

AUSTRALIA'S WORLD HERITAGE PLACES

WILLANDRA LAKES REGION INFORMATION SHEET



Quick Facts

- The Willandra Lakes Region is in the Murray Basin area of far south-western New South Wales.
- The region is a dry, harsh, semi-arid landscape.
- Thousands of years ago it was a beautiful paradise filled with water, animals, birds and human activity.
- This region has revealed ancient human bones, footprints and animal fossils that help scientists understand what life was like many years ago
- Each of Australia's 17 World Heritage Places are also on Australia's National Heritage List.

Why is the Willandra Lakes Region of World Heritage value?

The Willandra Lakes Region was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1981 for its natural and cultural values.

- **It helps us understand how the earth was formed**
The Willandra Lakes Region represents major stages of the earth's geological history, particularly with the response to major glacial-interglacial fluctuations.
- **It helps us understand the history of the earth as recorded in rocks and landforms**
The region contains a system of Pleistocene lakes formed over the last two million years. These lakes are now dry. Most are fringed on the eastern shore by a crescent-shaped dune, called a 'lunette', formed by the prevailing winds.
- **It tells the story of a past civilisation and shows how humans lived, hunted and gathered, ate, buried their dead and responded to major climate change**
Sand dune excavations in 1969 revealed the remains of a cremated woman who scientists called 'Mungo Lady'. Mungo Lady is the world's oldest cremated person. Five years later the ochre painted skeleton of 'Mungo Man' was unearthed showing evidence of ancient burial rituals. Both of these remains are believed to be 40,000 years old. Mungo Man and Mungo Lady show us that even in ancient times, people still took great care with their dead. In 2003 the astounding discovery of fossilised human footprints made by adults, teenagers and children was found. Preserved in the wet clay, these 19,000 to 23,000 year old footprints are the largest collection of fossilised human footprints in the world.



Australian Government
**Department of the Environment,
Water, Heritage and the Arts**



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Challenges and Management

The Willandra Lakes Region is managed by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, a division of the New South Wales Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water and the New South Wales Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources.

Challenges	Management
Cultural considerations	Aboriginal communities in the area have maintained their links with the land and take great pride in the archaeological and historical records of the past. Respect of Aboriginal beliefs and traditions is of fundamental importance and Aboriginal communities are involved with the care and management of the Willandra Lakes Region. Increased employment opportunities for Aboriginal people are also encouraged.
Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'The Walls of China' are forty-metre high sand dunes that have been eroded into interesting shapes. These 'lunettes' surround the eastern side of the lake beds, protecting thousands of years of human history.• A boardwalk has been built to protect this fragile and sensitive environment from tourist erosion and all Indigenous sites and objects are protected and must not be disturbed.

Read more

www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/world/willandra/index.html



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