

Menindee Lake System Self Drive Tour.

Your journey begins at the Tourist information Centre *Yartla Street*
And finishes at the Historic Maidens Hotel -Yartla Street

Zero your trip monitor in the car and start your trip facing SW-in *Yartla Street* towards the Maidens Historical Hotel.

This drive will take you approximately 3 hrs. Make sure you have plenty of water, a hat, sunscreen and a camera. There will be plenty of photo opportunities along the way.

Before you leave town, you have 2 chances to grab a coffee for the trip. Immediately on your **left** on the corner of *Yartla and Perry Streets* you will see the Pizza shop. – coffee and takeaway available.

Turn Right into *Perry Street*.

Take the **first left** into *Menindee Street*

On the corner **Right Hand Side**, is the Red Sands Café which is your last chance for coffee/food/cold drink.

FYI should it be required on your **Left hand side** is the *Menindee Pharmacy*

On your **Right Hand Side** is the “*Albemarle Hotel*” – Great cold beer/beer garden/sky channel. TAB, Local indigenous Art display.

Follow your nose and continue along *Menindee Street*.

You are approaching a school area. Remember – **40kms** during school hours.

Once past the school you will see the sign to the **KINCHEGA NATIONAL PARK**

Turn right on to *Little Menindee Creek Road* towards the Kinchega National Park.

As you approach the **1.7km** from your starting point- You will see the Menindee Cemetery on left hand side.

If you continue to look through the trees on your left at the **2.6km mark** you will see the remains of the old **Abattoirs** which sits on top of Riverbank. There is a nice big bend in the river defined by the beautiful big gum trees

At the **4.5km point** – You will be now at the outlet regulator for “Lake Menindee” it allows water from the Lake to flow back into the “Darling River”.

The Kinchega National Park Entrance will be directly in front of you.

So as you as you now look out towards your right you are looking at "*Lake Menindee*" is part of the 3rd storage compartment in the Lake Mendindee System "*Lake Menindee*" it self holds 650,000 megs and is joined with "*Lake Cawndilla*" which holds 550,000 megs, they are joined by "Morton Boulka Creek."
In total for storage 3 it is 1.2Mil megs combined
Sydney Harbor holds approx. 520,000 megs which will give you some idea of the volume of water able to be held in the 3rd storage area.
At the Outlet regulator itself – depending on the heights of the lake and river can let 4,500 megs a day back into the Darling River. The outlet regulator has been constructed in Little Menindee creek.

"*Little Menindee Creek*" is on your LHS. You can see where the Water has cut away the creek bank.

Take the **Left Hand turn** into National Park. You will see "*Little Menindee Creek*" is still on your **LHS**.

If you go just through the First set of gates continue past camp site 2.

At approx. **5.1 kms**, turn into camp site 3 arriving at the Junction of Little Menindee Creek and the Darling River and is lovely spot to camp and fish. The height of the river here, is dictated by the town weir which is about 10km downstream from where you sit – Weir 32 or by the flow coming from the lake system.

Before the Lake System was constructed, as flood water raised the level of the Darling River, the water would spill into Lake Menindee via Little Menindee Creek and fill "*Lake Menindee and Lake Cawndilla*".

As the water level recedes in the Darling "*Lake Menindee and Cawndilla*" would then drain back into the *Darling River* via the *Little Menindee Creek* leaving some water behind in the Billabongs out the back – acting as a shock absorber in times of flood

Turn around and go back the way you came.

At the T intersection, the Park information gazebo will be on your Left Hand Side.

Turn right at the T intersection taking you back past the Menindee Lake Outlet Regulator and instead of turning back down towards the town **follow your nose on the high road**. The sign will indicate you are heading towards Broken Hill.

On your **Left Hand Side** you will see “*Lake Menindee*”. The view starts to open up through the trees and looking across it is approx 16km to the other side.

At the 10.3 km mark you stop at the T intersection on the main road to Broken Hill.

If you look to your right you will see the township of Menindee and Coombes Service Station.

Turn Left towards Broken Hill.

Immediately on your **right** you will see the grave site of one of the Camel drivers- for Burke and Wills expedition party, Dost Mahomet.

You will be able to stop safely on your return and read the historical story of Dost Mahomet

At the 11.9km mark – before you cross the railway line, you will see the turn into the **Lake Menindee Caravan Park**. It is a cracking view across **Lake Menindee** in a westerly direction. This road accesses the local air strip which is used by the royal flying doctors.

On your Right Hand Side you can see the pipeline which runs from Menindee to Broken Hill.

Part of the reason the Menindee Lake System was built, was to provide a regular water supply to the township of Broken Hill. Before the pipeline and lake system existed the water was trained from the township of Menindee to Broken Hill.

The last train to take water to Broken Hill was ironically unable to complete the journey due to flood waters.

At the **14.6km** mark you will cross the Broken Hill pipeline

Whilst most of the grapes grown in Menindee are or were table grapes, on your Right Hand Side is the remains of a disused Wine Grape Vineyard. There are less wires in a wine grape vineyard and about 4 tons of grapes to the acre for wine and about 12 tons to the acre for table grapes.

At the **16.5km** mark you will continue past the Main Weir turn off.

Don't turn: keep going straight ahead towards Broken Hill.

On the **right hand side** is the shed for the Thomas Food Group. They grow potatoes when the water allows.

You will continue to see the pipeline running to Broken Hill.

Behind the big sand dunes on your **left hand side** is *Lake Menindee*. We will follow the bank as we make our way to the Lake Menindee lookout.

21.8km mark - GO PAST - The "*Copi Hollow*" turn off which is on your **right hand side** and **immediately turn left** into the *Menindee Lake* lookout,

Cross over the pipeline and make your way up the bank to the viewing area for "*Lake Menindee*".

At the top, directly in front of you is the interconnecting channel.

The Channel runs from storage compartment 2 "*Lake Pamamaroo & Copi Hollow*" combined.

It runs into storage compartment 3, which is "*Menindee Lake & Lake Cawndilla*"

Drive along the channel towards the train line and weir, overlooking "*Lake Menindee*". This area is a prolific breeding area for Pelicans and Native fish the like. The lake is approximately 14km across in front of you and 16km wide.

This Weir between the 2 is the only way for water to enter "*Lake Menindee* and Cawndilla"

Depending on the Height of both "*Lake Menindee*" and "*Storage Compartment 2*" – it can release up to 27,000 megs per day to run into the lake.

It is a Fantastic sight in full flight. The birdlife that gravitate to these areas is staggering in numbers and varieties.

We will now head out of the Menindee Lake Lookout area, **head back the way you came** in, **on your left** you may be able to see one of the pumping stations that assist in pumping water from Copi Hollow to Broken Hill

Turn right on to main road - towards Menindee and then **turn left** down 'Steve Hutton Drive' towards the "*Copi Hollow Caravan Park*", which is situated on the Lake and always has water.

At the **26km mark**, follow the bitumen around to your **left** and enter the Copi Hollow recreational area. You will see the Caravan Park on the **left hand side**. This is a beautiful camp ground and has a convenience shop and dump site available.

FYI: should you need: **Public toilets**

As you drive up to the back of the speed boat club house you will see a map of the lake system, catchment area and where you are at this stage of the drive.

As you Look at the map –you can clearly see the township of Menindee, the 2nd storage compartment of Lake Pamamaroo and Copi hollow, Lake Cawndilla and Lake Menindee that we spoke of earlier – Which comprise Storage Compartment 3

You can see the man-made channel from “*Copi Hollow to Lake Pamamaroo*.”

We are about to head around and have a look at “*Lake Pamamaroo*”

You can See on the map, where the *Darling River* is held back to create *Lake Wetherell*, *Tandure* and several other lakes to make storage compartment 1.

The Map on bottom right hand corner shows how big an area the Darling draws its water from

- 2% of total rainfall ends up in the catchment ,
- 5% of total flow that goes out of the Murray mouth comes from Darling system

Written down the bottom – is a list of the storage capacity of the lakes, although over time the accuracy of these figures have altered.

Drive around the corner of club building - away from the caravan park and you can see the Lake Copi Hollow – It is a popular water skiing and swimming spot with a lovely sand bottom.

Head back out through the entrance gate of “Copi Hollow” and make a **left hand turn** on to the gravel.

At the **28km mark look back to your left**, you can see the Old Scout Camp. It sits below the channel that joins Copi Hollow and Lake Pamamaroo

At the **29km mark** you can get a cracking view of Lake Pamamaroo. – You will be following the lake all of the way around the shoreline towards the inlet channel.

There is lots of free camping all the way around the lake Shoreline.

Keep looking to your left – At the **31km mark** – Enjoy the view of the Lake. If you decide to stop and take a photo:

Make sure you pull well off the road.

36.6km you will come to a **T intersection**.

Turn Left and follow the Lake Pamamaroo shore line. Remember it is a shared road with wildlife – Best to be aware, Drive steady, keep watching and try to avoid.

40km mark, the sandy shoreline on your left is a popular spot for camping, swimming boating and jet skiing during the warmer months of the year. It is also a beautiful spot to catch an amazing sun set at any time of the year.

At approx 41.3km: driving along the Pamamaroo Lakes edge, the “Burke and Wills” camp site will be on your **right hand side**.

Don't stop here yet.... :)

Continue over the outlet regulator for “*Lake Pamamaroo*” and continue straight ahead until you reach the Inlet chanel and weir from the *Lake Wetherell* – Storage Compartment 1, into *Lake Pamamaroo* - Storage compartment 2

This should be around the 42km mark give or take, pull up in the carpark.

Again the weir depending on river heights can let 27,000 megs per day through.

Together “*Lake Pamamaroo and Copi Hollow*” hold 300,000 megs when full – these being the most efficient of the 3 storages.

On the other side of the bank, a house was originally located for the water board staff. The house has since been relocated into the township of Menindee.

Turn around and head back, take the **first Left** and drive towards the Main Weir.

“*Lake Wetherell*” will be on your **left hand** side, you will pass over the “*Lake Wetherell outlet regulator*”.

This regulator is located in the Original course of the **Darling River** – before the man-made part of the system was modified.

Look to your left and the original River course can be seen marked via the gum trees. When the lake is full it is very easy to get lost in a boat in this section.

At approximately **43.7km** from our start point, you will arrive at the **Main Weir Carpark**.

This area is a popular camping spot, on both sides of the Main Weir.

The channel where the main weir is constructed is man-made. The Main Weir's job is to hold back the Darling River which creates the first storage area Lake Wetherell - which allows the water to flow into the other 2 compartments.

To my knowledge the weir has only been opened twice in 20 years with floods coming down the Darling River, to minimize the impact to the lakes.

In the 2011- 2012 floods, when the weir was opened it allowed 35,000 megs per day through, causing minor flooding to the Menindee township but maintaining the integrity of the lakes levy bank.

You can take a tour of the Darling River and Lake Wetherell with the River Lady Boat Tours. It is an informative and enlightening guide to some of the local history and an excellent insight to some of the wonderful bird life in Menindee. They can be contacted on 0491 125 828 to arrange your tour. They leave from the Main Weir.

Leaving the Weir Carpark, vere left across the camp area.

This takes you to the "*Darling River*" and river track.

Follow the river track through the wildlife sanctuary - Watch for wildlife. Again there are lots of free camping spots to choose from.

A tree on the *Darling River*, 2 meters in diameter is approx. 500 years old.

At the 45.5km mark you will drive out of wildlife sanctuary, onto the Main Weir road, **turn to your left** and you will come to the area called the **BLOCK DAM**. As mentioned before this is the original course of the *Darling River*.

"*Lake Wetherell*" created by the man- made wall across the river course is on you **right hand side**. This blocks the original flow of the river and is controlled by the pipe that runs under the road. It can let 4,500 megs per day, depending on river heights to be released from *Lake Wetherell* back into the *Darling River*.

The locals call this spot – '**Pelican Point**' or "**The Bubbler**" and at times the fishing is sensational here. The name the 'Bubbler' is used to describe the way the water looks coming out of *Lake Wetherell* into the *Darling*.

Continue back on the main weir road to the **T intersection, turn left**. *Lake Pamamaroo* will be on your **right side**.

We are now back at the outlet for "Lake Pamamaroo and Storage Compartment 2" – the water can only come out through this outlet regulator into the Darling or flow out through the channel to Lake Menindee.

Again it can release 4,500 megs per day out again depending on river/water heights

The outlet was built in the original "*Pamararoo Creek*". "*Pamamaroo Creek*" operated similar to "*Little Menindee Creek*". At high flow/ flood times the water would back into *Lake Pamararoo*, and as the river dropped the water would flow out of the Lake leaving water in the creek and billabongs.

Vere left from the Pamamaroo Regulator in to the "**Burke and Wills campsite area**" –

Public toilets here should you require.

The two camp sites are signed with information boards for you to stop and read. You can also see the site of the old river crossing across "*Pamamaroo Creek*".

It is a popular free camping spot.

Great view of the ***Darling River***, and if you like fishing this is perfect when they are biting. **Drive along the bank** – You can watch the Pelicans pick up carp out of regulator system.

Continue around towards your left, head back past the public toilets and back to the main road.

Turn left back towards town, approx. **47km mark**.

As your heading back towards town, take care and watch for Emus and Kangaroos.

At the 51.4km mark continue past the Copi Hollow turn

At the 53.3km mark on your left, there are disused grape vines. The property "TEXAS DOWNS" is owned by 'Thomas Foods'. Back Behind the vines are 10,000 citrus trees, and on the **right hand side**, under the 2 Centre Pivots are where potatoes are grown. Each pivot waters 32 hectares and the speed the pivot moves at is dictated by the speed of the outside set of wheels. If you watch closely you can see the inside sections will move to catch up with the outside set of wheels. The amount of water applied is dictated by the running time of the outside set of wheels, the wheels rotate at the same speed all the time. To increase the water application the outside wheels will turn on and off at preset intervals to increase the time it takes to do a full circle. The sprinklers are specially calculated to apply an even amount of water.

At the T intersection 55.8 km mark – **turn left** back on to the bitumen and head back towards Menindee - 8kms from Menindee

58 km mark there is another road access which will take you into the "**Lake Menindee Caravan Park**". Again, great place for a perfect view of the lake and photo shot especially at Sunset.

At 62km mark– on your **left hand side** is the grave site of Dost Mahomet, a member of the Bourke and Wills exploration party. An information board and headstone provide a better insight.

You are now back in the town 50km zone.

Cross cattle grid – Coombe's Garage is on the **right hand side** – Only place in town for fuel, tyres, bait etc.

Menindee Health services are on your **right hand side**.

Red Sands Café and take away is on the corner of *Menindee Street*, all day meals, soft drink and ice cream are available

When you arrive at the **T intersection**, **Menindee Pizza's Shop** will be directly in front of you, Pizzas, take away food and soft drinks are available here. Turn right into *Yartla Street*.

Menindee's local supermarket is on your **left hand side**. (open 7 days – also does take away lunches)

Directly opposite the IGA supermarket on your **right hand side** you will find the Police station and Post Office. **The Post Office has banking facilities available.**

After the Post Office on right hand side is the Op Shop, open from 10am-12pm

Continue down *Yartla Street* and on your left is the **Historic Maidens Hotel**.

Stretch your legs and look inside the hotel hall ways. You will get to see photos of the construction of the Menindee Lakes System and also photos of past floods in the town.

Great family hotel, beer garden, great meals cold beer.

End of trip at **Maidens Hotel** approx 64km