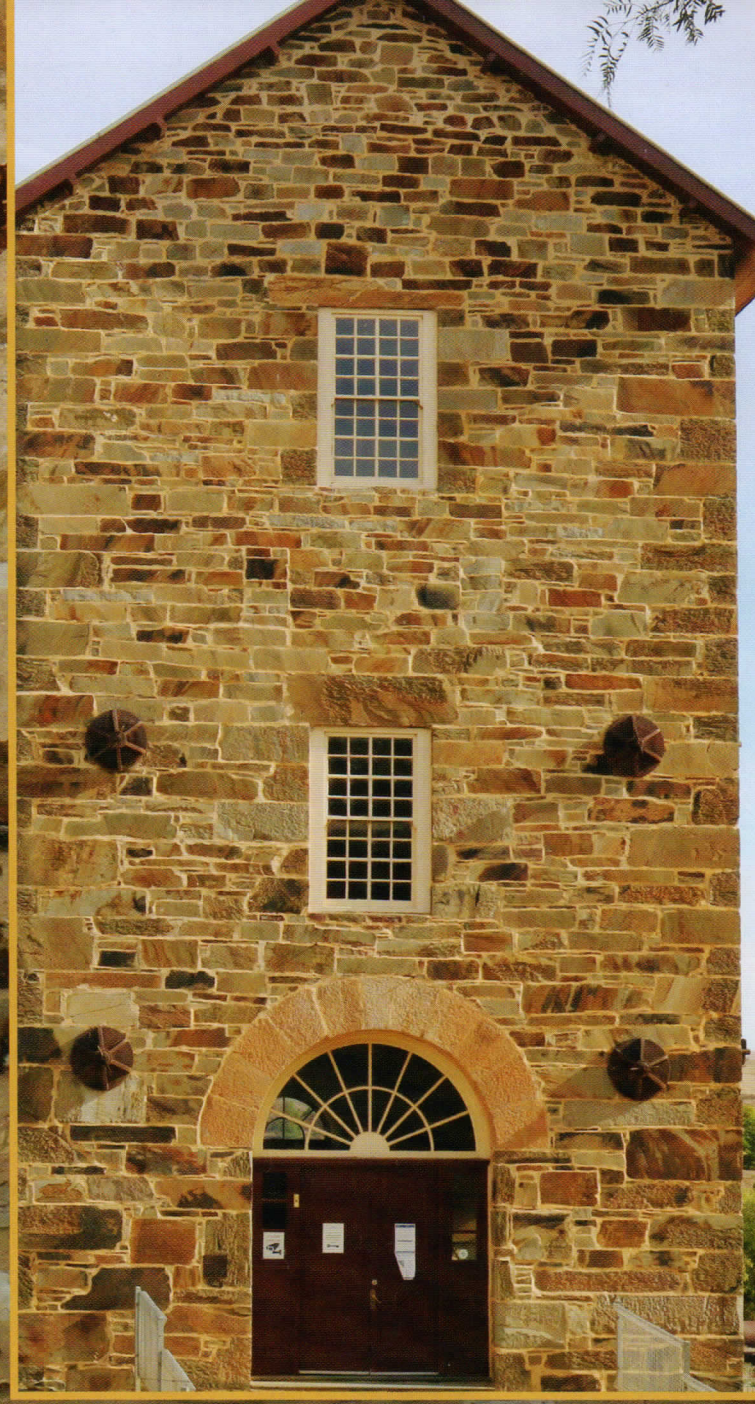


The Key to Burra

Take the tour of the historic buildings of South Australian town Burra two hours north of Adelaide.

Story and Photography: Glenys Gelzinis





If you've ever dreamt of having the key to a city and open access to go where you want when it suits, then Burra in South Australia may just be the answer to your travel dreams. This is the tour for people who don't like organised tours, where you have access to historic buildings which you can visit at your leisure and without the crowds.

Burra is two hours north of Adelaide and is notable for being the first surveyed mining town in Australia. Copper ore was discovered in 1845 and by 1851, Burra had become Australia's largest inland town. Most of the mining operation and management was run by Cornish settlers and during its heyday the population of Burra and nearby localities grew to around 5,000. The ore mined at one stage accounted for 5% of the world's copper production. Eventually the mine closed in 1867 after production declined but many of the buildings are intact and have National Heritage status.

When you visit Burra today you can literally unlock its historical past, with your very own key to the city, known



as the Burra Heritage Passport. For \$30 per adult, you follow a trail and open the doors to 11 locked sites any time and day you choose to visit, during daylight hours. A key can be picked up from the Visitor Information Centre where you're also provided with maps and a book on the history of Burra, including the sites you'll be visiting.

This is a history tour like no other where you are completely in charge of where you go and how long you spend at each of the sites with the passport yours to use for up to two days. All you have to do is follow the map and anywhere you see the passport key logo, simply unlock the doors and let yourself in.

Some of the sites you can enter are the old police lockup and stables, the Redruth Jail which was the first jail built in South Australia outside of Adelaide, Unicorn Brewery Cellars and the Burra mines historic site. You also have access to cottages which are furnished as if the occupants have just stepped out temporarily, and some tiny intact miner's dugouts.

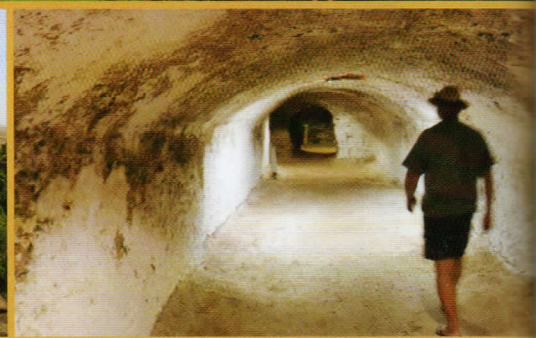
Some miners and their families were forced to live in these

dugouts, because of the shortage of houses during the rapid development of the Burra mine. The dugouts lined the Burra Creek and tributaries and at one stage there were around 600 dugouts being lived in, with the busiest area known as Creek Street. As you'd expect though, flooding devastated most of the dugouts and by 1860 most were deserted. The few you can visit today survived in a tributary of the Burra Creek.

The Burra Mine historic site is one of the more impressive places to visit and here, your key gives you access to Morphett's Enginehouse. It is one of three Cornish enginehouses which form the largest collection in Australia. Inside the building are historic photos, models and information on its operation and you can climb stairs to the top of the building to get far ranging views over the old mine site.

While you're in Burra, make sure to check out some Australian music history by travelling about 3 kilometres north of the town to Midnight Oil House. This 1920's built house sits in a cropping and sheep grazing paddock on the Barrier





Highway and for many Australian music fans, this old house is instantly familiar as the house on the cover of the 1987 Diesel and Dust album by Midnight Oil. The cottage is still standing thanks to a preservation fund set up in 2013 where money was raised which enabled its weathered tin roof and a collapsing wall to be stabilised and rebuilt.

The original image used for the album cover, was taken by Australian photographer Ken Duncan, and it has become a popular spot for photographers and fans of Midnight Oil to visit and get their own shot. A parking area has been created off the highway to make it easier for passersby to stop safely and take a look. It's easy to find and you can actually put the location name, 'Midnight Oil House', into Google Maps to find it.

With so much to see in and around Burra, caravanners and campers have a couple of options for places to stay and enjoy the area for a few days. The Burra caravan park is walking distance to the centre of town, on the banks of Burra Creek,

or if you prefer free camping, you can stay at Worlds End Reserve at Burra Creek Gorge.

The reserve is a little over 25 kilometres to the south and it gained its ominous name from early pastoralists. They declared it Worlds End, after the Surveyor General of the time marked a line on the map showing where farmland ceased to be reliable for crop growing, and became more drought prone.

For travellers today, the only thing that ends here is your phone reception, but that's not a bad thing with the Burra Creek and gorge to explore instead. In the 1880s this was the popular local spot for picnics, a place to go swimming and yabbing, have organised sports events and enjoy holidays.

Today there are plenty of sites for campers and caravans to set up away from others amongst giant river red gums with fire pits, picnic tables and rubbish bins provided as well as a few composting toilets. Worlds End Reserve is pet friendly, off grid and free of charge to stay.

