

# White Cliffs Opal Fields, NSW

95 km north of Wilcannia, sealed road.

“The First and Friendliest”



**OPALISED PINEAPPLE**  
[www.whitecliffsnsw.com.au](http://www.whitecliffsnsw.com.au)

2021 Edition

## SAFETY MESSAGE

Provided by the White Cliffs Miners Association

Tourists, Visitors & Fossickers:

The White Cliffs Miners acknowledge the right to fossick anywhere on the Reserve under the auspices of the mining act of 1992 and no licence is required. However, permission is required from the holder of a claim to fossick on any registered claim.

A registered claim is usually square in shape and 50 x 50 meters in size with a wooden or steel post at each corner. On the NE post is a datum board, which contains the details of the claim holder. There is a vast amount of unregistered ground on the Historic Mining Reserve; but please remember SAFETY IS PARAMOUNT and is the responsibility of the visitor. Children are especially vulnerable and need to be carefully supervised at all times as there are many hidden hazards. Good Luck and enjoy your stay!

### Emergency Phone Numbers:

EMERGENCY	000
HOSPITAL	08 8091 6605
POLICE (Wilcannia)	08 8083 8099
ROYAL FLYING DOCTOR	08 8088 1188
Local Road Condition Info.	08 8091 5155

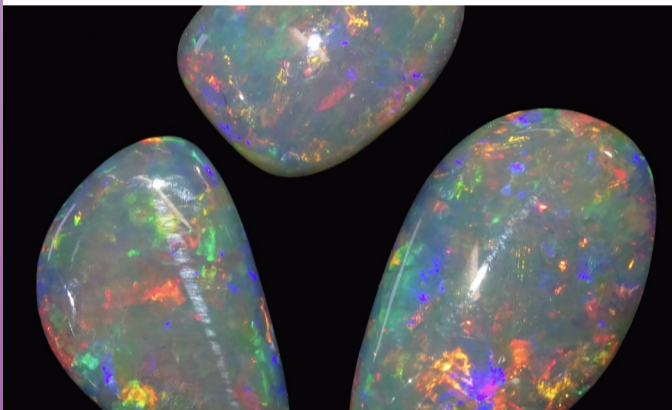


## INTRODUCTION

At first glance White Cliffs is a small outback town, but look a little closer and discover the diversity it has to offer. An amazing little town hidden in the desert just waiting for you to explore the gems within. The first and the most accessible opal mining town right at your backdoor. First there is opal. You can watch and experience the gritty reality of mining or fossick for your own opal. Observe the found treasures being polished into beautiful stones, design your own settings, or shop for gorgeous opal jewellery. White Cliffs is the only place in the world opal pineapples are found along with opalised wood, shells and fossils. Also fascinating to uncover are the underground homes – eerie, beautiful, intriguing, winding into the hillsides with sculptural grace and each bearing the distinctive stamp of its creator.

This is the true outback, both harsh and glorious. Here kangaroos and emus really do wander the streets, eagles soar above, wildlife captivates and wildflowers burst out seasonally. Sunrises are a glorious unfolding, sunsets are extravaganzas, and the night skies are dramatically revealed with no city lights to dim their majesty.

**Stop for a bit and say g'day,  
Explore the sites, enjoy your stay.**



## HISTORY

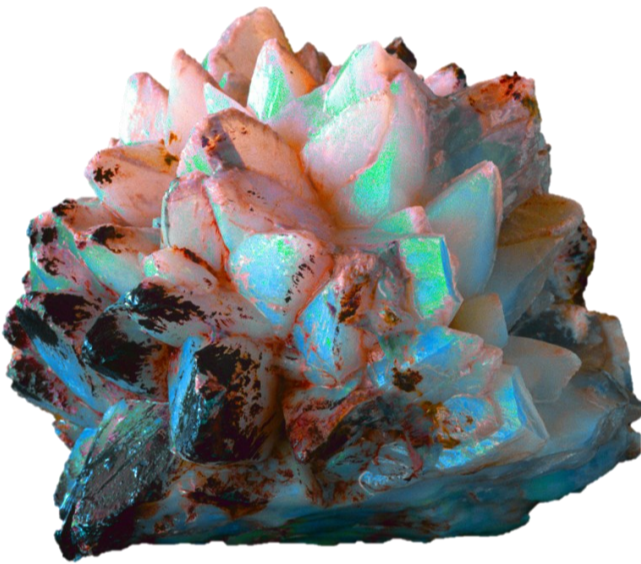
White Cliffs was the first commercial opal field in Australia. In the 1880's, a group of stockmen stumbled across a scattering of beautiful rocks which turned out to be precious opal. The first mining lease was lodged in 1890, and as word got around the town's population blew out rapidly. The first official census, taken in 1901, revealed a population of 1500. Not everyone wanted to stand up and be counted however, and rumor has it that the true figure was as high as 3000 or even 5000 people. Whatever the true number, it was more than the land could support. Drought and water shortage took their toll and the population declined when World War One began in 1914 and many of the miners left to enlist. Soon there were barely 30 people left in town. It was not until after the Second World War that people were drawn back to the town and the search for the elusive opal. White Cliffs has survived its turbulent past and is now home to a small group of miners who continue to uncover precious opal, including the amazing Opal Pineapples for which White Cliffs is famous. Others live here just because it is a beautiful place to be, and the town's population now stands around 100 to 200 people.



## ATTRACTIONS

There is plenty to see and do in White Cliffs, the longer you stay the more you will discover.

- visit our Opal Showrooms
- fossick for opal on your own or contact Fossickers Den for self-guided tour details
- go along on the famous Underground Mine Tour with Red Earth Opal
- drive the self-guided heritage trail around town and learn about our rugged past
- visit the Underground Motel History and Culture Centre
- take a Picnic and drive out to Peery Lake in the Paroo Darling National Park
- go Underground on a dugout tour with White House Tours
- tee off on our outback golf course
- visit the historic Solar Power Station
- BIRDWATCHING. The Orange Chat visits here in summer, see our website for more information on bird watching
- visit the Aboriginal rock art at Mutawintji
- take a look around Toms Hut
- ride along with White Cliffs Bus Tours to see all the sights



## OPAL PINEAPPLES

Unique to White Cliffs are opalised pineapples. These crystal formations have been developed over many years and many different stages of calcification and are known as pseudomorphs. They are most commonly found around 40 feet underground and there are many theories as to the exact science of how the pineapple has formed. White Cliffs is the only place in the world these opal pineapples can be found. Take time to look through the opal showrooms and learn more about these fascinating opal crystals.....One of mother nature's great wonders.

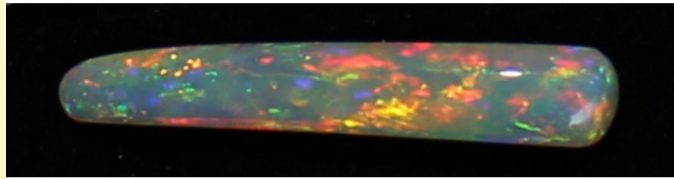


## PASTORALISTS

White Cliffs is surrounded by sheep and cattle stations which have been run by the same families for generations. Battling the harsh outback conditions, most stations are around 100,000 acres in size and run around 5,000 sheep and cattle.

## OPAL FOSSILS

Whilst visiting White Cliffs ponder for a moment and realize that millions of years ago, the ground you are standing on was under the sea. Swimming around here in the Cretaceous period were Plesiosaurs and Ichthyosaurs. The Plesiosaurs were 3 to 12 meters long with long necks and small heads. The Ichthyosaurs were similar in size, but more fish like. An opalised Plesiosaur was mined in the 70's and will soon be on display in White Cliffs.



Other Fossils that have been found here, some opalised, include Crinoids, also called sea lilies, belemnites which are like modern squid, various brachiopods, bivalve shells and gastropods. Along with these unique fossils opalised wood, various plants and cycads are also found. The Artesian Basin has left many unique, strange and beautiful specimens behind for miners to discover.



## PEERY LAKE

Peery Lake is a fresh water ephemeral lake and has been declared an important Ramsar site. Just over an hour's drive from White Cliffs, the lake is laced with aboriginal history and the famous mound springs, Peery Lake picnic area is a peaceful spot to unwind in the outback. When the lake is full take a canoe out and watch the waterbirds flourish, including pink cockatoos, mulga parrots and red-backed kingfishers.



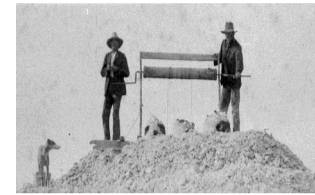
## FOSSICKING

White Cliffs is the only opal field in Australia where you are free to roam and fossick anywhere on the field, avoiding registered claims. Back in the day, opal with red was the only valuable opal and to this day you can still find precious blue green cuttable opals. Should you find a beautiful piece you can get it cut and polished locally in town.



## OPAL MINING TODAY

There are half a dozen full time miners in White Cliffs. Most of these miners are also business owners and limited on their mining hours. This number increases significantly, as hobby miners arrive for the winter months. The majority of mining is conducted on the original and now historical opal field known as the Lunar Landscape. Although the 10 and 20 ft. "levels" have been dug out, there is still opal to be found and mined at the deeper levels of 30



A "Windlass" was one of the first methods of dirt removal from mines. The hand cranked bucket was slow but effective given the resources available at the time.



A "Self-Tipper" is commonly used today as a mechanical method of removing dirt. Manual labour is still required to fill the bucket, but more efficient than the windlass.



A "Blower" is constructed from an old truck which produces a vacuum strong enough to suck large rocks. The quickest and most effective way of dirt removal.



Excavators are primarily used for open cut mining. An expensive but effective way to process the ground.

## UNDERGROUND LIVING

White Cliffs is one of the few places in Australia where most of the town is underground. Based upon what you see arriving into town, you wouldn't think there was a great deal here... that's because the majority of homes and some businesses are buried into the hills. Dugouts range in temperature between 16 – 26 degrees all year round which allows residents to be comfortable when its 0 – 50 degrees outside. The ground in White Cliffs is extremely stable as dugouts are sealed with paint and concrete. Although dugouts began from mining, no mining is now permitted on the hills containing dugouts. You can, however, dig as many rooms as you like up to your boundary.



## FOOD FACILITIES

- WHITE CLIFFS OUTBACK STORE has all your grocery needs, eat in or take away meals. Dinner with the locals Friday nights
- WHITE CLIFFS HOTEL MOTEL offers all day dining.
- WHITE CLIFFS SPORTING CLUB opens for a roast dinner Sundays, most of the year
- RED EARTH OPAL CAFÉ offers morning and afternoon tea with freshly baked cakes and freshly ground coffee
- GALLERY ON COOLIBAH opening 2021 offers hot bake, tapas and gallery

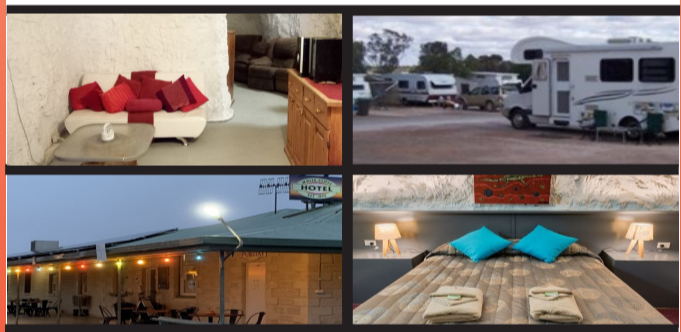


## FUEL & GAS BOTTLES

- WHITE CLIFFS OUTBACK STORE has fuel facilities along with swap and go gas bottles.
- WHITE CLIFFS HOTEL MOTEL Diesel fuel and Avgas available.

## ACCOMMODATION

- Fossickers Den Dugout Accommodation.
- White Cliffs Opal Pioneer Tourist Park.
- White Cliffs Hotel Motel.
- White Cliffs Underground Motel, Restaurant and Bar.

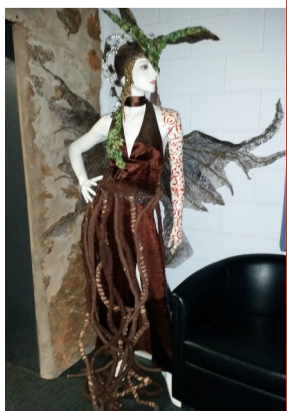


## ANNUAL EVENTS

- Easter Saturday YABBY RACES at the White Cliffs Hotel Motel.
  - Anzac Day Parade and Ceremony - April 25th.
  - Gymkhana and Rodeo - April.
  - Music Festival - May.
- For updates and information please visit our website:  
[www.whitecliffsnsw.com.au](http://www.whitecliffsnsw.com.au)

## BIENNIAL EVENTS

- White Cliffs Gemfest - odd years.
  - White Cliffs Underground Art Festival - even years.
- For updates and information please visit our website:  
[www.whitecliffsnsw.com.au](http://www.whitecliffsnsw.com.au)



## White Cliffs Bus Tour

Take a ride with Rob on his bus tour in White Cliffs and get a unique and true overview of the area. Rob's bus tour is the perfect way to combine the social atmosphere of a guided historical tour in comfort, educating you with the history about White Cliffs township, opal fields, underground living and our very own Solar Power Station.

9am most days – Guided bus tours tailored to suit your needs. Call Rob 0428 962 900 to arrange and book your tour. POA



## Red Earth Opal Gallery, Bar & Coffee House

"An unexpected oasis". Your first stop White Cliffs FINEST opal jewellery, souvenirs and rare Opal Pineapples display. Cappuccino and freshly made cakes. Open Wednesday-Sunday 10am-3pm. Daily during school holidays. 'Opal Mine Tour' starts 3pm daily. EFTPOS available. COACHES WELCOME

Phone: 0488 965 282 or 0437 786 317

Seasonal 1st April to 30th November



## Southern Cross Opals

OPEN TODAY, open 360 days per year 9am till 5pm, rely on Aussie Southern Cross Opals to be open when you need them. Opal mined locally, set in white or yellow gold and sterling silver. A fantastic range of rings, earrings, necklaces and pendants. Also, postcards, souvenirs, artwork, polished stones and findings. Pineapples in season. Informative DVD explains what you need to know about opals.

Open 7 days, all cards welcome.

Phone: 0429 916 707

Email: dicksherylwagner@activ8.net.au



## White Cliffs Sporting Club

- golf anytime or 8am Sundays
- club and buggy hire available
- tennis
- pool table
- darts
- air-conditioned Club House
- conference facilities
- catering and venue hire available

SUNDAY DINNER 7pm mid Feb-mid Dec. BAR OPEN 6pm. Beer, wine and soft drinks. VISITORS WELCOME

Phone: 0429 916 707 Email: wscs2836@gmail.com



Business Hours Seasonal

## White Cliffs Opal Pioneer Tourist Park

- caravan & camping area
- children's playground
- laundry (coin operated)
- pets allowed under control
- amenities with coin operated hot showers
- Powered sites
- FREE electric BBQ's
- camp kitchen
- facilities for disabled

Phone: 08 8091 6688

After Hours: 0419 871 083



## The Opal Mine Tour

Venture underground to view 'old timers diggings' and be part of Graeme's modern day working opal mine. The highlight of your visit to White Cliffs. Tag-a-long Mine Tour, leaving from Red Earth Opal Showroom/Café at 3pm most days. Duration 1-2 hrs. bookings at Red Earth Opal Showroom/Café. Adults \$25 pp. 10-16yrs \$15 pp. Under 10yrs \$10 pp. Other times by appointment subject to availability. COACHES WELCOME. Be among the growing list of people to discover opals in the mine.

Phone: 0488 965 282 or 0437 786 317



Business Hours Seasonal

## White Cliffs Underground Motel, restaurant and bar

White Cliffs Underground Motel is a huge complex with 30 underground rooms and 2 above ground rooms. Welcoming guests from all over the world for over 20 years the Motel promises a unique experience. The vast outback setting ensures a relaxed and peaceful stay. Featuring aboveground pool, games room, star gazing and White Cliffs History and Culture Centre during your stay. Licensed restaurant, café and meals daily.

Phone: 1300 688 225

Email: info@undergroundmotel.com.au

Web: www.undergroundmotel.com.au



## The Stubbie House

White Cliffs iconic bottle house and opal showroom. Built from over 60,000 stobbies. Now housing some of White Cliffs finest opal jewellery made with gold and sterling silver into rings, pendants, earrings and opal charm beads. Selling the unique and exquisite paintings of Rob Wellington and much, much more.

Open most days 10am till 5pm.

EFTPOS available

Phone: 0429 916 707

Email: dicksherylwagner@activ8.com



## White House Dugout Tours

White Cliffs' most amazing underground home is now open to the public. Experience a guided tour through this private residence filled with art and local stories.

There are 2 tours per day, 11am and 2pm. For coaches and large groups, please call to pre-arrange a tour outside these times.

\$10 pp Children under 12 yrs free.

Ph: 0497 268 971 Cree



## Fossickers Den

### Dugout Accommodation

Fossickers Den Dugout Accommodation offers an entire dugout/house for the price of 1 room. With full linen and facilities provided, experience staying underground in comfort. Pets welcome. Contact Hayley for bookings and nightly rate details.

Phone: 0408 262 929 or AH: 0410 355 859

Email: fossickersden@outlook.com

Web: www.fossickersden.com.au



## White Cliffs Solar Power Station

Welcome to one of Australia's Significant Industrial Heritage Sites. At White Cliffs the first Australian Solar Thermal Power Station was built in 1980. The fourteen large dishes made superheated steam to drive a single phase 37KVA alternator to produce power for the town. In 1997 it was converted to water cooled Photo Voltaic and ceased operation in 2005. In 2006 the site was recognized by Engineering Australia, Heritage Committee as being the Worlds First Commercial Solar Power Station.



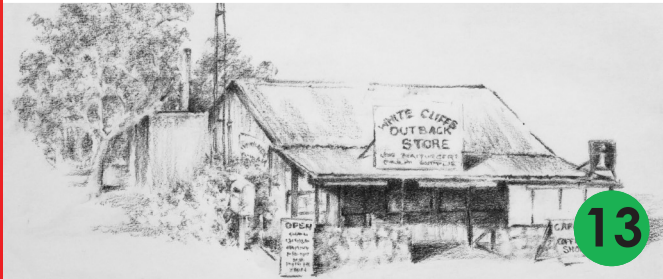
## White Cliffs Outback Store and Tourist Information

- Tourist Information Centre
- gas bottles
- all your takeaway food and sit down meals
- diesel and petroleum supplies
- Centrelink Access Point
- Community Postal Agency
- grocery supplies
- EFTPOS and ATM

Phone/Fax: 08 8091 6611

After Hours: 0414 935 803

Email: honor.boss lady@gmail.com



## Mutawintji Heritage Tours

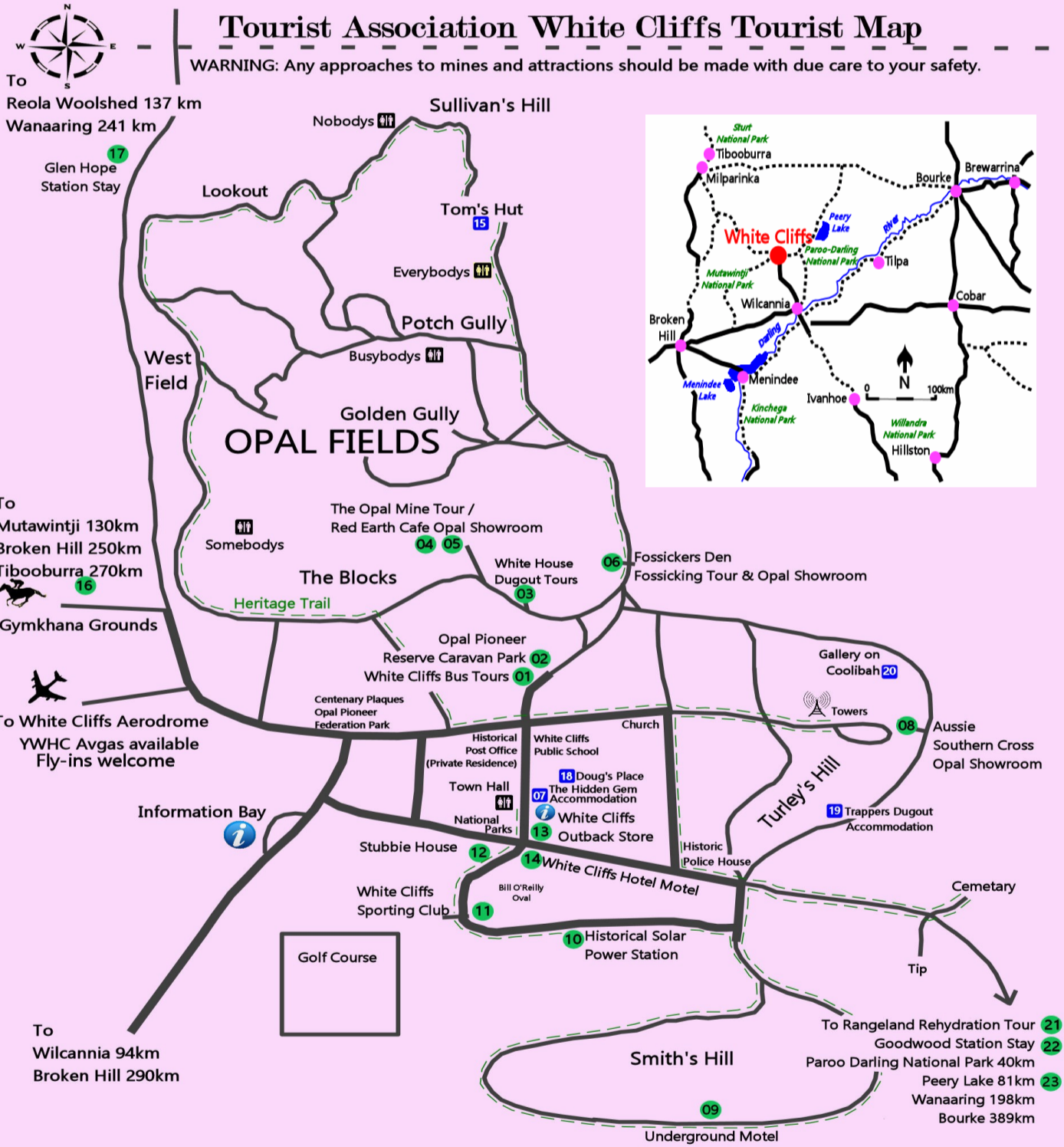
PROUDLY OWNED AND OPERATED BY MUTAWINTJI LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

Mutawintji National Park is an amazing place for fauna and flora discovery, scenery, and peace. The perfect place to learn about the local Aboriginal Culture with traditional owners and discover the environmental heritage of the area. Mutawintji contains one of the biggest collections of rock engravings and ochre hand stencils in Australia. Guided tours need to be booked in advance.

Phone: 0497 002 773

Email: mnph2016@gmail.com

Webs: www.mutawintjiheritage.wordpress.com



## Other Attractions

07 The Hidden Gem Accommodation

15 Tom's Hut—historic stone hut and local bric-a-brac.

19 Trapper's Dugout Accommodation. Ph: 0448 451 507

20 Gallery on Coolibah - The Miners Shaft Café with inhouse bakery. Opens soon.

## Home of the Opalised Pineapple

## Paroo Darling National Park

The Paroo-Darling Visitor Centre at White Cliffs is open most days and features displays of the history of the area. Aboriginal Heritage, the unique role of water in an arid environment, the unique plants and animals it supports, as well as information on other nearby National Parks. The Coach and Horses campground is situated on the Wilcannia to Tilpa road and gives the visitor a peaceful and quiet respite near the river under shady trees. It is equipped with barbecues and picnic tables so you can enjoy lunch or an evening meal with a scenic view. There is a camping fee of \$6 an adult per night.

Phone: 08 8084 2880

Web: www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au



## White Cliffs Hotel Motel

Located in the heart of this historic township in an extremely characteristic, quiet and lively area within short walking distance to most sites, surrounded by the extraordinary beauty of this vast outback land. We provide a range of accommodation to suit with most rooms being ensuite and air-conditioned for a comfortable stay. Our restaurant offers all day menu. We welcome Coaches, AVGAS sales and walk-ins. Come and meet, mingle and relax with the locals and tourists at this outback Hotel.

Phone: 08 8091 6606 or 0458 015 289

Email: info@whitecliffshotel.com.au

Web: www.whitecliffshotel.com.au



## Glen Hope Station Stay

GLEN HOPE STATIONSTAY is a family owned business on 77,000 acres. We run mainly Merino Sheep and Cattle. We have opened up our home for camping and caravanning. We are 15kms north of White Cliffs and our home is secluded with big open spaces for people to relax and enjoy.

Facilities Included:

\* Toilets and Hot Showers

\* Drinking Water

\* Firepits

Prices vary depending on your stay. Drop into the White Cliffs Outback Store, email, phone or find us on the Web for more details. Honor Taylor 0414 935 803



## Rangeland Rehydration Tour

Polpah Station

In one of the toughest droughts in memory, Barry Turner had no hesitation in implementing the system known as Ecosystem Management Understanding (EMU) on Polpah Station, near White Cliffs. Come along and see various sites the system of contours and ripped areas have been implemented and learn about Ecosystems Management Understanding or EMU.TM

Tour begins 8:00am – and concludes 9:00am

Please call Barry to arrange tour – 0429 427 744



## Goodwood Station Stay

Goodwood Stn is a 90000 acre, 3rd generation owned and run working sheep station located 46km NE of White Cliffs. We offer sites for camping as well as accommodation at our shearers qtrs.

♦ Stunning landscapes and waterholes bustling with wildlife

♦ Campfires & fire pits

♦ Bushwalking

♦ Hot showers / flush toilets

♦ Birdwatching

♦ Power available

♦ 40 min drive to Peery Lake



Camp site - from \$10pp/night

Accommodation -

from \$50/room/night

