



Owen Springs Reserve, formerly Owen Springs cattle station was acquired by the Northern Territory Government in 2000 and opened in 2003. The 1780 km² Reserve has fast become a favourite location for 4WD visitors seeking quiet bush camping without facilities.

The area protected within the Owen Springs Reserve is steeped in Territory history. The main access track through the Reserve closely follows John McDouall Stuart's route through the MacDonnell Ranges. His explorations between 1860 and 1862 opened Central Australia to white settlement.

Stuart, William Kekwick and Benjamin Head were the first white men to travel through this country. On 11 April 1860, while making their way northwards along the Hugh River, they discovered a waterhole that Stuart named Ewart Springs. The waterhole was later renamed Owen Springs by Stuart's financial backer, James Chambers.

One of the immediate results of Stuart's explorations was construction of the Overland Telegraph Line that originally followed the Hugh River through Lawrence Gorge in the Waterhouse Range.

Even before the Line was completed in August 1872, cattleman William Gilbert was on his way from South Australia to establish a cattle station here. The Old Owen Springs Homestead is the site of the first station homestead built in Central Australia.

Access

The Reserve is approximately a 30-40 minute drive southwest of Alice Springs and can be accessed via two routes:

- via Larapinta Drive, 50km west of Alice Springs; and
- via the Stuart Highway, 66 kilometres south of Alice Springs.



A high clearance 4WD is essential. Some sections of the track follow the sandy river bed and drivers should engage 4WD to minimise the risk of becoming bogged. These sandy river beds may be impassable after rain. Vehicles are required to keep to the main track except to access campsites in designated areas along the river.

South of Larapinta Drive access is along one track between Larapinta Drive and the south Stuart Highway.

What to Do

For almost its entire course through the Reserve, the Hugh River has considerable scenic and recreational appeal. There are numerous, attractive stretches of river with broad sandy banks lined with shady River Red Gums *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*.

In several places large waterholes remain long after rain and present outstanding opportunities for camping, picnicking, birdwatching and swimming.

The appeal of the Hugh River is enhanced by the scenery of the adjoining rocky gorges and red sand country.

Safety and Comfort

- Observe park safety signs.
- Carry and drink plenty of water.
- Wear a shady hat, sunscreen, insect repellent, suitable clothing and footwear.
- Avoid strenuous activity during the heat of the day.
- Consider your health and fitness when choosing a walk.

Please Remember

- Keep to designated roads and tracks.
- All historic, cultural items and wildlife are protected.
- Small open fires are permitted, within camping areas.
- Bins are not provided, please take your rubbish with you.
- Dogs are only permitted south of the Waterhouse Range (refer to map).



Camping is allowed between the signposts within Lawrence Gorge and near Redbank Waterhole.

There are no facilities provided and visitors should bring their own drinking water requirements.



Stop and walk around the historic Old Owen Springs Homestead.

A Self-drive Information Sheet is available from the information shelter when you enter the Reserve.



Visitors with a sharp eye might spot one of the Bustards that inhabit the park

Parks & Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory

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