



If you're looking for a remote off-road adventure, consider the Anne Beadell Highway, which stretches almost 1,400 kilometres from Coober Pedy in South Australia to Laverton in Western Australia.

The first thing to know is that the highway is really a track – named after road builder Len Beadell's wife, the grand label is a reflection of his cheeky sense of humour.



## The history of the Anne Beadell Highway

The track was constructed between 1953 – 1962 to service Woomera and atomic test sites in the area. It crosses the Great Victoria Desert with virtually no reliable water sources along the track and only one refuelling opportunity at Ilkurka Roadhouse, 170 kilometres west of the SA/WA border and 700 kilometres west of Coober Pedy.

## Preparing for the track

The Anne Beadell offers some of the most isolated travelling and camping you could wish for. We were six days getting to Laverton and didn't see another soul until day five. You need to be well prepared – stories of breakdowns, broken suspension and bogged vehicles abound. Travellers we met had worn out shock absorber mounting rubbers and broken brackets on a newly installed long-range fuel tank. This required some nifty strap work to hold it until they reached Kalgoorlie.



## Vehicle and Fuel

A high clearance 4WD vehicle is essential, and while some people advise against towing a trailer, our Track Trailer Tvan had no problems with the terrain. We travelled with friends so we each had backup in case of trouble.

You will need to carry sufficient fuel for at least 700 km. It will be more if you take in some of the diversions off the track and consumption will vary for each vehicle and according to track conditions. Food and water provisions should last 10 – 11 days if you start at Coober Pedy, allow for longer in case of breakdowns.



## Check your vehicle beforehand

Vehicle preparation is critical, so follow a comprehensive checklist for remote travelling. Make sure you carry a UHF, HF radio or satellite phone and detailed maps in addition to any GPS equipment. We bought the *Outback Travellers Guide to the Anne Beadell Highway* from Snowys. This was a great supplement to our in-car GPS and Hema Maps on my iPad.

The section from Coober Pedy to Mable Creek is renowned for severe corrugations. So we chose to go west from Adelaide on the Eyre Highway and join the track at Emu Junction via Maralinga to avoid the worst of them.

We camped two nights at Maralinga, topped up with diesel and took in a full day tour. This provided a fascinating insight into the bomb testings, the 4,000 people who worked there,





and the impact on the Maralinga Tjarutja community – then and now.

## South Australian section of the track

The South Australian section of the Anne Beadell Highway is a narrow, winding and sandy track. It undulates through small dunes and swales, between stretches of corrugations and long deep ruts, which thankfully were dry. We took it slowly, rarely driving above 30 km/hour through this section, a loose Anderson plug being the only repair.

It was a beautiful drive with sunny days, cold nights and early mornings. We saw wildflowers, red sand salt lakes and ever-changing vegetation. There was plenty of black oak woodland, spinifex, hakea and cypress woodland – often so close to the track it was like driving through hedgerows.



West of the border the road is smooth and wide and shows signs of regular grading. This might have something to do with the surrounding mining areas.

The track passes through Conservation Parks, Aboriginal Lands and Australian Defence areas. Permits are required for these various sections as well as for access to Maralinga, information can be found on the [Shire of Laverton website](#).

***Do you have an Anne Beadell Highway story to tell? Tell us in the comments section below.***