

# York & Surrounding Districts

## SCENIC SELF-DRIVE ROUTES

### Tour No. 1

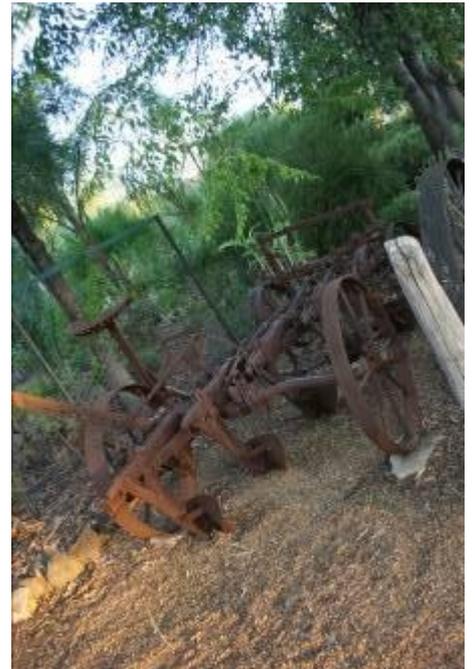
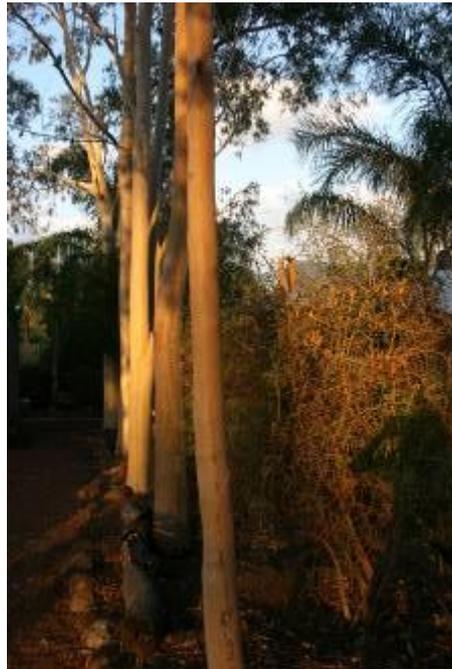
## Gwambygine

This journey is a loop traversing both sides of the Avon River Valley, upstream from York.

Distance: It is **approx 25km all on sealed roads**

Takes approx 1 hour (without optional extra) depending on how long you linger at stops.

See if you can spot these and other photo opportunities along your journey.



For further information on this or other self drive tours please contact

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**BE PART OF “HISTORY STILL IN THE MAKING”**

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**Commence in Avon Terrace at the York Town Hall** Toilets available [here](#).

Set odometer to 0 and head south.

**At 0.2 km** Stop sign at the Crossroads. On the left the Shire has created a pleasant green park on the site of the earliest Church in York (1840). The position of the Church is marked with a cross and some of the early tombstones from the graveyard that once surrounded the church are laid in the ground in the shape of the former building.

On the right is an excellent craftsman situated in a building that once housed a bakery (the oven is still visible today). *He creates all sorts of goods in pine wood from beautiful furniture to Folk Art and Welcome signs.*

**At 0.4 km** Pass Redmile Road on left used to go down to an early bridge over the Avon to the Convict Depot. Opposite this on the right is the former King's Head Hotel (1848), now a private dwelling. *It was once a bustling hotel with its coach house, stables etc.*

Also on the right is a white private house on the Wheeler St corner which was also once a bakery from the 1860's. *A deviation down Wheeler Street will show you workmen's cottages from the 1800's in various stages of restoration. Calculate your mileage and adjust accordingly if you decide to take a peek at this extra section.*

**At 0.5 km** cross over Bland's Brook on the old Bridge named after one of York's early Resident Magistrates. You are in a heritage listed precinct, steeped in early Western Australian history, called Blandstown. *There is a walk trail pamphlet available at YIS if you are interested to explore this whole area on foot, also a booklet containing 4 Heritage Walk Trails.* This was historically the important southern entrance to York.

Just past the bridge on the left is historic Wansbrough House (c 1860's) now National Trust registered. *It was once the home of one of York's early builders who often used a distinctive castellated front section on his houses.*

Next is the grand two storey Langsford House (1873).

On the right on the corner of Bland Street, is Brook Cottage. An early section from the 1860's is at the rear with a Victorian addition in front.

On the left is Parker Road that leads down to Balladong Farm. This farm was the first inland farm in Western Australia dating from the 1830's. *It is private property. Many important exploration trips into Western Australia's hinterland left from the Farm.*

On the right is the former Albion Inn (1861) with its distinctive balustrading on the upper storey verandah. *It is now a B & B and Beauty Retreat.*

**From 0.6 – 0.8 km** You will see several of the original small cottages from the 1860's are still standing. *In the one next to the Albion Inn on its south side, the midwife, Nurse Duckham, ran a Maternity Home where many of York's early residents first saw the light of day.*

**At 0.9 km** Pass Knott's Road on the right and Avon Terrace becomes The Great Southern Highway. On the corner on your right is the Boot maker's Shop, then Bygrave's Cottage (1800's). *Note the low window on the south wall of the boot maker's workshop. It was low down so he could sit at his workbench and see who was coming along the road to York.*

**At 1.2.km** on the right is the Co-operative Bulk Handling grain facility. *Approx 78,000 tonnes comprising 4 different types of wheat are received here. Also handled are 3 types of Barley mainly for malting, with some for feed as well as Canola and some Lupins. Incoming grains are trucked into this receival point and mostly sent out by rail to the ports for shipment overseas.*

**At 1.6 km** cross the railway line which goes left – eastwards – on to Bruce Rock and right to Northam and Perth.

**At 2.2 km** look right across the paddocks to a hill (Mt. Matilda) that has a rock formation coming down the slope looking like a road with boulders stacked along each side. *It is a very noticeable feature that can also be seen from Mt. Brown and other places round the Shire. This is a dolerite dyke thrown up from the bowels of the earth millions of years ago. It is of spiritual significance to the aboriginal people who have a legend about this. The Nyungar people revere a giant serpent associated with water called the Wargyl. The story says that in The Dreamtime when the Wargyl was forming the landscape, it slid over the mountain leaving that track, rested overnight in a patch of bush in the paddock which is supposed to be always damp, then moved on to form the Golguler (called the Avon River by white people) .*



Across the paddocks on the left is a continuing belt of trees where the Avon River flows. Between the road and the River the land is broken up into farmlets where a variety of activities take place.

**At 4.1 km** on the right is a tree-lined drive leading to the colonial homestead of "Grassdale" (private property). Roadside trees are mostly York Gums (*Eucalyptus loxophleba*) and the tall shrubs are mainly Jam trees (*Acacia acuminata*) so called because when the wood is cut it smells like raspberry Jam. *It is a very durable, hard wood and the pioneers used it extensively for fence posts. Some which are still standing today could be over 100years old.*

The hill on the left is Mt. Hardey.

**At 5.7 km** on the right is a marker sign for the Orchid Conservation Reserve. *It is a narrow reserve which runs till about 6.4 km, between the road and the railway line.*

*In the spring there are wild flowers, including various orchids, among the jam trees and further in you can see the railway line and the water pipeline. Please tread gently if you explore this on foot. The Pipeline along side the Railway line is a feeder line off the main conduit to Kalgoorlie and carries water from Perth to Beverley.*

**At 8.3 km** on the right is a quarry that produces high quality granite for monuments. From here on until **9.2.km** when you cross Cave Hill Bridge, keep a lookout to the right and you may see a ragged shaped cave about half way up the escarpment wall. *In this cave there is a Nyungar drawing of a round object with lines across it like loosely woven string and a hand-print and a jagged hole in the roof of the cave. Legend has it that in the Dreamtime the moon was a man on the earth and some warriors chased him into this cave. He got tired of being confined there so he put his hand on the cave wall and using that leverage he burst out, making the jagged hole in the roof and escaped into the sky where he roams around still. Access to the cave can only be arranged with the Nyungar custodian of the site.*

**At 10.2 km** on the left is Gwambygine Park. See the rammed earth entrance gateposts of the Alcoa million dollar Avon Ascent environmental project. This is worth a visit. Calculate your extra kilometres if driving in. (Toilets, BBQ's and children's climbing equipment here). Alcoa put in all the facilities including a boardwalk that leads to a gazebo lookout over the River. Riverine vegetation is labeled, and well presented boards tell various interesting aspects of the River. Water birds frequent the pool and sometimes you may see a long-necked tortoise swimming. Blue wrens and other birds have been seen in the trees and the paper bark tea-tree bushes (*Melaleuca raphiophylla*). See the interesting lichen on some of the bushes. In high summer the river consists mainly of brackish pools.



In the bush further south in the park, following a line of pine posts marking a path, is a memorial rock with a plaque at the site of the Gwambygine School (1908 - 1947) listing names of students and the dedicated teachers. *The York Society has a fascinating article in one of its publications about the trials and tribulations of running this rural school, especially when the river was in flood. The teacher boarded on the east side of the River, was rowed across, then walked to where her horse was stabled then rode on to the school. The school was closed in 1947 and the students were bussed into the central School in York.*

At 10.5 km the East Gwambygine Road goes off to the left.

**Short optional addition to the main tour.** If you are interested in seeing River reclamation works. Continue straight on for about 2 kms to Gwambygine Conservation Reserve on your left on a curve of the road at Gwambygine Pool and drive in there. *This spot was the swimming hole for generations of young Yorkies. However, due to a combination of factors, the river is silting up again even after many tonnes of silt were removed several years ago. So, much reclamation work is still ongoing. Tributaries that feed into the Avon upstream need to be planted with correct riverine vegetation to try to slow the washing in of silt. There are information boards, and plantings of the shrubs and trees that once grew here though the harsh summers and sparse rainfall of 2006/7 killed a lot of the seedlings. Walk down to the River and see the banks of silt still forming. There is still some bird life and several families of ducks swim here. In the summer of 2007 three Black Swans were seen here. Consider coming again in a few years to see if we are making progress.* Drive back out to the Highway, turn right and return to the East Gwambygine Road.

**Calculate the extra kilometres if you have done this addition.**

At 10.5 km **turn left**, if you choose not to take the added option, into East Gwambygine Road. The road winds sharply to cross the Avon River which flows left through York and eventually feeds into the Swan River. On the right, upstream, the river is fed by tributaries that drain a hinterland about the size of Tasmania. After crossing the River, on the farm on the right you can sometimes see the picturesque black-faced Suffolk sheep that are bred for meat.

Along the road verge the dark rough barked trees are mainly York Gums (*Eucalyptus loxophleba*) but you will see occasional Salmon Gums (*Eucalyptus salmonophloia*) with shiny leaves forming an umbrella-shaped canopy. *The smooth bark becomes a lovely salmon colour in early autumn after the old bark has been shed. These trees denote very good farming land which was quickly selected by the early settlers.*

At 13.1 km arrive at crossroads at the Top Beverley Road. Right would take you to Beverley, Pingelly etc. The unsealed road ahead would connect with the Quairading Road. **Turn left** back to York and straight ahead you will see the majestic Mt. Bakewell in the background.

At 14.0 km See an old abandoned cottage on a hillock in the paddock on your left and a plantation of native trees near the road.

At 15.0 km In the paddock on your right is a revegetation planting of native shrubs and trees along a creekline

**At 15.2 km** Pass Winterfalls Road on your left.

**At 15.7 km** On the left is the Lambshed facility on the "Broadlands" property of Tony and Sally Boyle. *This is an important local concern turning out about 2000 prime lambs per week.*



**At 16.3 km** On the right is an interesting very early weatherboard house also on the Boyle's farm.

**At 16.8 km** Cross the bridge over the Mackie River, This is one of the tributaries of the Avon River. Then on the right is "Broadlands" the homestead of the Boyle family.

**At 17.3 km** On the right are the remains of a mud brick building. There is a local story told that in the early days there was a punitive hanging of an aborigine there.

**At 17.6 km** On the left is a Clydesdale horse stud.

**At 17.9 km** Pass Mt. Hardy Road on the right. Along here on the left between the road and the Avon River are various hobby farms. *Some keep coloured sheep for wool for spinning and "Little Eden" at 19.6 km has olive and fruit trees.* On the right you will see glimpses of the Water Supply Pipeline. *This is part of the most extensive water scheme in the world.* As the road gets to the top of a hill, look right front to see the extensive Sheds of the Mackie Hay enterprise. *This is a very important local industry for our farmers where about 80,000 tonnes of hay plus straw are processed annually.*

**At 20.6 km** Pass Cold Harbour Road on left.

**At 21 km** Take care at the junction where the busy York/Merredin Road comes in from Quairading on your right. Turn left to continue on to YORK.

**At 21.1 km** Pass Hoops road on the left and **at 21.2 km** Cross Cold Harbour Bridge. The road is now passing through what was originally a large holding called "Cold Harbour". *It was farmed from 1842 by John and Stanley Parker who had come out with their family from England from Northbourne in Kent where their farm was called "Cold Harbour". The name had nothing to do with the sea but was a term used for an area protected from cold weather. These two brothers were among those who initiated the building of the district's first church the site of which we passed on the corner of Avon Terrace and Balladong Road at the beginning of this journey.*

**At 21.7 km** pass Lightly Place on the left. **At 22 km** cross the railway line which goes left back into York then Northam and Perth and right to Quairading, Bruce Rock etc. Immediately adjoining the railway line on the left is the Aboriginal Reserve, an area set aside for the indigenous Nyungar people. *In earlier times some families camped there, now they are more integrated into society and live around the town.*

**At 22.3 km** on right is an old stone house perched on a hill which gave it views all around.

**At 22.6 km** on the left is Errol's Forge where a skilled blacksmith plies his ancient craft.

**At 22.8 km** cross Tomney Bridge.

**At 23.4 km turn left** at Brook Street (before the main Balladong Road) and see on your left the Residency Museum. *This was the first country museum to be recognised by the W.A. Museum. A well presented and diverse collection of colonial and historical artefacts is housed here. It was formerly the home of York's Resident Magistrate and before that it was part of the Convict Hiring Depot. This precinct was where the convict Depot was situated when the convicts came in the 1850's to 1868. A fee applies, well worth the visit.*

Nearby is the shingled roofed, two storey Old York Hospital, (1896) designed by the famous Public Works Dept architect of the 1890s, George Temple-Poole. *Restored by the National Trust in the 1990s the whole precinct is now privately owned.* The single storey Maternity Wing on the left is a later addition.

**Turn right** into Clifford Street and note some of the interesting early cottages on both sides of the street here. Nice photo opportunity here (first garden on the corner) of a representation of an early Australian Garden design. This garden was featured on a television show featuring these types of gardens from all over Australia.



**At 23.8 km Turn left** at the crossroads at Balladong Road.

*This is named after the indigenous Barllardong people who roamed this area for thousands of years before white people came to the Avon Valley.* Cross the Avon River. On the left pass the park with the old church site seen at the beginning of your journey as you arrive at the crossroads at Avon Terrace – right takes you back to the York town centre or straight ahead goes back to Perth.

**As our comment on the first page states we are all amongst “History Still in the Making”  
Save Our Trees – please recycle this pamphlet**

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