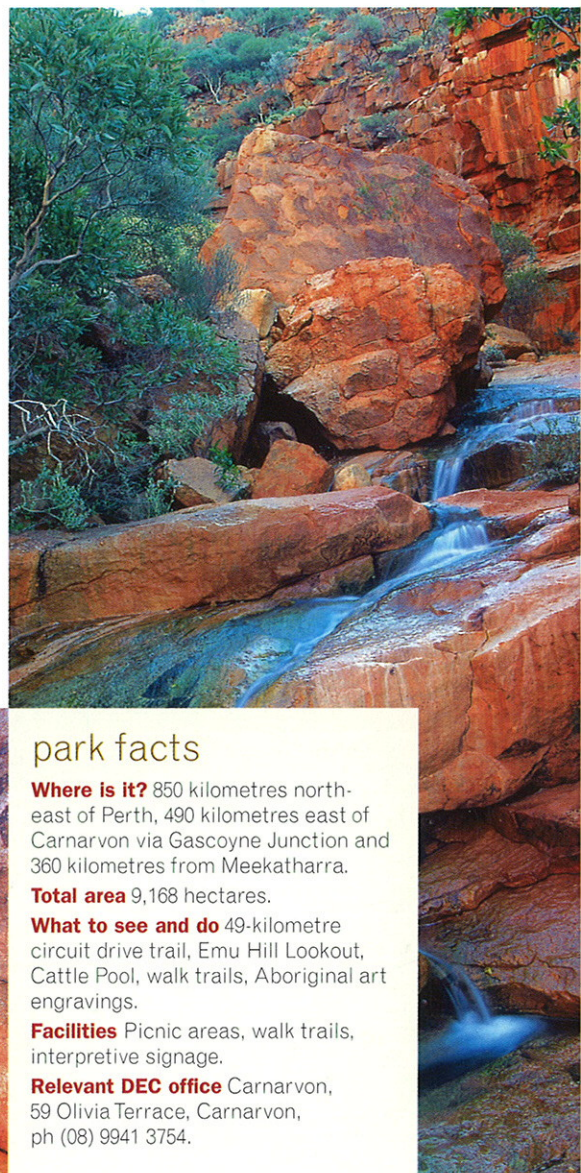
Exploring the park

One of the best ways of viewing the changing faces of Mount Augustus is setting out on the 49-kilometre circuit drive. This drive takes in rocky creek gorges, caves, Aboriginal rock engravings, picnic sites and walk trails.

Hikers will find an extensive selection of walk trails, ranging from 250-metre trails to picnic areas and gorges to the challenging 12-kilometre return walk to the mount summit.

About five kilometres west of the park boundary is Emu Hill Lookout—the ideal spot for taking photos of the mount at sunset. Cattle Pool, also known as Goolinee, is also well worth the visit. This permanent pool on the Lyons River is home to a riot of birds and is revered by the Wajarri people for its spiritual value.

There is no camping within the park but accommodation is available at the nearby Mount Augustus Outback Tourist Resort. Accommodation is also available at the historic Bangemall Inn located on Cobra Station, a former pastoral lease now managed by the Department of Environment and Conservation for its conservation values.



park facts

Where is it? 850 kilometres north-east of Perth, 490 kilometres east of Carnarvon via Gascoyne Junction and 360 kilometres from Meekatharra.

Total area 9,168 hectares.

What to see and do 49-kilometre circuit drive trail, Emu Hill Lookout, Cattle Pool, walk trails, Aboriginal art engravings.

Facilities Picnic areas, walk trails, interpretive signage.

Relevant DEC office Carnarvon, 59 Olivia Terrace, Carnarvon, ph (08) 9941 3754.

- 51 New marine parks website a hit with kids
School children can learn about marine parks with a new interactive website.
- 54 Bringing back the animals
Karakamia Wildlife Sanctuary near Perth protects threatened native animals, enabling them to be relocated to natural habitats.

Regulars

- 3 Contributors and Editor's letter
- 15 Bookmarks
Birds of the Greater South West Western Australia
Fixing Climate: The story of climate science and how to stop global warming
Geology of Western Australia's National Parks
- 30 Feature park
Mount Augustus National Park
- 39 Endangered
Woolly lysiosepalum
- 62 Urban antics
Love is all around...

Publishing credits

Executive Editor Ron Kawalilak.

Editors Samille Mitchell, Rhianna King, Carolyn Thomson-Dans.

Scientific/technical advice

Kevin Kenneally, Paul Jones, Keith Morris.

Design and production Maria Duthie, Natalie Jolakoski, Tiffany Taylor, Gooitzen van der Meer.

Illustration Gooitzen van der Meer.

Cartography Promaco Geodraft.

Marketing Cathy Birch

Phone (08) 9334 0296 Fax (08) 9334 0432.

Subscription enquiries

Phone (08) 9334 0481 or (08) 9334 0437.

Prepress and printing Lamb Print, Western Australia.

© ISSN 0815-4465

All material copyright. No part of the contents of the publication may be reproduced without the consent of the publishers.

Please do not send unsolicited material, but feel free to contact the editors.

Visit www.dec.wa.gov.au

Published by the Department of Environment and Conservation, 17 Dick Perry Avenue, Kensington, Western Australia.



Department of Environment and Conservation

Our environment, our future

