

THE AUSTRALIAN GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY'S

CANNING 2010

100 YEARS OF THE CANNING STOCK ROUTE



10–30 May 2010

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The longest stock route in the world, the Canning runs for more than 1700 km in WA – from Halls Creek in the north, to Wiluna in the south – traversing four Australian deserts.

A STOCK ROUTE through north-western WA was first proposed in late 1890s to take East Kimberley cattle to the southern markets. But the experienced explorers Lawrence Wells and David Carnegie, who led an expedition through the area in 1896, reckoned that the region was far too desolate and dangerous for such a route.

Yet the demand for a stock route to take cattle to market was so strong that, in 1906, the WA government selected Alfred Canning to survey a course between Lake Way, in the East Murchison goldfields, and Sturt Creek in east Kimberley. The survey team returned to Perth in 1907 to much public acclaim. Canning, originally a Victorian who'd spent most of his working life as a surveyor for the NSW Department of Lands, arrived in WA in 1893. Having already surveyed the way for the immense rabbit-

proof fence, Canning was the obvious choice to lead the well-sinking party for the stock route. Canning's team left Wiluna in April 1908. Over the next 14 months, 31 wells were sunk on the way north before Canning's men turned south in August 1909 and sank another 21 watering points on their way back to Wiluna.

Canning sent a two-word telegram to Perth after this feat: "Job completed". It met with a standing ovation in the WA Parliament. In 1930, Canning was called out of retirement to complete the reconditioning of the wells. A year earlier, William Snell had attempted to refurbish the wells, which had deteriorated due to fire, termites and the occasional act of vandalism, but gave up after reaching Well 35. Canning however finished the job, aged 70.

2010 EXPEDITION ITINERARY

THE 2010 EXPEDITION will gather in Kalgoorlie, still the richest goldmining town in Australia. While much has changed in Kalgoorlie since Canning first arrived, there are many old grand buildings still standing in this exciting goldrush town.

From Kalgoorlie we'll head north on good roads to the goldrush town of Leinster, but not before visiting the ghost town of Gwalia. Next day we pass through Wiluna and begin our Canning Stock Route (CSR) adventure by visiting the first couple of wells along the stock route before camping at Well 3. Over the next two days we enter very remote country and travel as far north as Well 16 – and the famous Durba Springs where we will take a day's break to explore the area. On leaving the magical Durba Hills we'll be seven days on the track, passing the salt expanse of Lake Disappointment (so named by the explorer Frank Hann) and briefly stopping at the isolated Aboriginal community of Kunawarritji for a hot shower.

We then pass by the desert oak forests of central CSR and the historic graves of early pioneers – who died of thirst, or were killed by Aboriginals protecting their meagre water supply – before arriving at the mesa-like Breaden Hills. The last few days of the expedition will be spent around the wetlands of Lake Gregory before reaching Old Halls Creek – the original starting point of the CSR, just south of present-day Halls Creek. Our expedition comes to an end here, on the headwaters of the Elvire River and in the foothills of the Albert Edward Range. It's a fitting finale to an exciting and rewarding expedition.

OUR GUIDES

ANTHONY AND KAREN MCDONALD are experienced, veteran AG expedition leaders, who run numerous 4WD expeditions and Australian Geographic Society scientific research camps. Their company, Red Desert Tours, specialises in remote-area touring and catering.

WEATHER

MAY in WA's desert country normally means cold nights but pleasant sunny days that are ideal for travelling. Rain and/or flooding can sometimes occur and may mean changes to the route and the itinerary.

TRACK CONDITIONS AND VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS

TRACK SURFACES will vary from good graded gravel roads to badly corrugated and rocky surfaces and soft sandy sections over steep sand hills. We'll encounter some normally dry washouts and creek crossings and, on some lesser-used tracks, there will be spinifex and/or overhanging scrub. Vehicles must be high-clearance, low-ratio-equipped 4WD vehicles. Four-wheel-drive, or centre diffs locked, will be the order of most days' driving. It is essential that every vehicle on this expedition is in exceptionally good mechanical condition and fitted with good tyres with at least 80 per cent tread. They must be able to carry enough fuel for 1000 km of desert travel as well as a minimum of 60 litres of water. A full requirement list will be sent to registered participants.

Trailers are not permitted on this expedition.

SUGGESTED READING LIST

- *Australian Geographic Issue 87; The Canning Stock Route*, by Ron Moon
- *The Australian Geographic Book The Canning Stock Route, A Traveller's Guide*, by Ronele and Eric Gard
- *The Beckoning West*, by Eleanor Smith
- *The Glassy Goanna*, by M.H. Bremner
- *Spinifex and Sand*, by David Carnegie
- *To the Great Gulf: The Surveys and Explorations of L.A. Wells*, by W. and C. Steele
- *Do Not Yield to Despair, Frank Hann's Exploration Diaries 1895–1908*, by Mike Donaldson and Ian Elliot

COST

\$3950 incl. GST, per vehicle of two occupants.

PARTICIPANTS WILL RECEIVE:

- Help from an experienced guide to plan the route and camping sites
- Background briefing from a special guest who'll recount the story of the Canning Stock Route
- Assistance on the journey from a qualified first-aid person
- Experienced support crew with comprehensive recovery kits, tools and common general spares; but note: this does not extend to model-specific spare parts
- Hema Desert Map (issued upon final payment)
- All permit approvals (where applicable)
- Communications: Royal Flying Doctor Service and access to HF radio and satellite phone – the satellite phone will be available at any time for \$2 per minute.
- Daily briefings, assistance and guidance
- Environmental toilet facilities
- Expedition welcome dinner at Kalgoorlie
- Expedition farewell dinner at Halls Creek
- All camp ground fees

HOW TO BOOK

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION and bookings, please phone Odyssey Travel **1300 888 225** or email: info@odysseytravel.com.au.

Odyssey Travel is Australia's premier not-for-profit educational travel organisation and an Australian Geographic corporate partner.

A 20 per cent non-refundable deposit is required to secure a booking. The balance is to be paid 70 days prior to the start of the expedition. Places are allocated on a first-in, first-served basis. A cancellation fee will be charged for bookings cancelled less than 60 days prior to the expedition commencing. Please see the Odyssey Travel website for cancellation policy and charges www.odysseytravel.com.au.



JOIN THE AUSTRALIAN GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

THE AUSTRALIAN GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY is a not-for profit organisation that has supported conservation across Australia for more than 20 years. We would like to invite all those undertaking the expedition to become AG Society members. When you book your place on the expedition you will receive a subscription flyer to complete and return by post to begin your AG membership.

