

# **DENMARK-NORNALUP HERITAGE RAIL TRAIL**

## **Description of the Trail**

This scenic coastal trail features a variety of forest, farmland and coast heathland views. It is currently in three sections -

- Denmark River mouth to Hay River (about 12km) - Walkers, Hybrid Bikes, Mountain Bikers. The section to Rudyard Beach Road is of high quality surface (suitable for families), with the remaining section soft or uneven in places, and suitable for walking and keen bikers.
- Denmark River mouth to Parker Road (33km) - Walkers, Horse Riders, Mountain Bikers. Sections are boggy in winter and soft sandy sections make it recommended for keen cyclists.
- Peaceful Bay Road to Station Road (about 14km) - Walkers, Mountain Bikers. The surface is still rough and/or sandy in places and suitable for walkers and keen bike riders only.

The 14km section between Parker Rd and Bow Bridge is not expected to be open for a few years, once bridges over the Kent and Bow Rivers have been re-built.

Denmark River mouth on Inlet Drive is the trail hub. This is where the Denmark River flows into the Wilson Inlet, and where the Bibbulman Track, the Denmark to Nornalup Heritage Rail Trail, the Mokare Trail and other Denmark trails intersect.

In the foyer of the Old Denmark Post Office there is an information display panel, which includes historical photos of the original Railway line being built and of the railway wagons.

See other sidings, culverts and historic features on the Rail Trail map on page 4.

## **Points of Interest**

Along the trail, look out for sites of historical interest, connected with its railway past. Only traces remain of the railway sidings which serviced the local communities along the line. These include Denmark Station, with its photographic displays at the Old Denmark Post Office, and Nornalup Station, where a historical plaque marks the terminus site.

Four original timber rail bridges remain in use on the trail. These are near Board Road, Kordabup Road and where the trail crosses Little River, 4km west of Ocean Beach Road.

Where the trail follows the edge of the Wilson Inlet, between Denmark River mouth and Rudyard Beach, there are shelters and interpretative signage.

## **Denmark-Nornalup Heritage Rail Trail Etiquette**

The trail is multi-use, available for walkers, mountain bikers and, for the Denmark to Parker Road section, for horse riders. The section from Denmark River mouth along Wilson Inlet is wheelchair accessible. Motorbikes are not permitted. Please note, a number of sections of the trail are utilised by motor vehicles, so caution is required. The track may be sandy or boggy in places, requiring a higher level of fitness. Fires and camping are not permitted.

Safety. All users - please stay on the trail to avoid environmental damage. Take all rubbish with you. Do not disturb wildlife or stock. Dogs to be on a lead at all times.

Cyclists - Approach horses with care, alert others as you approach, overtake on the right at a reduced speed.

Horse Riders - Slow down approaching other users, dismount and lead horses across all

bridges. Where possible, please keep in single file on the southern edge of the trail, allowing the northern edge to stay firm for cyclists.

By respecting the etiquette of the trail you will assist in its care and maintenance, as well as increase the enjoyment of all users, including yourself.

### **Points to Remember**

Bike riders, check your equipment - tyre pressure, brakes, chain and lubrication. Bring a tool kit, pump and helmet.

Clothing - hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, comfortable clothing and waterproof gear.

Food and water -take up to 2 litres of water per person, high energy snacks, etc.

Mobile phone - reception not likely to be available.

Inform others of your ride - let family and friends know your route and your return time.

Take care - the track surface varies between sand and hard gravel. Be aware of hazards such as fallen branches. Please report significant hazards to the Shire of Denmark.

### **About Denmark**

The trail is situated within the Shire of Denmark on the south coast of WA. The area is a popular holiday destination with a fascinating history, stunning coasts and forests, and a strong community spirit.

Prior to European settlement the region was occupied for many thousands of years by Aboriginal people.

The area was first explored by Europeans in 1829.

### **The History behind the Denmark-Nornalup Heritage Rail Trail**

In 1895 the Millar brothers secured private leases for 20,000 acres of old growth Karri forest. They proceeded to build an extra 16 miles of railway from Torbay to service their mill. By 1900 they had a total of three mills, employed 750 men, and sent 90,000 super feet of timber twice per day to Albany.

The Millars exploited the forests so rapidly that they cleared the local forests within ten years. By 1905 they had closed the mill and the town was almost deserted.

The WA Government bought the Millars' property, town, land and railways for 50,000 pounds, after lengthy negotiations. The railway line to Albany became a commercial line in 1908/9, after the land was offered for farms and housing. The WA Government Group Settlement scheme of 1923 saw the migration of many new families to the district.

Rail extensions assisted the local dairy, agriculture, timber and fishing industries. The Denmark to Nornalup Railway was the only completed stage of the planned Denmark to Big Brook Railway. The construction of the full line would have connected Denmark to the timber mills of the Pemberton area and completed the link to Bunbury.

Work on the Denmark to Nornalup line commenced in 1926, employed 300 men and took nearly 3 years to complete. Even though the distance between Nornalup and Denmark was only 34 miles, the country was rugged and presented many engineering problems. Deep gullies had to be filled with earth, many rivers and creeks were bridged, and huge cuttings were carved out of the gravel hillsides. The ruling grade on the whole line needed to be 1 in 60.

The work was very rough, carried out with picks and shovels, axes, cross-cut saws and gunpowder. No bulldozers, backhoes or chainsaws were available back then, just a 'steam navy' to excavate some of the bigger cuttings, and plain hard work by many determined men and their wonderful horses. Despite the hazards, the project was accident-free.

In summer the workers toiled through steamy heat, with its accompanying flies, and through cold, wet winters. The men worked a 44 hour week. A typical day for the supporting train crews involved starting at 5 am and not finishing until 10 pm.

At the time of opening, the line serviced 900 people on 15 group settlements along the line. The railway played a central role in the lives of the group settlers. Two trains a week ran, which serviced passengers, collected farm produce and delivered goods and supplies. Railway trucks even brought cattle for the settlers' farms.

The history of the group settlement scheme is a sad one, with a lot of hardship and failure. Government planning was poor, stock failed to thrive on some trace element deficient soil types, the Great Depression hit and the Australian climate challenged the farming success of newly settled migrants, most of whom were from English cities.

The Denmark to Nornalup Railway Line was closed, on economic grounds, on the 30th September 1957, despite protests from Denmark residents.

### **Acknowledgments**

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