

Ghost Town & Gold Mine Relics
Swimming in Season (after rains)
Camping & Caravanning
Wildflowers, Birds, Animals

1.5 Hrs One Way—124 km from Meekatharra
Easy Dirt Road & Tracks
High Clearance Vehicle Advised for Peak Hill track
Deep sandy sections at Bilyuin Pools

No Phone Reception
Take Water
Tell Someone
Hazardous Areas



DIRECTIONS

This is a wonderful and easy day trip which also features some great bush camping spots. Take all supplies including fuel and water. The Bilyuin Pools track is accessible to cars and caravans, but there are very sandy sections where you can get stuck. Bilyuin Pools have water for most of the year, but they get low if there has been no rain. Caution for cattle in the area.

A high clearance vehicle is advised for the 18km Peak Hill section due to some rough sections, and there may be wet creek crossings. If you encounter trouble, stay with your vehicle. Someone will come along. **CARRY PLENTY OF WATER.** Peak Hill is a hazardous former gold mining area; you enter at your own risk. You must be cautious for holes and unstable ground. Do not let kids or dogs wander at Peak Hill.

From Main Street, Meekatharra, follow the Great Northern Highway north.

- **Continue for 34 km / Trip Meter 34 km**

On your right: Spongebob Mailbox (Munarra Station) and on your left, 25 Mile Well commemorating the Afghan cameleers and stock route travellers.

- **Continue for 21 km / Trip Meter 55 km**

Karalundi campground, cafe, Seventh Day Adventist school - beautiful place with caravan & camping sites.

- **Continue for 12 km / Trip Meter 67 km**

26th Parallel. Turn **LEFT** (west) on to the Ashburton Downs ROAD (dirt). Can be busy with mining trucks.

- **Continue for 14 km / Trip Meter 81 km**

Creek crossing. Slow right down, the track is hidden by bush until you are almost right on it. **Look for a track on your left on the far side of the creek.** This short winding track wanders along the Bilyuin Pools & free camping areas. You can do a loop by crossing dry areas and come back along the other side, but be careful - it can be easy to get bogged in mud or sand, especially after rain. To carry on to Peak Hill, get back on the Ashburton Downs road and continue north.

- **Continue for 25 km / Trip Meter 106 km**

The Peak Hill turnoff is often missing its sign! But the track is easily recognised: a VERY wide dirt road on your right (east) about 25 km from Bilyuin Pools. Turn on to this road. Tip: if you come to the sign for Yulga Jinna Community, you have gone too far. Tip: There are a number of dirt track turnoffs along the Peak Hill track, just follow the **WIDEST** track. On the way you will pass the old Peak Hill airstrip on your left and abandoned mine workings on your right.

- **Continue for 18 km / Trip Meter 124 km**

You will know you are in Peak Hill when you see old stone walls, crumbling buildings and the fenced old homestead. Park here and have a look around.

If you continue on the track behind the homestead for a few kilometres you will see other ruins and the old cemetery. Don't get lost; there are many tracks around here. You may also see camel tracks or actual camels. Budgies, emus and bungarras are common, and it's a popular area for prospectors & camping.

You must be very careful for DRILL HOLES which are only about 20—30 cm wide and which can be a danger to children and pets.

Ashburton Downs Road



To Newman & Port Hedland
Great Northern Highway

Peak Hill Ghost Town

Bilyuin Pools

26th Parallel

Karalundi

25 Mile Well

Spongebob Mailbox

From Meekatharra
Great Northern Highway

***Karalundi** is an oasis in the desert. It is mainly a school for indigenous children, run by the Seventh Day Adventist Church. It is open to the public, with a café serving coffee and fresh food. Accommodation, caravan and camping sites are available and you can replenish your water supply with Karalundi's famous spring water. Visitors should note that alcohol and smoking are NOT allowed at Karalundi, and that it is a religious centre.*



GPS COORDINATES:

BILYUIN POOLS

Latitude: -25° 53' 59.99" S
Longitude: 118° 39' 59.99" E

PEAK HILL

Latitude: -25° 38' 16.80" S
Longitude: 118° 43' 26.40" E



Peak Hill, Western Australia Songlines and Gold Fever

Peak Hill lies in the land of the Yamatji people and is part of an aboriginal songline running north to south which includes Peak Hill, Wilgie Mia, Walganna (Walg Rock) and all the way south to Carnamah. This songline follows waterways and was used by women and children of the Widi people further south to meet up at the Peak Hill area with other Yamatji groups such as the Wanmulla and Badimia people.

In 1892, William John Wilson discovered gold here and the rush was on. By 1913, the mine had produced over 270,000 ounces of gold and the town population was recorded as "180 men and 10 women", although historical records disappointingly fail to elaborate on any juicy details. Peak Hill grew to nearly 2000 people, and had a bakery, hotels, post office and even a train service. For those who couldn't afford train fare, it was a long, tough slog through the outback on foot, by horse or camel train, bicycle or even wheelbarrow. Model T Fords carrying passersby, dogs, chickens and all manner of goods also made the rough journey—it must have been quite an adventure.

By the mid 1950's Peak Hill had dwindled to tumbleweed and one lonely bloke running the general store; he turned the lights off and left in 1954. The boom-bust cycle saw a brief frenzy in the 1980's and again in the 2000's. Although it's quiet now, you are bound to run into a driller or prospector if you go exploring.

Peak Hill gets its name from a 30m high peak at the centre of the gold find; the hills you see now are generally human-made from the years of various mining operations. There are four open-cut mines visible from the air - Main, Jubilee, Fiveways and Harmony. Further away are the Horseshoe fields. While it feels desolate and wild, if you could fly over the area you would be astonished to see the number of tracks, mine pits, abandoned workings and debris that cover the region. Take a long ramble around the townsite area and you will find old cellars, an oddly idyllic water-filled mine pit (do NOT swim in mine pits, they are often contaminated with naturally-occurring toxic elements) and, if you've got a good eye, the bat-cave shaft (also stay out; shafts often contain deadly toxic air - the cliché about carrying a canary into the coal mine has solid fact behind it).

A little-known slice of history: the famous self-made anthropologist Daisy Bates visited the Peak Hill community as part of her exploration of the Murchison area. Daisy Bates spent many years travelling through Australia, living with aboriginal people and documenting their culture. The lives, culture and stories of the original inhabitants are often left out of the history books, and while the ghost town ruins are picturesque, they stand upon an ancient land and a not-so-distant past of personal and cultural tragedy - a loss that can never be compensated by any amount of gold.



Bates with group, Murchison or Peak Hill



GOLD!

At last we have a doctor again (Dr Ick), and not any too soon, as there has been an epidemic of influenza for some time. The local name given to it is the "dog's disease."

WESTRALIANA

A compliment
if accepted

Thursday 28 August 1952

PEAK HILL PEOPLE

by T. MORROW

A COMPLIMENT it is if one is admitted wholeheartedly into the society of Peak Hill. You are regarded as a person of good character, one to be trusted by these honest and hospitable people. It makes no difference to them whether you are prospector or banker. Once vouched for their hospitality and friendship is unbounded.

This tiny community, once a flourishing mining town, lies 70-odd miles north of Meekatharra. It has a hotel, post office, police station and general store. A few dwellings are scattered about. There are no defined streets. You may walk where you wish without fear of trespassing.

A few years ago my wife had the good fortune to be invited to spend the weekend at Peak Hill. A most enjoyable and well remembered one it proved to be. We arrived in the late afternoon. A euchre party and dance provided entertainment for the evening. A well played old-fashioned button accordion supplied the music. It made no difference whether one could dance properly or not, everyone tried, including myself. To see the happy laughing faces of these people made it impossible not to enjoy this frolic. Dancing ended abruptly at midnight.

Sunday passed only too quickly. We explored the huge open cut, supposed to be the biggest in the world at that time. One had only to climb down to the floor of this enormous hole in the ground to realise its immensity. We followed tunnels where

yards), and fortunately I had a telescope with me and by this means had a very close view. Black beak (short, hooked, similar to an owl's), black narrow circle around eye, beautiful pale grey on back, all white body and under wing excepting the 'W' band. Darker grey flight feathers and very dark brown or black on shoulders. Black or very dark brown visible

hard-working, hard-living gold miners have pursued that most elusive metal. We listened to old timer's tales of Peak Hill as it was a half century or more ago.

A Mothers' Day service was held in the hotel parlour on Sunday evening. All denominations attended, mostly men; there were very few women in Peak Hill. Rough and ready miners and prospectors, dressed in their Sunday best, joked and jostled with each other as they scrambled for seats.

A young man nervously sang "Mother Machree." Loud clapping and cries of "Good on you, mate, darn well sung," came from the appreciative congregation.

During the address by the missionary interjections were frequent. Should he bring out some point that met with their approval, his listeners would let him know of it by calling out loudly, "Them's true words, parson," or "You can say that again, mister." If, on the other hand, some didn't approve, "That's a debatable point, padre," and "I reckon you're off the mark there, mate," were flung at him. A merry twinkle in the eye of the missionary told plainly that he was thoroughly enjoying this very unorthodox service.

After the address came the singing of favourite hymns. Each vied for priority in choice. "What about 'Lead Kindly Light'?" one called out. "Let's have 'Onward Christian Soldiers,'" cried another. "'Abide With Me' beats the lot of them," said a big burly prospector, smiling uncomfortably as if ashamed of his enthusiasm. Hymn after hymn was sung lustily until hoarseness and lack of breath brought the sing-song to an end.

Sunday night was also library night. While the singing was in progress, some were selecting and changing books. The hotel parlour was used as the library room. There was much laughter when a young man, evidently an avid reader of Hall Caine, called out across the room: "Hey, Joe, have you finished with 'The Woman Thou Gavest Me'?" He was so embarrassed by the laughter that I doubt if he even waited for an answer before sidling out of the door.

It was not without regret that we left Peak Hill to return to Meekatharra. We realised that, during our short stay, we had been made members of one big family. That is something that only the outback can do.