

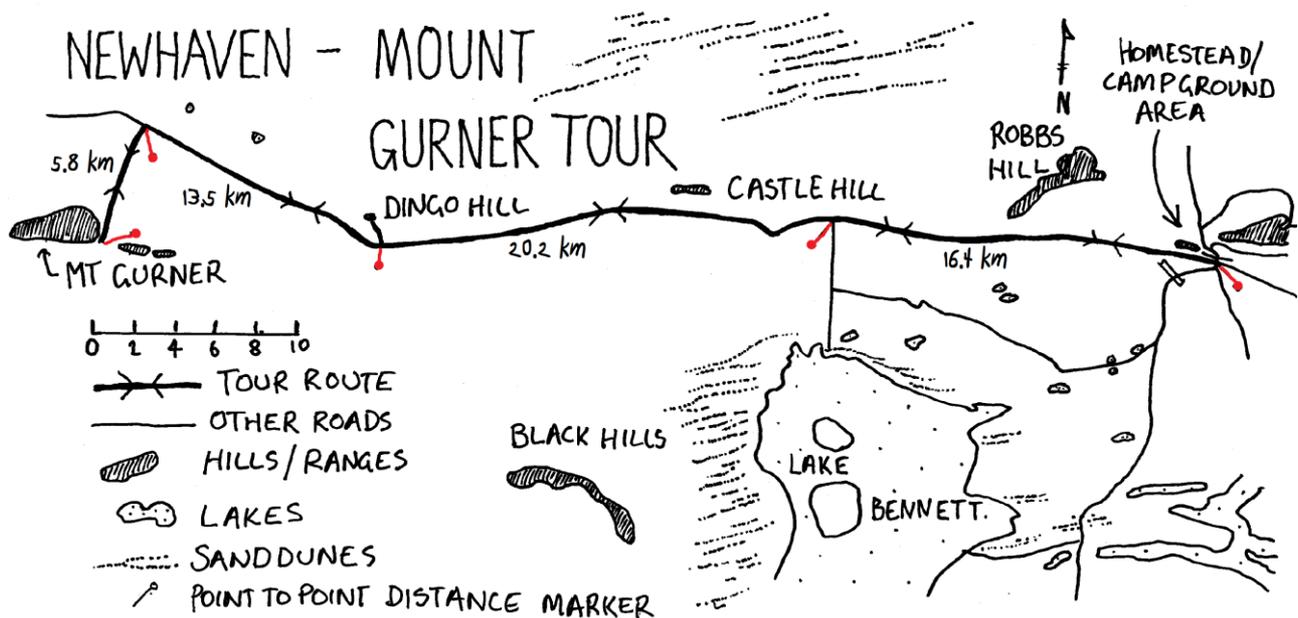
Newhaven Wildlife Sanctuary

Dingo Hill and Mount Gurner Tour

Please Note: Newhaven Sanctuary has a vast number of tracks and firebreaks—not all these are open to the public. For safety please keep to designated tracks set out in the map showing all the Newhaven self-guided tours. These tracks include the six coloured tour routes, and the solid black roads marked “open” in the map legend. Always carry spare food and plenty of drinking water (20 litres per vehicle, with an additional 10 litres for every person above two). Whilst on Newhaven UHF channel 3 (duplex) can be used to contact others however this must not be relied on for emergency communications.

Dingo Hill & Mount Gurner Tour Summary

Dingo Hill and Mount Gurner are towards the western end of the Sanctuary—all west of the campgrounds. The return trip is about 110 km. The tour includes a short walk up Dingo Hill and an optional strenuous (but not hazardous), hour long, untracked climb up Mount Gurner, one of the higher rocky hills on Newhaven. Both climbs offer spectacular views to the west. Allow at least 4-5 hours for the complete tour including walks.



Dingo Hill and Mt Gurner Tour Notes

0.0 km - Bird Box; S22°43.472' E131°10.044':

This Tour begins at, and is distance-referenced from, the Registration/Information Shelter ('Bird Box'). Start from here after noting the odometer or resetting the trip meter. (Note: odometer readings vary slightly between vehicles and you may need to make allowances for this). Begin by heading south.

0.2 km - Main Road; S22°43.591' E131°09.971':

Drive to the intersection with the main road then turn right, heading west.

Once you pass west of the small hill at the campground—Camp Hill—a mountain with a high bluff on its eastern end named Robb's Hill will appear on your right hand side. You will travel along its southern edge for a number of kilometres. From when you pass the last visible tip of Robb's Hill, you enter an expanse of bloodwood sandplain. To the south-west are the Andrew Young Hills. These hills have been given an appropriate local nickname, the Black Hills, as they often sit in shadow.

Bloodwoods (*Corymbia opaca*) are an important tree in central Australia for many reasons. On Newhaven they are the main hollow bearing tree. Mature tree hollows provide crucial habitat and breeding sites for a range of species including the black-headed monitor (*Varanus tristis*) and pygmy mulga monitor (*Varanus gilleni*), the eastern barn owl, (*Tyto javanica*), southern boobook owl (*Ninox novaeseelandiae*), budgerigar (*Melopsittacus undulates*), and cockatiel (*Nymphicus hollandicus*). As a food source, medicinally and for the creation of tools, the bloodwood was—and still is—extensively used by Aboriginal people.

Although bloodwoods can re-sprout after mild fires, they are killed by hot fires or by successive fires within the trunks.



19.4 km - Mount Gurner Homestead Bore: S22°42.908' E130°59.160':

The Mount Gurner buildings have long gone and the bore is now defunct. All that remains of this cattle station—amalgamated with Newhaven in 1982—are some tumbled down yards, a cattle crush, windmill and tank, and an area of buffel grass. You are asked not to enter the weedy areas to help manage the spread of buffel grass.

As you continue to the west you will come alongside a low hill on the right—Castle Hill. You can see that its geological structure is the same as many other hills on Newhaven with a resistant capping layer made of quartzite. Castle Hill appears subdued, as though it is slowly sinking into, or being buried by, the sand sea.

Just beyond Castle Hill the landscape opens out. Blue mallee sand plain and expansive open saltbush flats are the two dominant vegetation types.

Open saltbush flats are concentrated in the western half of the Sanctuary occupying approximately 5.6 % of the total area of Newhaven. Because of their shallow soils they rarely support plants higher than half a metre. None the less, this vegetation community supports three rare plant species including *Bergis occultipetala*, *Eragrostis crateriformis* and an undescribed *Fimbristylis* species. Scattered throughout this community there are small islands of different soils, which support stands of mulga over short grasses.

It is thought that the enigmatic **night parrot** (*Pezoporus occidentalis*) may feed on fire sensitive chenopod species within this habitat.

36.6 km - Dingo Hill Turn Off: S22°43.256' E130°49.550':

A small quartzite outcrop named Dingo Hill is on the right hand side. Follow the wheel tracks until you reach the old bore head on the left hand side. Park here. This track unfortunately follows a small drainage line and has severely eroded.

Follow the remaining track on foot and climb to the small hilltop; a cairn marks the highest point. To the south are the Black Hills with Mt Liebig visible in the background. To the north are the Truer Ranges running out to the west. To the west are Mt Gurner and the Campbell Range. These mountains form a beautiful cluster of hills. To the north of these hills lies Nyirripi Community.

Dingo Hill supports a remnant population of acacia. Most of this community has been killed by fire. The northern slope of Dingo Hill provides a fire shadow (a natural boundary that protects vegetation from fire eg. bare rocky ground), which supports a number of other fire sensitive species including native plum (*Santalum lanceolatum*), black gidgee (*Acacia pruinocarpa*) and native currant (*Canthium latifolium*).

Head back to the main road.

38.3 km - Main Road: S22°42.908' E130°59.160':

Turn right to head towards Mount Gurner or left to return to Newhaven Homestead.

The track winds back towards Dingo Hill and crosses its western-most edge. It then meanders through a few rare patches of diverse and long unburnt mulga woodlands before opening out again onto open saltbush flats. Here you will be able to see Mount Gurner to your left.



50.1 km - Mt Gurner Turn Off: S22°40.363' E130°43.680':

When you are just beyond the eastern tip of Mount Gurner there will be a signed turnoff on the left hand side. Take this turn.

Along the track heading south you will drive through some beautiful diverse country. Small patches of **weeping mulga** (*Acacia paraneura*) identified by its drooping foliage and single trunk, are mixed in among chenopod shrublands and tussock grasslands with ghost gums. Weeping mulga is uncommon and this western area of Newhaven is the only place where significant numbers are found.

Also along this track the **upside down plant** (*Leptosema chambersii*^[TM1]) can sometimes be seen. This plant is a small (40cm) spiny intricately branched rounded shrub. Its large red flowers, which contain very sweet nectar, have adapted for bird pollination, and grow under the plant at ground level. Even if this plant is not in flower you may be able to notice this unusual characteristic by looking for old flowers.

55.9 km: Y Junction: S22°43.296' E130°42.621':

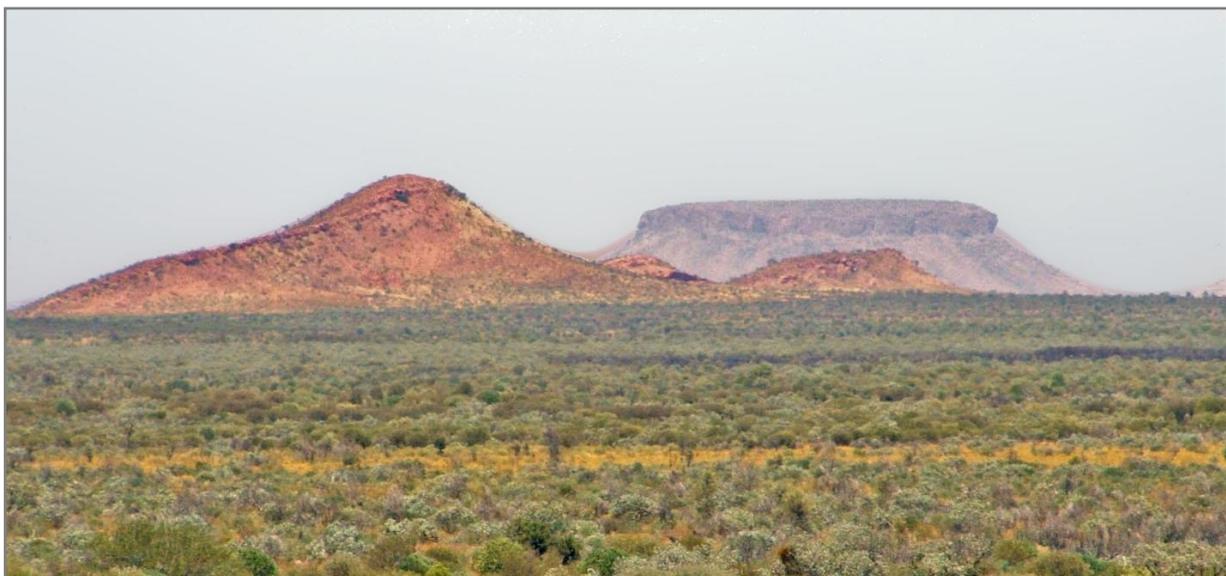
The track continues along the southern face of Mount Gurner but please stop here. The track ahead has been closed for regeneration. The foot of the northern face is littered with large boulders that have fallen from the bluff over many years. To the left is a small set of associated quartzite hills.

Mount Gurner Climb: From here you may choose to climb Mt Gurner; a cairn is visible on a small rocky outcrop part way along the spur.

At 710m above sea level, Mount Gurner is about 150m above the surrounding plain. It is more than 3 km long and runs in an east-west direction, with steep slopes on either side.

The rocks of the Newhaven hills began to form over a thousand million years ago. Layers of very fine sand were deposited in a shallow ocean. The sand, reddish in colour, was weathered from an eroding lifeless land surface. Its colour came from particles of iron rusted by the oxygen that was now free in the ocean and the atmosphere (generated by photosynthetic water-dwelling bacteria). The sand covered a layer of water-smoothed pebbles and cemented them together. These two layers were in turn covered by more and more sediment washing into this shallow sea from the bare, unprotected land surface. Over almost a billion years, the fine sand and pebble layers were squeezed flat by sediments above them. Under that enormous pressure, the temperature of the rock rose high enough to fuse the individual sand grains together. The layers metamorphosed into quartzite and conglomerate.

The land surfaces beside the shallow ocean were the three earliest land surfaces of what is now Australia. Its neighbours were the bits of the Earth's crust now called Tibet, India, Africa, Madagascar, and South America. Next, Antarctica crashed into and fused with Australia, forming a partnership that would last almost 900 million years. The three core bits (cratons) of the present Australian continent were jostled together with unimaginable tectonic force. At the join of these three cratons the layers of pink quartzite and conglomerate were buckled and twisted—like the pages of a crushed book—in a gigantic but slow moving upheaval. These dramatic changes took place in what is now central Australia. They were completed by about 350 million years ago. The result was the formation of mountain chains that were thrust to roughly the same height as the Himalayas. Since then, these huge mountains have progressively weathered and eroded until now when they are less than 10 % of their original size. Though just the stubs of what they once were, the central Australian ranges remain impressive and beautiful today.



61.7 km - Main Road:

Return to the main road along the same route used on the outward journey. Turn right at the main road, which will take you back to Newhaven Homestead.

109.8 km - Newhaven Homestead Turnoff

These notes, maps and photos were written, drawn and taken by Danae Moore, Josef Schofield, Dean Graetz and Margaret Graetz. They are regularly updated and were last reviewed in February 2013.

We hope that you have enjoyed this tour.

For more information about Newhaven Wildlife Sanctuary, visit www.australianwildlife.org