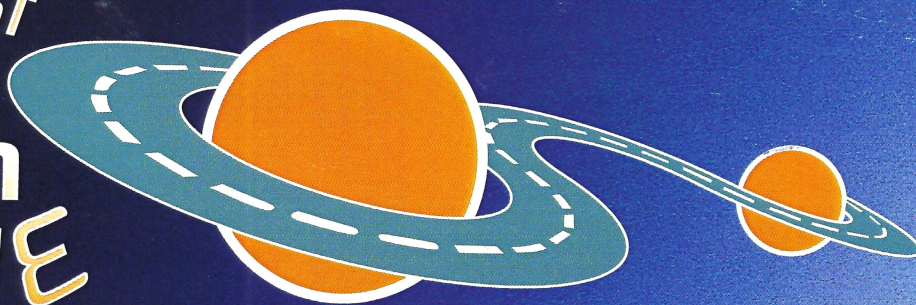


World's LARGEST virtual solar system DRIVE



...ever wondered how
vast our solar system
actually is?

Launch into Coonabarabran, Central NSW, on the World's Largest Virtual Solar System Drive and explore the planets as if you were hurtling through space.

Journey through the Solar System and picturesque countryside on one or all of the five drives that lead to Australia's largest optical astronomy centre, Siding Spring Observatory.

Discover the 3D planet models attached to starry billboard signs scaled 38 million times smaller than outer space – the distance between each planet is also scaled.

So fasten your seat belts... this can be the drive of a lifetime!

The Drives

All drives lead to Siding Spring Observatory, Timor Road, Coonabarabran.

Location of Planets and distances (km) to Siding Spring Observatory

Drive 1: Dubbo

Pluto	Dubbo Visitor Centre, Newell Highway	190
Neptune	Gilgandra Cooe Heritage Centre, Newell Highway	119
Uranus	Tooraweenah Rest Area, Newell Highway	79
Saturn	Jack Halls Creek Rest Area, Newell Highway	40
Jupiter	Timor Road, west of Coonabarabran	21.5
Mars	Timor Road, west of Coonabarabran	5.5
Earth	Observatory Road, west of Coonabarabran	4.1
Venus	Observatory Road, west of Coonabarabran	1.9
Mercury	Observatory Road, west of Coonabarabran	1.2
the Sun	Siding Spring Observatory	0

Drive 2: Gulgong

Pluto	6km south of Birriwa, Castlereagh Highway	157
Neptune	Milling Park, Golden Highway, Dunedoo	132
Uranus	New Mollyan, Mendooran Road	70

For Saturn to the Sun see Drive 1

Drive 3: Merriwa

Pluto	Rotary Park, Golden Highway, Merriwa	205
Neptune	Jorrock's Park, Binnia Street, Coolah	118
Uranus	Ulinda, Warrumbungles Way	74
Saturn	Deringulla Bridge, Warrumbungles Way	41

For Jupiter to the Sun see Drive 1

Drive 4: Tamworth

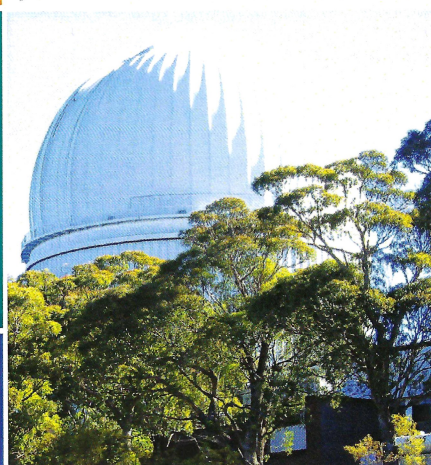
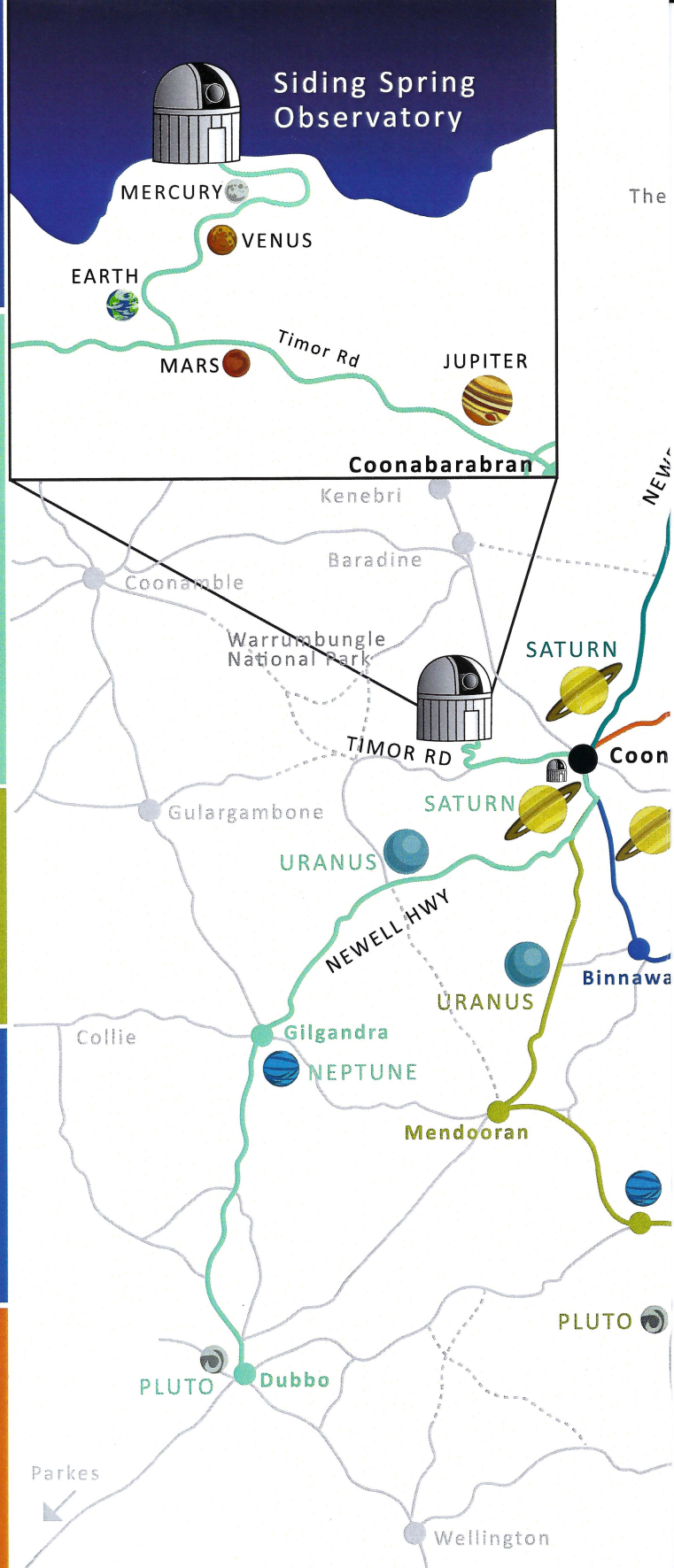
Pluto	Rest Area opposite Tamworth Airport	197
Neptune	Rural Museum Rest Area, Oxley Highway, Gunnedah	133
Uranus	Oxley Highway, Goolhi Road turn-off	79
Saturn	Oxley and Newell Highway Junction Rest Area	34

For Jupiter to the Sun see Drive 1

Drive 5: Moree

Pluto	Sugar's Park, Newell Highway, Bellata	193
Neptune	Pilliga Rest Area 2, Newell Highway, sth Narrabri	119
Uranus	Yaminbah Rest Area, Newell Highway	79
Saturn	Oxley and Newell Highway Junction Rest Area	34

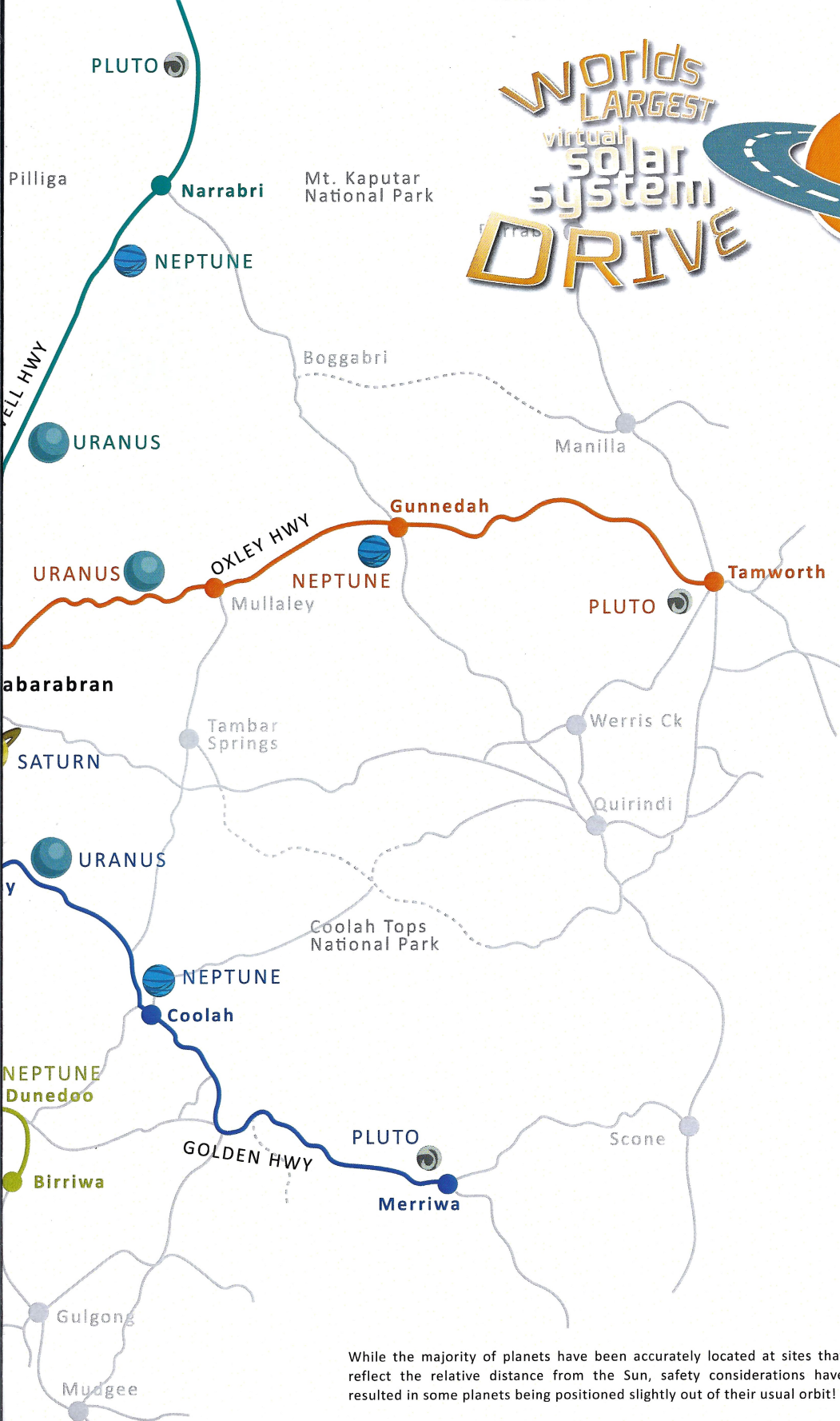
For Jupiter to the Sun see Drive 1



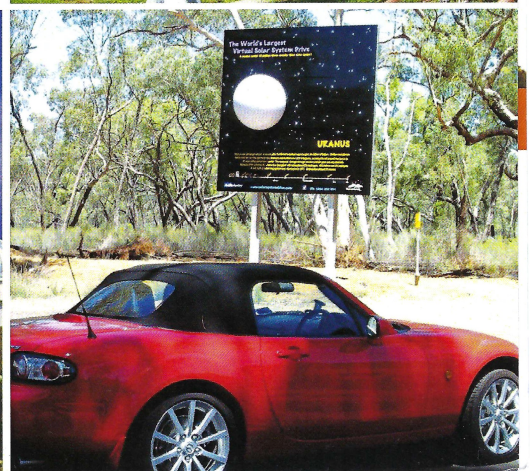
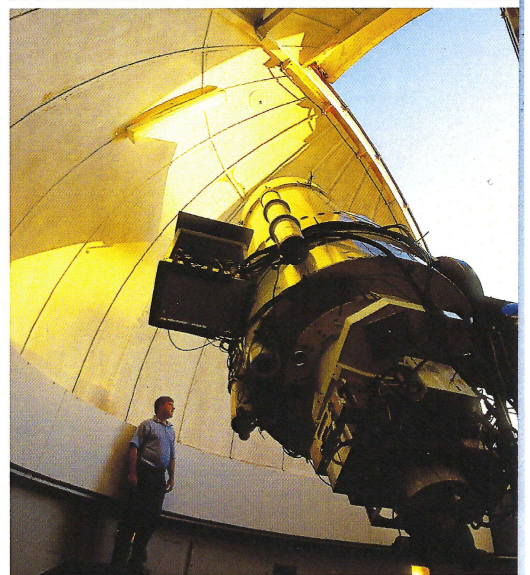
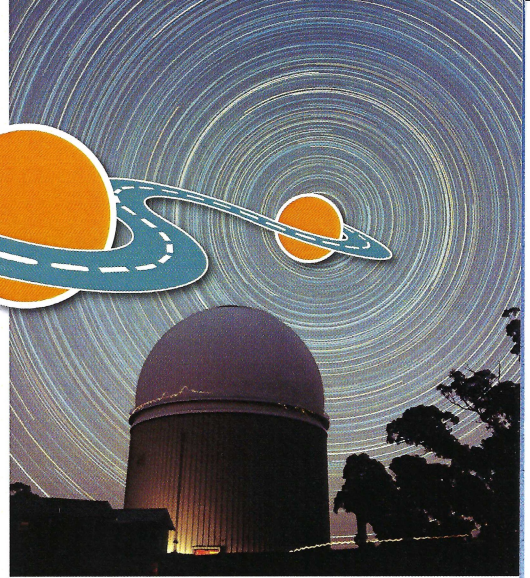
Siding Spring

Looking out from atop the Mountain Range is Siding Spring, the foremost optical research site in Australia. At Coonabarabran, the site is including the impressive Siding Spring Observatory, Australia's largest telescope. The finishing point for you

Note: Distances are approximate only



While the majority of planets have been accurately located at sites that reflect the relative distance from the Sun, safety considerations have resulted in some planets being positioned slightly out of their usual orbit!



g Observatory

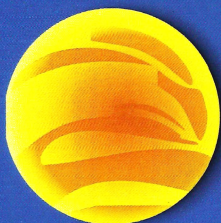
magnificent Warrumbungle Spring Observatory, Australia's centre. Located only 28km from home to more than 45 telescopes 3.9m Australian Astronomical largest optical telescope... and our solar system exploration.



The Solar System Drive is a daytime experience. Visitors are encouraged to stop at each planet in a safe manner, taking care when pulling off and back onto the roadway. Visitors please note that Siding Spring Observatory is only open during the day and operates day tours. There are opportunities to also explore the night sky with an informed astronomer, bookings essential. For further information contact the Coonabarabran Visitor Information Centre on **1800 242 881** or visit our website www.warrumbungleregion.com.au

the Sun

The centre of the Sun has a temperature of at least 15 million degrees. It takes light 8.5 minutes to travel from the Sun to the Earth.



Jupiter

Jupiter rotates about its axis in only 9 hours, 55 minutes, as compared with 23 hours, 56 minutes for Earth. Jupiter's Great Red Spot probably smells of garlic and one of Jupiter's moons (Io) looks like pizza!



Mercury

Mercury is the closest planet to the Sun, but its dark side is one of the coldest places in the Solar System, with temperatures as low as minus 173°C.



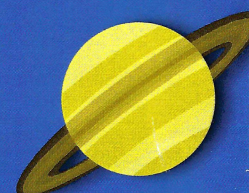
Venus

Venus is the hottest planet in the Solar System with temperatures reaching 450°C. It is so hot, that it can melt lead. Venus also probably once had oceans but they all boiled away into the atmosphere.



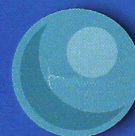
Saturn

Saturn would float if you could throw it in a bucket of water. The fascinating ring system observed by Galileo in 1610 is only beginning to be understood. First thought to be moons of Saturn, it is now known that the rings comprise trillions of ice and rock chunks ranging in size from dust particles to the size of a small car.



Uranus

First recorded in 1690 as being a star, it took 91 years for astronomers to realize that a mistake had been made and that this was the Solar System's 7th planet. Uranus takes some 84 years to orbit the Sun.



Earth

Our moon is moving away from Earth at about 3.8cm per year. There is enough railroad track on the Earth to go to the moon and back several times. Why is this planet named Earth when 71% of its surface consists of water?



Neptune

The blue colour of the planet Neptune is due to the absorption of red light by methane in the atmosphere. Neptune has stronger winds than any other planet in the Solar System with gusts up to 2,500 km/hour.



Mars

Mars is the planet that is considered the best candidate (besides Earth) to harbour life. Olympus Mons, located on Mars, is the largest volcano in the Solar System—it is 3 times higher than Mount Everest.



Pluto

Pluto is not always the furthest planet from the Sun. For 20 years of its 248-year orbit, Pluto is closer to the Sun than Neptune. In August 2006, the General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union reclassified Pluto as a "dwarf planet". This means there are now only 8 planets in our Solar System.



Did you know?

- Some rocks found on Earth are actually pieces of Mars!
- The Sun is more than 1.39 million km in diameter!
- The Sun makes up 99.86% of the Solar System's mass!
- If you were travelling along the WSVSSD in your car at 100km/hr this equates to hurtling through space at a speed of more than three times the speed of light!

Accredited Visitor Information Centres

Coonabarabran	1800 242 881	Mudgee	02 6372 1020
Dubbo	1800 674 443	Narrabri	1800 659 931
Gilgandra	02 6817 8700	Tamworth	02 6767 5300
Gunnedah	1800 562 527		
Merriwa	02 6521 7046		

Coonabarabran Visitor Information Centre

1800 242 881 for more information on the drives and the planets.

Photo credits – David Kirkland, David Malin