

York & Surrounding Districts

SCENIC SELF-DRIVE TOUR

Tour No. 3

Spencers Brook/ Mokine Road

This route travels a loop around Mt. Bakewell

Distance: 73 km with approx 20 km of unsealed roads.



For further information on this and other self-drive tours please contact

York Information Services
info@york.wa.gov.au www.york.wa.gov.au
9641 1301

BE PART OF "HISTORY STILL IN THE MAKING"

Distance: This route travels a distant loop around Mt. Bakewell for 73 km with approx only 20 km unsealed

- Wildflower Brochure Aug–Oct

Commence in Avon Terrace at the 1911 York Town Hall. Toilets are available here.

Set odometer to 0. Drive north through the main town centre with its heritage shop fronts, hotels and banks. On the left on the corner of Ford Street is the Sandalwood Yard precinct. *The building, now the Headquarters of the York Society, was once the thriving, bustling hub of the Monger family's transport business. Bullock wagons with stores from Perth were unloaded and turned around here. Sandalwood and other products of the hinterland were carted into here and thence down to Perth. Behind the main building, a small country school from the 1800s has been brought in to the Yards, brick by brick, from its original location on the Northam York Road, and restored to show what an early rural school was like.*

Avon Terrace becomes the York–Spencers Brook Road.

At 1.5km on the left in a patch of bush is the site of a clay pit where many of the bricks for York's early buildings were made. Majestic Mt. Bakewell (455 m) is dead ahead.



At 2.1 km the road veers to the right. To the left and 400m up Ninth Road is Pepper Tree Grove with olives & chocolates. Roadside trees along here are generally York Gums (*Eucalyptus loxophleba*) with dark rough bark but around **3.3 km** with the York Race Course on the left, there is a stand of Flooded Gums (*Eucalyptus rudis*) with lighter grey rough bark and usually associated with creek lines. *The York–Beverley Turf Club is the oldest continuously operating Race Club in Australia, run and maintained by an enthusiastic band of local volunteers and holding several race meetings each year.*

At 3.9 km on the right, up and down through the trees, is the Motor Cross track. There are toilets here.

At 5.1 km on your right is the York Recycling Depot which has won a “Tip Top Tip Award”.

At 6km on the right is the Springbett Airfield. *Open areas around here are seasonally frequented by a flock of several hundred white cockatoos (Corellas). They might be seen spread out feeding on the ground or crowded noisily into a tree.*

At 6.7 km the road curves left to cross the railway line. Please NOTE THE STOP SIGN AT ALL RAILCROSSINGS. After crossing safely veer right staying on the sealed road with the railway running on your right.

At 7.6 km on your left is a disused gravel pit and at 7.9 km pass Mackie Siding road on the right.

At 9.5 km passing the hangers on your right is the entrance to the HQ of Sky Dive Express. *Tandem skydiving can most likely be arranged on relatively short notice however booking is essential as they do get very busy on the weekends. It is recommended to allow about ½ a day for this experience however spectators are welcome and there is a coffee shop on site.*

At 11 km on right pass Burges Siding Road on the right and down in the paddock are the large sheds of Emfert Organic fertiliser works. On the left at 11.4 km are the lovely stone buildings of Burges Siding School. These include the toilet block at the back and the Teacher's House on the right. *These buildings are all now privately owned. This was first called Tipperary School, from the late 1870's till 1929. (This is not the same school that you saw earlier,) It then became officially known as Burges Siding School until its closure in 1946 when school buses were introduced to comply with the Education Department's centralisation policy. In the early days kids came to school by covered carts, walking, ponies and even by train. (info.*



From "From Early Beginnings: A History of York's Schools" by York P. & C.)

Glimpses of the Goldfields Water Supply Pipeline branch to York can be seen on the far side of the railway tracks.

At 12.1 km on your left is a sign under some trees showing where the former Gregson's Well School once stood (1892 – 1897). *Furniture from this school was transferred to the Tipperary (Burges Siding) School.*

At 14.6km also on the left is the green roofed Homestead of Kerry Downs. Formerly this farm was run by the Irish Roman Catholic order of Norbertine Fathers who staffed St. Patrick's Church in York. Produce and profits from the work of the Lay Brothers on the farm supported the Parish.

The road you are travelling follows the Great Southern Railway line and the Avon River which is marked by a dense line of trees seen in the paddocks on right. *It was on these river flats in the vicinity of the modern Kerry Downs that Ensign Dale, York's discoverer in 1830, took up land for his own farm.*

At 18.5 km on your right is a marker stone with a plaque commemorating the first sighting of the Avon Valley by white people, namely Ensign Dale and his small exploring party, as they came over Mt. Mackie, the mountain on the left. *This is the discovery point of the entire Avon Valley on August 7th 1930. The aboriginal people had been using their 'firestick farming' methods here for probably 20,000 + years and we read in the early settlers' diaries the land resembled "parklands" and therefore looked very suitable for grazing. Dale*

reported this to Governor Stirling when he returned to Perth. Settlers followed in 1831, thus beginning York, the first settled inland town in West Australia.

Just before the crossroads at 19 km on the left is the beautiful “Rivoli” formerly the homestead of the Hamersley family – early settlers of the district. Wilberforce Road to the right leads over the Avon River – low level crossing often closed in winter – to the York–Northam Road. You pass Hamersley Siding Road on your left this joins Mokine Road which this tour passes later. Continue straight ahead on the York–Spencers Brook Road through attractive farming country, cleared and cropped at lower levels with the upper slopes of the rounded hills reserved for grazing.

At 23 km you will cross the York Shire Boundary into the Northam Shire. Mainly York gums (*Eucalyptus loxophleba*) are visible on the hilltops. **At 25.2 km** there is a farm on right.

At 26km the road curves right to cross the railway. Please STOP at the STOP SIGN. The Pipeline and railway are now on your left.

At 27.7 km turn left into the former town of Spencers Brook at this T junction with the Spencers Brook Road (sealed). Right goes to Northam. On your right is a parallel road constructed on the original railway line that went to Kalgoorlie and the eastern states. Spencers Brook was an important rest stop. *A hand bell was rung as the train stopped at the station. (Old photo in the Tavern) Tea, hot scones and pies were available.*



At 28.7 km turn right onto the side road to the Spencers Brook Tavern. *The two-storey old pub is still being renovated but it has a warm welcoming atmosphere with a dart board and Billiard table, a log fire in winter and attractive shady outdoor beer garden for warmer days. The Tavern is open from Wednesday to Sunday from 12 noon and serves a popular Sunday roast for which it is best to book ahead. This historical spot is well worth the stop for a cool drink on a summers day or hot coffee during the cooler months.*

Turn right, after this welcome break, and leave Spencers Brook on sealed road heading west.

There are cattle and sheep farmed here. The predominant trees are the rather straggly York Gums and many of the tall shrubs are various wattles, the most frequent being the jam tree (*Acacia acuminata*) so called because when you cut into the wood it smells like raspberry jam. *Because of the hardness of the wood the early farmers used the jam trees extensively for fence posts. Some of the posts still standing could be over a hundred years old.*

At 31.8 km on the right you pass a road leading off to the Great Eastern Highway, but you continue straight ahead. In the low range on right is Monday Hill. *This part of the road you*

are now driving on was actually constructed on the alignment of the old narrow gauge east-west railway line. You will notice that there are no steep inclines or sharp bends that the trains could not cope with. Sometimes the now tree-grown railway embankment can be seen to the right or the left of our road.

At 37.00 km turn left into Mokine Road.

At 37.1 km continue in Mokine Road as it turns left (sealed) and again as it turns right and travels through 5 Kilometres of winding road through attractive valleys with rock-strewn hills.

At 38.7 km the road becomes unsealed. *Crops you might see here are oats and wheat, a lot is cut for hay.* Corolin Farm is named after the nearby Corolin Brook.

At 41.9 km note the Wandoo trees on the tops of isolated ironstone hills. Please take the winding road sign seriously. *Not much understorey seems to grow on these distinct hills even when they are undisturbed. This is of course exacerbated by the grazing sheep which eat off most new seedlings as they emerge.*

At 41.9 km on the left is probably the largest group of Grass Trees (*Xanthorrhoea preissii*) you will see all together in the district.

At 43.5 km you cross the boundary back into the Shire of York. Leaver Road goes off to the right which has extensive wildflowers along the verges in the season (late Aug to Oct.)

At 44.8 km Farm sheds.

At 45 km on the right is a large Wandoo thicket with many scattered termite nests among the trees. *It is believed that termites won't eat the Wandoo unless it is dying or lying on the ground but very little other timber survives here.*

At 46.8 km Waterfall Road goes off to left.

At 47.2 km on the verge on your right as the road bends left is a She-oak tree (*Casuarina obesa*) that has been damaged by a parasitic mistletoe plant. *The secondary plant you will see is hanging down from the host tree. Eventually the host will be killed as its entire nutrient is drained.*

At 49 km both road verges near a farm have been planted with trees and a lot of Tagasaste shrubs. *This is partly as shelter from the dust from traffic on the road. Also, Tagasaste is supposed to be fire retardant and it is very good fodder for stock.*

At 50.3 km note degraded salt scald in the paddock on your right.

At 50.8 km the road crosses Boyercutty Brook.

At 51.3 km pass Boyercutty Road on your right.

At 52 km on the right, high on a hill, see among the trees the homestead of the York Winery. *It is constructed from gravel and rammed earth mined from a quarry on the property alongside the road.*

At 52.4 km on the left, pass Hamersley Siding Rd which goes off to wind back to the York-Spencers Brook Road. Continue on in Mokine Road and it becomes a sealed road again. On the right is Breckna Brook farm. Mokine Road that you are travelling on was once called Breckna Rd after this farm.

At 53.4 km on right is the entrance to York Wines. If the gate is open, you are welcome to drive up the well formed sealed road winding up the hill to the wine tasting and cellar door sales area. *It is a 320 acre property and includes a 6.5 acre vineyard. The vines are dry-grown, using only natural rainfall. They use no chemicals or preservatives in the vineyard or in the winemaking process.*



At 55.3km on right is Glen Oban Farm that has been farmed until recently by several generations of the same family.

At 56.9 km on the left, is the rarely seen north face of Mt. Bakewell in the Dyott Range. *Hang gliders and Paragliders take off from here, catching the thermal currents that sweep up the mountain to make them airborne.*

At 57 km pass Williams Road on the left.

At 58.5 km the distant scattered dwellings of the Town of York come into view.

At 59.2 km turn right into Ashworth Road which is sealed for about a kilometre and unsealed for 6 km. The turning corner is sign posted THE YORK OLIVE OIL CO 4 km.

At 60.1 km there is a farm on the right and the road is now unsealed. The road passes through groves of She-oaks (*Casuarina obesa*).

At 61 km on right there is another of the distinctive ironstone knolls and a large patch of bush.

At 63.0 Km on the left is New Cosely farm with a large dam, stately Grass Trees and lovely modern house up on the hill behind the olive groves.

At 63.5 km, surrounded by more olive trees, is the York Olive Oil Company. *It has a modern state-of-the-art processing plant you can view, where local growers can have their olives pressed during the season which is from April to July. Award winning Extra Virgin Olive Oil is produced here and on Saturdays, Sundays and most public holidays you can taste and purchase olive oil and other products including jams, marmalade and honey.*

Turn left when you leave the Shop, continuing in Ashworth Road.



At 64.8 km on the left across a creek line see the former Ashworth old stone homestead.

At 65.4 km on left see planted tree lines of revegetation.

At 66.3 km Turn left to York, at this T junction Ashworth road comes to the Great Southern Highway (sealed). Right leads back to Perth.

At 66.7 km pass Helena Road on your right. *(York Information Services has a very interesting self-drive tour along Helena Road through the water catchment bushland forest. This is an attractive round trip or as an alternative route back to the Lakes and thence to Perth.)*

At 66.8 km the road on your left goes to the York Golf Course. *The 18 holes are laid out among Wandoo trees and bushland with wildflowers in season. Arrangements can be made for visitors to play golf there.*

At 68.6 km on the right, Cut Hill Road leads off into The Talbot district. *(Another self-drive route is available from York Information Services to lead you through this interesting long-established farming area.)* Your road now passes through a deep cutting and you can see an old ruined stone house on the left.

At 70.4.km turn left into Morris Edwards Drive. *This is the original entrance into the town of York. There used to be several old farms on the left. Straggly York Gums and jam trees line this road originally developed for horse-drawn traffic.* On the right on the outskirts of the town you can see some of the old cottages hidden under modern additions, but still distinguishable by high rooflines and old style chimneys. Ahead you will see Mt. Brown

(310 m) the lookout at the top is worth a visit, because lovely views over the town can be seen, especially at dusk when long shadows dapple the landscape.

At 73.1 km there is a STOP SIGN at the crossroads. On the right corner are the superb York Cottages. *These are stone with superior modern self-contained accommodation and lots of provision for families with children such as farm animals, tennis court, indoor games area etc.*

At 73.6 km you STOP at the crossroads back at Avon Terrace and you are safely returned to the heart of YORK.

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

York Information Services



81 Avon Tce
YORK WA 6302
Ph: 08 96411301
Fax: 08 96412202
E-mail: info@york.wa.gov.au
Web: www.york.wa.gov.au