

# York & Surrounding Districts

## SCENIC SELF-DRIVE TOUR

### Tour No 4

# Sandgate Road

This route explores undulating farmland, tree-lined roads  
& mountain scenery South of York

Distance: Picturesque 53 km round trip tour

Note: Unsealed roads may not be in good condition following heavy rain



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

York Information Services [info@york.wa.gov.au](mailto:info@york.wa.gov.au)

[www.york.wa.gov.au](http://www.york.wa.gov.au) 9641 1301

**BE PART OF "HISTORY STILL IN THE MAKING"**

# Advertising Opportunity

**This page is available to promote your business  
Half Page or Full Page**

**This publication is printed in hard copy and distributed  
through York Information Services.**

**If you are interested in advertising your product here  
Contact York Information Services  
9641 1301**

**[info@york.wa.gov.au](mailto:info@york.wa.gov.au)**

**This route explores undulating farmland, tree-lined roads & mountain scenery South of York.**

**Distance:** Picturesque 53 km round trip tour

**Note:** Unsealed roads may not be in good condition following heavy rain

**Commence in Avon Terrace at the York Town Hall toilets available here.**

Set your 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.*

**At 0.4 km** Redmile Road on left used to go down to an early bridge over the Avon to the Convict Depot. Opposite 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 once also a bakery from the 1860's. Along this street there are several workmen's cottages from the 1800's.

**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 [pamphlets available at YIS if you are interested to explore this whole area on foot, also a booklet containing 4 Heritage Walk Trails].* This was the southern entrance to York. 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, which is now private property, but was the first inland farm in Western Australia dating from the 1830's. *Many important exploration trips into Western Australia's hinterland left from this farm.* On the right is the former Albion Inn (1861) with its distinctive balustrade on the upper storey verandah. *It is now a B&B and Beauty Retreat where you can stay and be pampered.*

**From 0.6 – 0.8 km** 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** Knott's Road goes off to the right and Avon Terrace becomes The Great Southern Highway. On the corner on the 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. *A variety of grains and cereals are accepted here and railed off to the ports for shipment overseas.*

At 1.6 km cross the railway line - left goes 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.*



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 100 years old.* The hill on the left is Mt. Hardey.

At 6.4 km on the right is the Orchid Conservation Reserve. *In the spring there are wildflowers, 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.*

At 8.4 km on the right is a quarry that produces high quality granite for monuments.

At 9.2 km you will cross over Cave Hill Bridge. Between here and 10.3 km where Youngs Road comes in, keep a look out to the right and you may see a ragged shaped cave about half way up the escarpment wall. *In the 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 kilometers if visiting. (Toilets, BBQ's and children's climbing equipment here) Alcoa established all the facilities including a boardwalk that leads to a gazebo lookout over the River. Riverine vegetation is labelled, 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 interesting lichen on some of the bushes. 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, and then walked to where her horse was stabled to ride on to the school. The school was closed in 1947 and the students were bussed into the central school in York.*

**At 11 km** on the left pass the East Gwambygine Road.

**At 11.1 km** you cross the Wittenoom Brook and on the left down near the trees along the River is the old Wittenoom homestead (private property) now owned by the Clifton family – *both notable names in the annals of the history of the Swan River Colony.*

**At 11.4 km** *there is a short optional addition to the main tour if you are interested to see river reclamation works. Continue straight on for about 1 km to Gwambygine Conservation Reserve on your left on a curve of the road at Gwambygine Pool. 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, several families of ducks swim here and in summer 2007 three Black Swans were seen here. Come again in a few years and see if we are making progress!*

**Return back along the Great Southern Highway to Ovens Road and take up the Tour from there.**

**At 11.4 km** Turn right into Ovens Road (unsealed). **You will turn left into Ovens Road if you took the extra option to the Gwambygine Pool.** Please STOP before crossing the railway line which goes left to Beverley and on to Albany or right to York, Northam then Perth. A Salmon Gum (Eucalyptus salmonophloia) on the right, tall York Gums and jam trees line the verges.

**Around 14 km** on the right there is a lot of the parasite mistletoe infesting the jam trees. *It has pretty red flowers in December but too much will eventually kill the host tree.*

At 14.6 km on the left is “Castle Rock” Farm. *The Ovens family has farmed here for several generations and the Road is named for them (private property).* On the right and left are untidy Flooded Gums (*Eucalyptus rudis*) along the creek line.

At 15.8 km is “Hillview Farm”. *Various descendants of the Davies family are still farming the district.*

At 16.9 km the road takes a right angled turn to the right.

At 17.6 km another Davies farm on the left.

At 18.1 km the road goes down a depression with Flooded Gums.

At 18.9 km on the left is “Badgepool” home of the Beresford–Peirse alpaca herd. Huge rocks are piled on each other among She–oaks (*Casuarina obesa*). In the paddock on the left is an ironstone knoll with Wandoo trees. *Nothing much seems to grow under these trees on these distinctive hills. You will see interesting scenery with rocky hills.*

At 19.5 km **turn sharp left** (almost a hairpin bend) and the gravel road you are on joins the sealed Qualen West Road.

At 20.4 km “Valeview Farm” on left with revegetation plantings on both sides of the road.

At 22.2 km pass Kittlers Road off to the right.

At 22.9 km on the left was a gravel quarry once used for road making which is gradually being revegetated.

At 23.4 km on the right pass Qualen Road. *This leads off to Talbot Hall.* This is the lively community centre for a rural farming area known as The Talbot. They have a very active Landcare group concerned with research into acid sulphate soils and other environmental problems. See their revegetation plantings around the district.

At 23.9 km a planting of Olive trees on the right. *The big Red Gums (*Eucalyptus calophylla* or “Marri” from the Nyungar) are a mass of white flowers in February/March and in that season they are beloved of the beekeepers.*

At 25.3 km pass “Westgate”. *The Emins have been a well–established farming family in the district for several generations.* Continuing through attractive undulating countryside, the wattle trees here are the Manna Gum (*Acacia microbotrya*). *The gum was chewed for medicinal purposes by the Nyungar people and as they bear prolific seeds in season, these were ground for ‘flour’ for making damper.*

At 26.8 km some remnants of bush land. *There are extensive revegetation plantings especially along creeks to help slow the movement of sand. These creeks are tributaries of the Avon River.* Cable farm is on your right.

**At 27.3 km** on left is a farm gate and note the stone tank and the clump of Aloe plants. *Pioneer settlers seemed to be fond of these plants. Does anyone know why? It usually indicates there was an early dwelling wherever you see Aloes in a paddock.*

**At 27.4 km** make a right-angled turn to the left onto Sandgate Road which is unsealed. Traffic sign indicates very winding road so please travel carefully while you enjoy the scenery.

**At 28 km** on left a plantation of several hectares of white-trunked Lemon Scented Gum trees (*Corymbia citriodora*) backed by some pines. On the verge are some prickly Hakea shrubs (*Hakea preissii*) sometimes called Needle Bush, which have creamy flowers very like wattle blossom, in November/December.

**At 28.8 km** the road passes through a grove of She-oaks (*Casuarina obesa*). Wandoos and the occasional York Gum line the road with branches meeting overhead -understorey is mainly Jam trees.

**At 29.6 km** the road crosses a geological fault line with Grass Trees (*Xanthorrhoea preissii*) among the bush and leaving a ridge of large broken rocks to right and left.

**At 31.3 km** on left is a super spot for a camera stop. *Do take time to stop, but be careful to park where your car is visible from both directions because this is a farm road.* On the left are views over the Valley to Mt. Bakewell in the far distance. Amazing piles of immense boulders looking as though they were stacked up by a mammoth forklift are on your right and left.

**At 31.6 km** more Manna Gum wattles.

**At 32.1 km** on right in the Fleay Paddock is a memorial to Steven Fleay who died very young. Road soon crosses a gully, with more Needle Bush shrubs on right and left.

**At 33.3 km** on left are piled boulders on a hill and a creek line with straggly Flooded Gums. *Majestic wedge-tailed Eagles can sometimes be seen soaring high on thermal currents over the paddocks in this area.*

**At 37 km** our road turns sharply right at the railway line then left to a STOP sign. On your right is Khaelan Farm that has a self-contained farm stay. Cross over the railway tracks.

**At 37.7 km** turn left for York at the T junction with the Great Southern Highway (sealed). Right would take you to Beverley and places south, ahead is Oakover Road, an unsealed private farm road.

**At 38.1 km** a track leads off to the right through bush to St. Peter's Anglican Church at Gilgering. *Sadly the church always has to be closed because of vandalism. But it is surrounded by an interesting graveyard. It is also the site of the former Gilgering School where one of the locals who lived on the other side of the river remembers swimming her horse across to go to school during a flood.*

At 38.4 km you will cross the Oakover Bridge. You will see occasional glimpses of the railway and the pipeline on your left.

At 42.2 km see Ovens Road on your left where we turned off the Highway at the beginning of our journey. So retrace your steps heading now back to York and soon Mt. Bakewell will come into view ahead.

As stated on the front page you are 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](mailto:info@york.wa.gov.au)

Web: [www.york.wa.gov.au](http://www.york.wa.gov.au)