



Water in the bush is not always a common sight in the majority of the country, well at least not in South Australia.

I have been heading to the Flinders ever since I was a young lad. And whilst we occasionally had a few days of rain, I rarely saw creeks running freely with water. Nor did I experience thunder and lightning overhead in this usually dry part of the world.

If you're lucky enough to see this dry landscape after the rains have quenched the land, you'll be rewarded with sights that have to be seen to be believed. To watch a dormant landscape suddenly spring to life in a display of colour is an incredible experience.

It's something experienced by one's whole body as the senses are awakened by the vivid wildflowers and greenery. Animals appear from every rock and tree, with the simple yet life-giving presence of water...



Our cosy caravan set up at Spear Creek, before the weather hit. Photo: David Leslie

Our Flinders trip begins at Spear Creek

Our Flinders trip begins at [Spear Creek Caravan Park](#) located just a few km's south of Port Augusta. The journey from Adelaide takes about 4 hours with kids and caravan. It makes for a pleasant first day pulling into camp mid-afternoon.

Nestled in the foothills on the western side of the Mt Remarkable range, Spear Creek is a beautiful spot that offers private camping towards the back of the property. This is tucked away amongst the ancient red gums still standing beside a creek that rarely sees running water.

The caravan park has comfortable facilities in the powered section including toilets, showers and a camp kitchen. In the unpowered camps, there are flushing toilets in small sheds shared by a couple of campsites.



Dinner around the fire at Spear Creek. Photo: David Leslie

Walking tracks

A walking track follows Spear Creek into the thick of the ranges. It makes for quite the adventure as the walls of the gorge get taller and narrower the further you venture along. The rain made the landscape flourish, so we were treated to blooming flowers, which provided a stunning contrast against the rocky escarpments.

The track starts off with a vehicle track but turns to a single-file and runs along the gurgling creek. This makes for some interesting crossings and great photo opportunities. The kids loved exploring the little waterfalls and balancing across the stones as they tried not to get their feet wet.



The wildflowers provided a stunning sight for us and the kids. Photo: David Leslie

Setting up camp

Back at camp, we built a fire and enjoyed our first meal in style – a leg of lamb cooked in the



camp oven to perfection. Sitting around the fire, with not another soul in sight and comforts like toilets and showers only a stroll away – was a magical and relaxing way to start our Flinders trip.

Little did we know that the weather would impact on our little campsite that was a little too close to the creek...



With a delicious meal of roast lamb, we were ready to settle in for the night. Photo: David Leslie

The first-day trip

The following day we decided to head out for a day trip to Alligator Gorge. From Spear Creek, we drove to Quorn where we stopped at the information centre and collected our day pass for Alligator Gorge. From Quorn, we drove to Wilmington, found the turn off to Alligator Gorge a few km south. All up, the drive including the Quorn stop was 2 hours to the point of heading off along the walking track.



If you need a day trip activity, you can't go past Alligator Gorge. Photo: David Leslie.

Alligator Gorge

From the car park, we headed straight down the stairs to Alligator Gorge and followed the track to the Narrows.

Upon reaching the bottom of the stairs we were immediately faced with a rather wet obstacle. The creek was flowing, and we saw a few other walkers returning with wet shoes in hand so we reconsidered. We ended up walking along the gorge to see how far we would get. I certainly found some of the creek crossings challenging as I was holding my 5-year-old in one hand, my wife's in the other, my 2-year-old in the backpack, and a large camera hanging around my neck. I must confess I was probably more worried about the camera...

We pushed through and despite getting our socks wet, we found ourselves dwarfed by the deep cuttings of the gorge. This is a truly spectacular place and needs to be experienced in person. Photos cannot do this place justice! With the creek running high it was quite an adventure, but we had a great time. Even though we didn't cover that much ground, we were exhausted by the time we got back.



The whole family had a great time exploring Alligator Gorge. Photo: David Leslie.

Settling in for a rough night at Spear Creek

That night back at Spear Creek we were packing up dinner when the first of the flashes of lightning lit up the sky. Within a few minutes, the heavens unleashed and we quickly retreated to the comforts of the caravan. After a few games of scrabble and some dessert, we headed to bed as the rain started to subside. Any thoughts I had of flooding creeks turned into dreams only to be awoken around midnight to a strange sound.

As I came to, my heart raced as I realised I could hear rushing water and it was getting



louder. I leapt out of the caravan with my torch just in time to watch the water flow before my very eyes. What was a very dry creek quickly turned into a torrent of water 5 metres wide and getting closer to our camp. We rang the caretakers and after explaining what was happening they replied, "That creek hasn't had running water since 1979!".

With our exit to the campground cut off by the creek, we didn't have much choice but to stay put and watch. I placed a few large rocks marking the edge of the water and watched the creek. Eventually, it settled, so I managed to get a few more hours sleep.



Our campsite before the rains hit. Photo: David Leslie

The aftermath of the storm

The next morning we awoke to find the creek still in full swing. It'd cut a deep groove into the once dry creek bed which was going to make dragging the caravan challenging. The caretaker came over and told me from over the creek that the vehicle track was completely underwater.

They'd been the caretakers of the park for 30 years and had never seen so much water in the creek. After packing up we had to cross the creek to leave which was now a foot deep. It also had a sharp entry and exit to contend with.

Luckily, I had lifted my caravan before the trip to make it more off-road friendly. Even still, the drawbar and the tail bottomed out and so I dragged it through the creek with its wheels in the air. I was happy I got a new set of Cooper mud tyres on the patrol, which made it a lot easier and ended up being a pretty exciting experience in the end.



The vehicle track was completely underwater, which made exiting a little tricky! Photo: David Leslie

Heading north to Wilpena Pound

From Spear Creek, we were heading north to Wilpena Pound. This had been a great start to our Flinders adventure. With more extreme weather on the way, the 'adventure' had well and truly begun!

Spear Creek is a beautiful spot and we will definitely be back. They have a 4WD track on their property which we didn't try, but that's just an excuse to come back again. If you're passing through Port Augusta and need a place to stay definitely keep Spear Creek in mind!

In Part 2 of our Flinders trip - we head to Wilpena Pound where closed roads, flooded bush walk tracks and lots of mud keep the adventure alive!