

WORDS AND PHOTOS_ANNIE WADDINGTON-FEATHER.

Bushwalk of broken dreams

Para Wirra Recreational Park offers a glimpse into SA's dramatic mining history.

The view of the park would have been very different 144 years ago. Instead of trees and chattering birds the area would have been filled with buildings, tents and noisy machinery as miners dug deep, hoping the ground would yield its gold and they could fulfil their dreams.

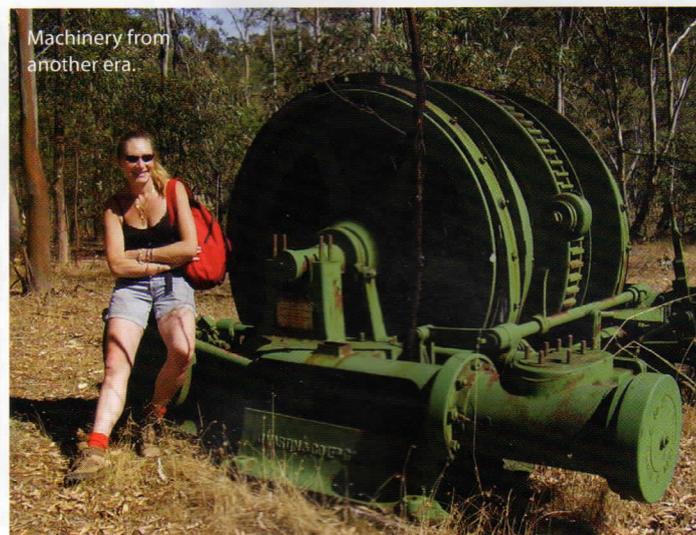
The Quarry Hike (8.4km) and Phoenix Hike (4.2km) take you back to this era, with information boards helpfully explaining the history en route. In October 1868, a man named Job Harris discovered alluvial gold and within a week 2000 people flocked to the area. At its height, the rush attracted 4000 people. Approximately 25,000 ounces of gold (worth over \$40 million today) is the total recorded production of the goldfield, but by 1871 only 100 men remained working the old fields.

In 1896 the Menzies Barossa Mining Company erected massive machinery and buildings, but this time the toil was relatively unrewarded and dreams were broken; by 1898 the mine was closed.

After leaving your car in the carpark, start walking along Knob Track. Quarry Hike is soon clearly signposted to the right off this track; the sign also reminds you no fossicking is allowed. The wide track takes you down the valley and there are stunning views of rolling hills between the gum trees. After crossing a delightful brook on the valley floor, there is a steep ascent, but the remains



The tramway tunnel to Phoenix Hike.



Machinery from another era.

of the old battery house about halfway up the hill provide a good excuse to stop for breath. All that remains of this 18m x 12m structure is a concrete floor and crumbling walls.

Quarry Hike is a linear walk, but if you'd prefer not to retrace your steps too much, at the brow of the hill join the Phoenix Hike by scrambling through the old tramway tunnel. The quartz-scattered track narrows after the tunnel but opens to more mine workings built by the Barossa mining company and there are a couple of impressive mine shafts.

At the trail crossroads follow the sign to the Barossa goldfields (joining the Victoria Hill Walk) where you'll be rewarded with lots of smaller mine shafts (fortunately fenced off) and the remains of the miners' houses, looking rather eerie in amongst the trees. The trail takes you up some wooden steps and past more mine shafts to the restored settler's cottage, Bowden Cottage. There's a great view here as well as some mining equipment and a small jail cell. Continue along the Phoenix Hike to see more machinery and mine shafts, and the trail will lead you back to the tunnel. Here you can retrace your steps back to the carpark.

As well as the Park's historical aspects, gum trees and other flora provide a haven for wildlife. It is home to over 100 species of native birds including emu. Kangaroos are also common, along with a number of reptiles.

i NEED TO KNOW

Para Wirra Recreation Park is 40km northeast of Adelaide. Access is via Humberg Scrub Road, One Tree Hill. \$9 entrance fee/car, no charge given. Para Wirra office phone: 08 8280 7048 or www.parks.sa.gov.au. Mining heritage sites and walks in SA: www.mininghistory.asn.au/mining-heritage/south-australias-mining-heritage/

Walk notes **PARA WIRRA RECREATIONAL PARK**

Time/Distance: Quarry Hike: 8.4km/3-4hr,
Phoenix Hike: 4.2km/1.5-2hr | Degree: easy

