

Welcome to Part 2 of our trek following the Old Ghan Railway from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs. Part 1 covered the section from Oodnadatta to Finke. Now to the rest of the trip.

Finke to Maryvale (Titjikala)

From Finke you will travel 121km along the Old Ghan line, sometimes on top of it. Generally firm and sandy with some gibbers and corrugations, this is a good outback track. It is not necessary to go into Maryvale but the track to Chambers Pillar begins here and it would be a pity to come this far without taking the 114km round trip detour. Fuel is also available at Maryvale if required.

Finke to Alice Springs is also the route of the annual Finke Desert Race. Held on the June long weekend, motorbikes, quads and buggies thrash their way along a narrow dirt track that can be seen adjacent to the main track.

The roughness of this track has to be seen to be believed and the ability of body and machine to withstand the punishment is amazing.



Relics at Finke. There is still plenty of old infrastructures to be seen along the Old Ghan Railway.

Old Ghan Sites

After leaving Finke the track is either on or adjacent to the Old Ghan line. After about 16km you pass through the Musgrave siding area (25° 26' 38.3" S 134° 32' 32.9" E). Unless you stop and look you would not realise this was an old siding. A wander around will reward with various rail paraphernalia.

The turnoff into Rumbalara is 28km north of Finke (25° 19' 39.2" S 134° 29' 35" E). Take the sandy track west over the main sand dune for about 2km to reach the very significant siding remains. This was a major stock loading siding with a turning triangle quite obvious.

After travelling a further 21km the area of Mount Squire is passed through (25° 11' 42.7" S 134° 25' 42.2" E). The road is between the two rail line embankments but not easily recognised unless you stop and wander around.

At 64km north of Finke the ruins of Engoordina will come into sight. The stark white concrete walls stand out and an information board provides the history of this area.

Travel a further 23km and a large railway water tank comes into view, heralding your arrival at Bundooma. The tank is the only significant remains, but a wander around enables a vision of what once was.



The old water tank at Bunbooma.

After leaving Bundooma and travelling 28km a decision is required. Take the detour to Maryvale and Chambers Pillar or continue along the Ghan line towards Alice Springs. If continuing north the next significant site is Rodinga, another 14km beyond the Maryvale turnoff.

A Detour to Chambers Pillar

A narrow track heads west for 8km, arriving at Maryvale (Titjikala) through the not-so-picturesque town dump. Fuel is available at this Aboriginal community and there is an art gallery featuring the work of local artists. The 45kms from Maryvale to Chambers Pillar takes you through a mixture of sandy and gibber-strewn track, including a quite steep and stony section as you pass over the Charlotte Range.

Chambers Pillar and the surrounding rock formations are impressive and the colours spectacular, especially at sunrise and sunset. There are two excellent camping areas with well-defined campsites including fire pits and clean toilets.



Chambers Pillar is a must visit, especially in the early morning light or at sunset.

This imposing lump of sandstone was first seen by Europeans in April 1860 on John McDouall Stuart's first expedition to attempt to cross the country from south to north. He named it after James Chambers, one of the sponsors of the attempted crossing.

The area is of significance in the Aboriginal Dreamtime, involving the gecko ancestor Itirkawara. A brochure detailing the significance of this area can be found [here](#).

Maryvale to Alice Springs

Once back at Maryvale there is a 14km trip back to the Old Ghan Heritage Trail and the remains of Rodinga. From here you will pass through or near a number of old sidings as you head to Alice Springs, another 101km north. The track is sandy, occasionally corrugated, but in good condition.

Old Ghan Sites

Rodinga was a significant siding and building ruins remain just near the track.

23km north of Rodinga is the site of the Deep Well siding (24° 21' 26.93" S 134° 03' 9.45" E). Now a date plantation and in private hands – it is not accessible to the public.

Ewaninga siding is 65km north of Rodinga and a spot with quite a lot of infrastructure remaining. This is due to the Ghan Preservation Society based in Alice Springs that at one time ran tourist trains to this site.

The home of the Ghan Preservation Society is found at McDonnell siding, 8km south of Alice Springs in well-preserved railway buildings. The area is also home to the magnificent National Transport Hall of Fame. You can easily spend several hours wandering around here.



The new Ghan at the Alice Springs train station.

Distances and Services

Oodnadatta to Alice Springs is 529km, with two Aboriginal communities at Finke and Maryvale providing unleaded and diesel fuel on weekdays and Saturday mornings only. There are numerous camping opportunities near old rail ruins, at creek crossings, and Eringa waterhole.



The Last Bit - What Else You Might Need To Know

Permits

No permits are required to travel or camp along any sections of this trek. A camp fee is payable at Chambers Pillar.

Key Contacts

Police Station, Oodnadatta - (08) 8670 7805

Pink Roadhouse, Oodnadatta - (08) 8670 7822

Aputula Community Store, Finke - (08) 8956 0968

Titjikala Store, Maryvale - (08) 8965 0793

Did you miss part one of this series? Check it out [here](#).