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PO Box 292 Mitcham Vic 3132

Phone 03 9874 7222

Fax 03 9874 7233

Email office@fwdvictoria.org.au

Website www.fwdvictoria.org.au

ABN 40 891 301 368

ASSN A0013539S

RTO 21605

Print Post PP 100005076

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TRACKWATCH

Editor Brian Tanner (*Toyota Land Cruiser Club of Victoria, Geelong FWDC*)

Email editor@fwdvictoria.org.au

Individual Contributors

Brian Tanner, Ian Fletcher, Greg Rose, Allyson Watts, Colin Oates, Garry Doyle, Penny Flett, Russell Thorsen & Andrew Mertens

Production Brian Tanner

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From the President



As you will see from the CEO's report we start the year on a very positive note, having secured financial support from the Government for the next three years, but on the down side we are in the middle of a drought, on top of which Victoria has experienced the worst fires in a decade. The Association is already looking to see what and when we can provide assistance to effected communities, and I know Clubs are also making their own plans as well. I would ask all Clubs to please coordinate and keep the office advised of any proposed activities you are looking to undertake. The Association will support and assist you where ever possible.

The fires are also a reminder of the need for caution when looking to venture out on to the tracks, and that at the end of the day our safety and that of our fellow four wheel drivers is the paramount consideration. Expect some areas to be closed so please check before you venture out.

The office is doing a great job of using the various mediums of social media to keep our Affiliated Clubs, as well as that of the broader community up to date and informed. TrackWatch is another important tool in how we communicate and inform, and going forward we will look to see how it's value can be enhanced. Please don't forget we are always grateful to receive trip reports or other relevant material, on club activities to be included in Trackwatch.

The future and structure of the National entity is expected to become clearer after a meeting of the States in late April. Once the Board has been updated it will review any proposals forthcoming on future direction and structure and update the membership accordingly.

We continue to put a lot of effort into our RTO, which is paying off with new

courses coming on line and demand in general growing. Our long-term plan remains for the RTO to be the major revenue generating vehicle for the Association.

As a member of the Ministerial Advisory Committee the strategic plan provides direction and agreed outcomes with the Land Managers and Government. One such common objective is the revitalisation of the iconic drives. Along with this is the desire to undertake a comprehensive survey of four wheel drive user expectations and experiences. This is planned to be undertaken before the end of this year.

It is going to be a busy year for the Association, continuing to represent the interest of our Clubs. With any new Government comes the challenge of getting to know and be known by the new faces and ensuring the old ones don't forget and overlook us. In the meantime don't miss our member update days ensuring your Club is up to date with the latest news and events.

Michael Martin
President

Moving house soon? Changed your contact details?

We want to make sure you keep receiving Trackwatch.

If you are moving house or your details such as email address have changed, could you please let us know.

Just send an email to projects@fwdvictoria or call the FWDV office on 03 98747222. Many thanks.

Ian Fletcher (FWDV)

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SUSPENSION KITS

Three Shock Absorber Options

Make and Model	Nitro Gas	Foam Cell	Foam Cell Pro
FORD			
Courier	\$1540	\$1760	\$2024
Everest 2015+	\$1023	\$1177	\$1529
Ranger 2011+	\$1617	\$1771	\$2123
Ranger 2006-2011	\$1540	\$1760	\$2024
HOLDEN			
Colorado 2012+	\$1639	\$1793	\$2145
Colorado 2003-2012	\$1540	\$1760	
Colorado 7 / Trailblazer	\$990	\$1144	\$1496
Jackaroo UBS 25 & 69	\$1012	\$1232	
Rodeo KB/TFS/RA/RA7	\$1540	\$1760	
ISUZU			
D-Max 2012+	\$1639	\$1793	\$2145
D-Max 2003-2012	\$1540	\$1760	
MU-X 2014+	\$990	\$1144	\$1496
JEEP			
Grand Cherokee WG/WJ	\$880		
Grand Cherokee ZG/ZJ	\$880		
Cherokee Liberty KJ	\$990		
Cherokee XJ	\$1518	\$1738	
Wrangler JK	\$880		\$1364
Wrangler TJ	\$880		
LANDROVER			
Defender County / Dual Cab	\$880	\$1100	\$1364
Range Rover / Discovery	\$880	\$1100	\$1364
MAZDA			
BT50 2011+	\$1617	\$1771	\$2123
BT50 2006-2012	\$1540	\$1760	\$2024
B Series Bravo	\$1540	\$1760	\$2024
MERCEDES BENZ			
G Wagen		\$1166	
G Wagen G55		\$1166	
X-Class	\$1067	\$1221	\$1573
MITSUBISHI			
Pajero Sport 2015+	\$990	\$1144	
Pajero NM-NX	\$990		
Pajero NH-NL (Coil)	\$1012	\$1232	
Pajero NH-NL (Leaf)	\$1540	\$1760	
Challenger PB/Pajero Sport	\$990	\$1144	
Challenger PA (Coil)	\$1012	\$1232	
Challenger PA (Leaf)	\$1540	\$1760	
Delica, L400	\$1012		
Triton MQ/MR	\$1650	\$1804	
Triton ML/MN	\$1518	\$1672	
L200/Triton ME/MK	\$1540	\$1760	
NISSAN			
Navara NP300 (Coil)	\$1067	\$1221	\$1573
Navara D40 / NP300 (Leaf)	\$1518	\$1672	\$2024
Navara D22	\$1540		
Navara D21	\$1540	\$1760	
Pathfinder R51	\$990	\$1144	
Pathfinder WD21/Terrano	\$1012	\$1232	
Y62 Patrol	\$1023	\$1177	\$1529
GU Y61 Wagon	\$891	\$1111	\$1375
GQ Y60/GU Y61 Cab Chassis (Coil)	\$891	\$1111	\$1375
GQ Y60/GU Y61 Cab Chassis (Coil/Leaf) (Leaf)	\$2200	\$2420	\$2684
GQ SWB/LWB	\$880	\$1100	\$1364
Patrol MQ/MK G160	\$1980		

Make and Model	Nitro Gas	Foam Cell	Foam Cell Pro
SUZUKI			
Sierra LJ, SJ	\$1474		
Vitara / Grand Vitara	\$1012		
Jimny	\$880		
TOYOTA			
4Runner Gen 3/4/5	\$990	\$1144	\$1496
Hilux LN/RN/YN/VZN 130 V6 Gen 2	\$946	\$1122	
4Runner LN 61/YN63 Gen 1	\$1529	\$1749	
FJ Cruiser	\$990	\$1144	\$1573
Hilux 2015+	\$1562	\$1716	\$2068
Hilux 2005-2015	\$1518	\$1672	\$2101
Hilux LN/RN 107/110/111/167/SR5	\$1540	\$1760	
Hilux LN/RN/YN 65/105/106	\$1650	\$1870	
Fortuner 2015+	\$1012	\$1166	\$1595
Landcruiser VDJ/UZJ 200	\$1045	\$1199	\$1507
Landcruiser HDJ/UZJ 100 IFS	\$1111	\$1331	\$1595
Landcruiser HJ/HZJ 80/105	\$880	\$1100	\$1364
Landcruiser Dual Cab 79	\$1804	\$2024	\$2288
Landcruiser HZJ 78/79	\$1738	\$1958	\$2222
Landcruiser HZJ 76	\$1738	\$1958	\$2222
Landcruiser FJ/HJ/HZJ 75	\$2156	\$2376	\$2640
Landcruiser Bundera LJ 70/73	\$880	\$1100	
Landcruiser FJ/HJ 60/61/62	\$1914	\$2134	\$2398
Landcruiser FJ 45/47	\$2288	\$2508	\$2772
Landcruiser FJ/BJ 40/42/46	\$1914	\$2134	\$2398
Prado 90/95	\$990	\$1144	\$1496
Prado 120/150	\$990	\$1144	\$1573
VOLKSWAGEN			
Amarok	\$1518		
OTHER MODELS			
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Hyundai Terracan	\$1060		
JMC Vigus	\$1518	\$1672	\$2024
LDV T60	\$1661	\$1815	\$2167
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TRACK CLEARING IN THE BRISBANE RANGES



There was always the possibility it would be hot. The week leading up to the scheduled track clearing weekend saw record high temperatures all across Australia and so the chance of bushfires was extreme. The Brisbane Ranges are so dry there is simply no moisture anywhere - but there's a need to clear tracks so that if something unforeseen does happen, our fire fighters have a good chance of getting access.

I had met with the Rangers from Bacchus Marsh several times in the lead up to Christmas offering the services of two clubs. Eureka Ballarat which is my club and the Ballarat District 4WD Club. We organised for a number of MVO tracks to be cleared and were given access to camp at one of the campsites normally reserved for walk-in campers. The tracks we cleared were the walking track sections that included vehicle access and the boundary track running along the edge of the forest and adjacent farmland. The directions were that we needed 4 metres wide, 4 metres high and to last for 4 years before needing to be cleared again. This is so our Land Managers can get their Unimog fire trucks in.

Between the two clubs we had 22 people in 14 vehicles volunteer for the weekend. Amongst us were 7 with chainsaw licences who included Alicia

from the District Club and Anthony Holden, a Eureka member who is a qualified arborist. Anthony could bring down the trees that needed to be felled and the rest of us cut them up and moved them off the tracks. It was really great to have a large group of ladies also providing assistance including Alicia with a chainsaw licence, so it

made dividing the group very easy. We met in camp on Friday night with a crew arriving on Saturday morning before the safety briefing. The weather also turned kind for us and a cool change came through on Friday afternoon, so working conditions were very pleasant.





We monitored our safety procedures and all those cutting had correct PPE. Others also had high-vis so we certainly stood out in the forest. The District Club also provided a number of fire extinguishers so at the first sight of sparks we would be right on to it. The first track proved to be straight forward to the point where we divided the group into two and attacked both tracks simultaneously. We planned to meet at lunch time and check on progress. When we



did catch up, both of us had finished the designated tracks so there wasn't anything left to do.

We did a recce and found more tracks in the immediate area, so these were tackled after lunch, and at the end of the day all tracks in our designated area were cleared. We also explored an historic mine site that we came across. This is the value of being given access to tracks that are not normally open. Not only did we clear the tracks, but Anthony was able to remove any dead

overhanging trees with his pole saw. Now the tracks were clear and safe!

A great weekend because we could relax on Saturday evening before packing up for home on Sunday morning. There will be more of this summer track clearing as the months progress as in reality it's something that should go on all year. Thanks to Phoenix and Stuart from Parks Victoria and to the volunteers from the two clubs from Ballarat.

Garry Doyle
Ballarat 4WD Club

ANSWER THE CALL OF THE WILD



4WD modifications are becoming increasingly popular. Enthusiasts are modifying ECU's, fitting oversized tyres and upgrading exhaust system amongst a host of potential enhancements.

As a result, it is important that the improved vehicle performance is not compromised by the standard clutch. It is critical to check to ensure the system is capable of handling the increased load being transmitted through the drivetrain. Failure to do so can result in clutch slip and premature wear.

EXEDY's Safari Tuff 4WD clutch range is designed help overcome these issues.

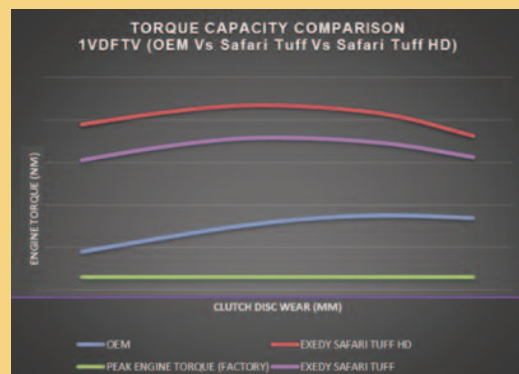
EXEDY has several options in its range for light commercial and 4WD vehicles seeking something stronger than the standard clutch system. The Safari Tuff Clutch is the "next level" again which is suitable for the 4WD enthusiast who enjoys hill-climbing on the weekends or towing a heavier load such as a van or boat.

At the top end is the Safari Tuff Heavy Duty Clutch which boasts the highest torque capacity in the range and which is suitable for vehicles fitted with a performance chip, oversized tyres or exhaust upgrades and for vehicles engaged in more demanding 4WD activities such as Winch Challenge events.

EXEDY has released Safari Tuff Heavy duty clutch kits for Toyota Landcruiser, Hilux and Prado applications as well as Nissan Patrol, Mitsubishi Triton and Holden Colorado. More applications are being developed continuously.

If you are putting increased torque through your drivetrain and don't mind asking your vehicle for that little bit more, insist on an EXEDY performance clutch for your 4WD.

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Amarok Club of Victoria

Cycling for MS

‘Sometimes, life throws the most unexpected curve ball – it’s what you do with the ball when you catch it that determines what happens next.’

One of the founding members of the Amarok Club of Victoria was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in 2016, and as a Club, we have decided to embrace the challenge and enter a team into the MS Melbourne Cycle and 1/2 Marathon to increase awareness of MS, and to hopefully help to find a cure for our mate.

Just imagine your day starting off at 3.30 every morning, because you have continual troubles sleeping – often feeling like you’re sleeping in a sauna, despite it being cold, having pins and needles when your feet shouldn’t be asleep, and being constantly

exhausted. These are just a few of the symptoms in the everyday life of my best mate.

Other sufferers of Multiple Sclerosis experience daily issues with

Motor Control – muscular spasms and problems with weakness, co-ordination, balance and function of the arms and legs

Fatigue – including heat sensitivity

Other Neurological Symptoms – including vertigo, pins and needles, neuralgia and visual disturbances

Continence Problems – including

bladder incontinence and constipation
Neuropsychological Symptoms – including depression, cognitive difficulties and short or long-term memory loss

So, getting back to that ball, and what you do with it, the Amarok Club of Victoria are rallying behind the cause, and participating in the MS Melbourne Cycle and 1/2 Marathon in a 30km or 50km bike ride, encompassing the West Gate Bridge, or a 3km or 6km family ride around Flemington Race Course, or running a 1/2 Marathon.

One in 1000 Australians are directly impacted by MS, so there is a good chance you know someone who has MS, even if you’re unaware of it. With the support the MS Society provides, our loved ones who have been diagnosed with MS are able to lead fulfilled lives and stay out on the tracks.

We are seeking to raise as much awareness for this cause as possible, and if you have some spare coffee money, we would love it were you able to make a tax-deductible donation to the MS Society so they can provide as much support to those who live with MS as possible.

Our Team fund raising page is at <https://www.msmelbournecycle.org.au/index.cfm?fuseaction=donorDrive.team&teamID=6396>, and we would greatly appreciate any donation that may help find a cure for our mate.





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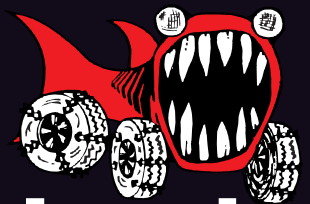
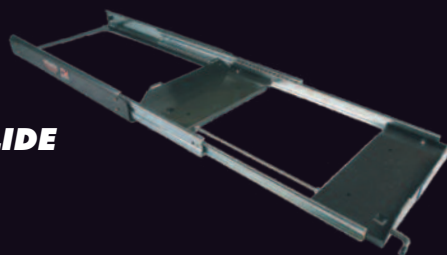
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News from FWDV CEO

We start the new year knowing that we have been successful in securing funding for a further 3 years from the government commencing July 1st this year. This indicates the enormous respect we have gained regarding the volunteer activities carried out by you all each year. I commend and thank each club member for making this achievable by not only completing the tasks at hand but also for taking the trouble to record details which allow the totals to be compiled by our amazing statistician. 2019 has started with a real explosion of activity, firstly with the number of activities filling up our calendar from meetings with Land Managers and Politicians from both sides of the house, through to quotes and delivery of our training courses which have shown a marked increase over the last twelve months. Our staff in the office are certainly working hard to keep you all informed on every aspect of what we do via not only

this magazine but also through the social media pages such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter so please look to these mediums for current up to date news. Any items that you would like passed on to other members, send through to the office and we will look to facilitate this action for you. Club activities are also looking to be very positive from indications coming through to us here in the office which is very encouraging, from trips and gatherings being planned to be organizing more auspicious occasions such as club anniversaries. On this point, please let the office know if your club is celebrating an important anniversary at any time soon so we can help recognize the event for you. Unfortunately, the outbreak of fire around the state has forced the postponement of many club activities as the State Emergency Services try to contain, extinguish and mop up those affected areas. This means we will need to be patient about venturing into those areas because of the risk management issues

associated with fire burnt trees etc. More importantly we will need to muster our resources and offer help and assistance in the rebuilding of fences and other essential requirements to help resurrect people's livelihoods and existence in general. There will be more to follow in this regard as time moves on, I ask that you offer support whenever you can if possible and please contact the office so we can gather groups to be allocated tasks into regions rather than have a scatter gun approach from good natured volunteers. Our member update days are a worthwhile event to be a part of from the point of view of hearing first hand what we are up to but also and importantly for you to ask those questions which have been bothering you. I hope to see a representative from your club at these occasions to ensure information is gained and then shared with fellow members after the event.

Wayne Hevey CEO

Four Wheel Drive Victoria on Social Media

Our social media pages have been running hot with over 7250 followers on our public Facebook page. We have also developed a new closed Facebook Group which is just for our affiliated club members so we can post information that is only relevant to you, our members. If you would like faster communication from Four Wheel Drive Victoria the closed Facebook page is the place for you. You will need to answer the questions to be accepted. The public page is for exposure to the general public and information of a more general nature is published and shared. If your club would like to publicize an event or club activity just contact the office or email projects@fwdvictoria.org.au. Social media is seen as the quickest and easiest communication of information in these modern times and we encourage all our members to use and follow our pages. We are also active on Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. Google is the prime source of enquiries to our website closely followed by Facebook and we encourage you to do a Google search for us and complete an independent review on Google and Facebook which will raise our profile even further. Obviously 5 Stars if you think we do a great job

Warrnambool 4WD Club Otway tour



The Warrnambool 4WD Club took off for a fun filled day in the Otways. There were 7 vehicles in convoy carrying members who were eager to take off early in the morning despite the wind and the rain. We all knew that the rain was going to make the tracks muddy and slippery but we were all up for the challenge. It was a mixed crew that day varying from experienced drivers who knew their vehicles well to new members who were eager to see what their rig was capable of doing. One vehicle was not equipped with a winch at all but was carefully winched or snatched by other vehicles up most of the slippery terrains with ease and without damage. The whole day was a great experience and we would all agree that when our car made it to the top of a hill it was hailed a little victory! It was also a big winching day and the new members were able to help set up and learn the safety aspects of vehicle recovery.

Penny Flett - Trip Coordinator. Warrnambool 4WD Club



Murrindindi and

When you are planning a getaway not too far from Melbourne, there are some delightful spots just north of our big city. The Murrindindi District and Upper Goulburn areas have a range of different opportunities for 4WDing, camping, swimming, fishing, water skiing or just chilling out.

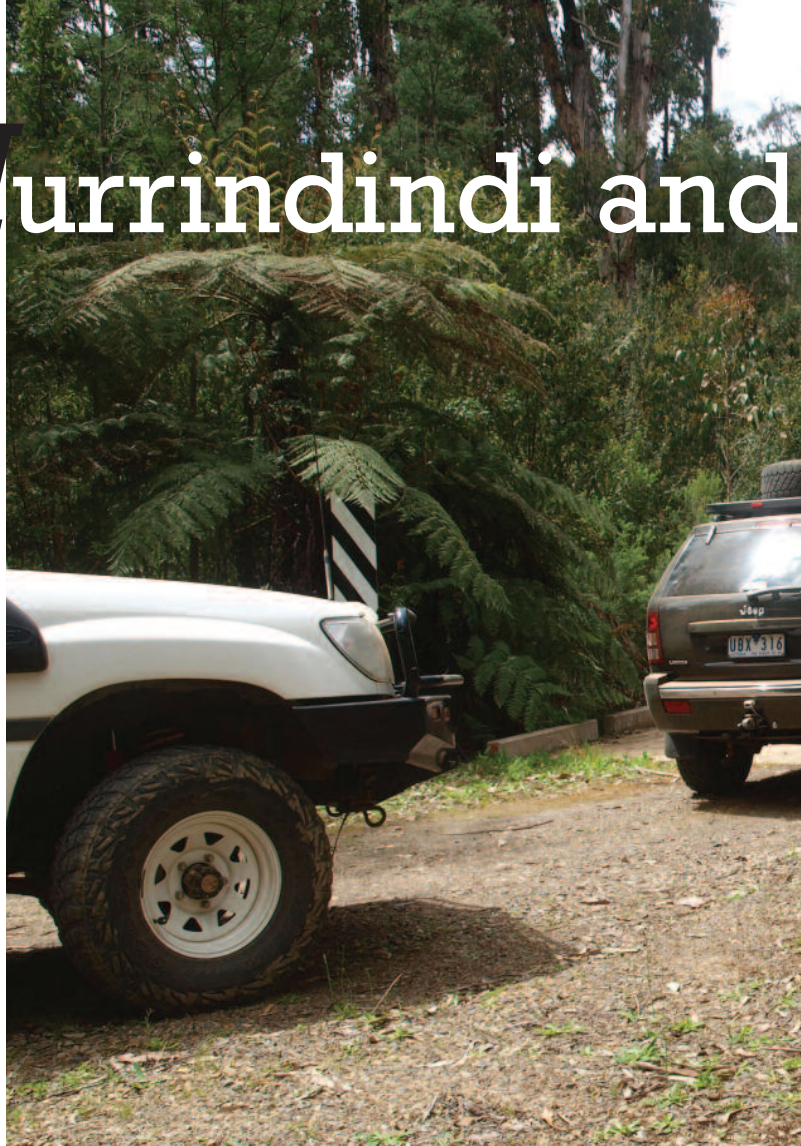
A number of rivers run north towards the Goulburn River and Lake Eildon from these areas, many of which have attractive camping spots on their banks. Leisure activities can easily be enjoyed at many places along the Big, Torbreck, Rubicon and Acheron rivers.

These cool, clear flowing rivers run through the Big River, Rubicon and Marysville State Forests. Many smaller creeks feed these rivers and also provide idyllic camping locations for families and groups or just

one or two campers.

Following the Maroondah Highway from Melbourne leads to a number of country towns along the way. The Narbethong Hotel, north of the Black Spur, is a familiar stop where food, refreshment and an overnight stop is possible. Taking the Marysville turn-off, a little north of Narbethong will get you to a place which is making a remarkable recovery from the 2009 bushfires. The colours of the bush and the new buildings make a pretty vista of a town on the Steavenson River beckoning travellers to stop. This town is a great place with plenty on offer for eating out, walking, 4WDing and many more outdoor activities.

Taking the road north from Marysville gives an opportunity to visit the Buxton trout and salmon farm before



BIG4 Taggerty Holiday Park

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- Toolangi State Forest
- Rubicon State Forest
- Big River
- Black Range State Forest
- Strathbogie Ranges

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arriving at Taggerty, located on the Acheron River. A little north of town along the Maroondah Highway, the Taggerty Holiday Park is waiting to welcome those looking for a place to stay so the surrounding countryside can be explored. Enjoyable and challenging four wheel driving can be pursued in the nearby Cathedral Ranges, Lake Eildon and Yarra Ranges National Parks and Big River, Rubicon and

Marysville State Forests while staying at the Taggerty Holiday Park. Good facilities, plenty of sites – powered and unpowered - make this a good base camp from which to run four wheel drive trips for your club.

Another option is the Murrindindi Scenic Reserve which offers bush camping for all sorts of rigs and has easy access to tracks in the Toolangi and Black Range Forests.



Broken Gate Tweed Spur Track

Upper Goulburn



The Murrindindi Project, operating in the Murrindindi District and the Upper Goulburn areas, managed by Four Wheel Drive Victoria, works through the Regional Representatives Network.

The network is made up of FWDV club members, who work closely with DELWP and PV staff, to develop relationships and make it known club members are available to help, when requested by our Land Managers. There may be times when an appropriate suggestion can be helpful too. This project has run working bees and track clearing work over the last two years.

The Murrindindi Project track clearing work has now become part of the FWDV calendar each year, where the last couple of weekends in October are set aside for work in the Murrindindi District and the Upper Goulburn areas.

If you or your club are interested in being involved in the Murrindindi Project you may contact me via the FWDV office.

**Colin Oates - Offpeak 4WD Club
FWDV Regional Representative –
Murrindindi District & Upper
Goulburn**

Left: Tweed Spur Track



Pinnacle Track and Gap Track



The Wonnangatta Valley is a special place to be. It is a wide long valley surrounded by magnificent mountain scenery, with dozens of excellent places to camp. The valley, even in modern times, is remote and only accessible via four wheel drive tracks of varying difficulty. The mystery of the unsolved 1917/18 murders of Wonnangatta Station manager James (Jim) Barclay and farm hand/cook John Bamford, add to the Wonnangatta experience. The Wonnangatta Valley regularly features in the four wheel drive media and has become a “must do” destination for four wheel drive tourers from all over Australia.

The Wonnangatta Iconic Drive is one of “Victoria’s Iconic 4WD Adventures” promoted by Four Wheel Drive Victoria and Parks Victoria. An overview route planning map and track notes are available online.

Parks Victoria Area Chief Ranger for the Southern Alps, Mike Dower, states, *“The Wonnangatta Iconic Four Wheel Drive Experience is one of the countries most recognised and high profile journeys. The work that Parks Victoria has done in collaboration with Four Wheel Drive Victoria in recent years has further enhanced the experience. We will continue to improve associated camping and day visitor assets and manage the network of four-wheel drive tracks into the future along with our partners. Our Rangers and volunteers are now encountering people from all over Australia who are here to add the Wonnangatta Icon Drive to the bucket list alongside the Simpson Desert and Cape York experiences”.*

There is however more to the Wonnangatta Iconic Drive than the valley itself. In this basic guide some of the places of interest and good campsites are detailed.

Grant.

In its heyday in the 1860s Grant was the centre of the Crooked River goldfields. In 1865 there were fifteen hotels, a church, courthouse, a number of stores supplying food, household goods and mining equipment and a weekly newspaper. The population was thought to have peaked at approximately 2000. The surrounding gold mines were quite sophisticated with networks of tunnels into the hills. There were tramways, stationary steam engines and crushing mills. The gold period only lasted about ten years.

Grant today has some excellent interpretive signage to make sense of the town layout. It’s a great spot for a lunch stopover and wander about. There is a long drop toilet near the main information board.

Talbotville.

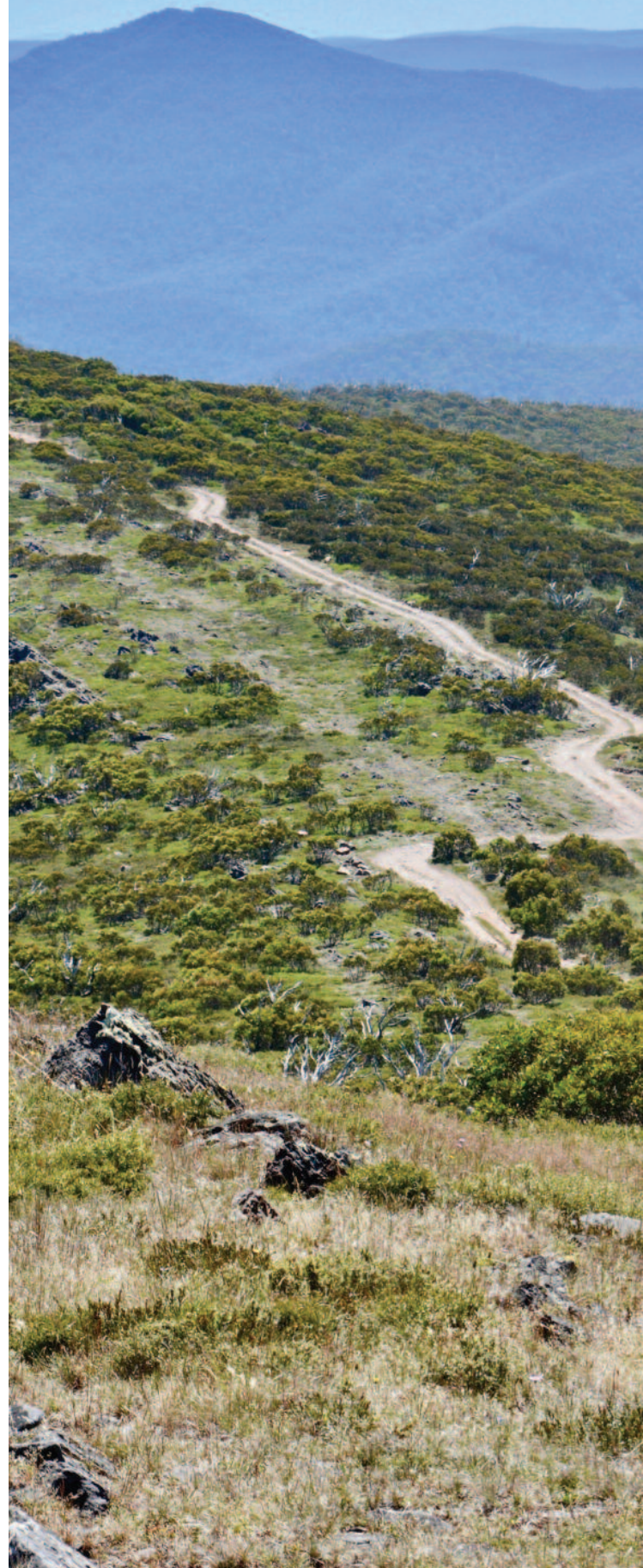
One of the best camping areas along the Wonnangatta Drive, Talbotville is a large grassy valley beside Crooked River. Established in the goldfields days there was a formally set out village and some small farming ventures. The cemetery is a short walk up McMillan Road from the camping area. Talbotville is a great place for a summer camp as there are some deeper spots in the river for escaping the heat of the day. Currently there is only one long drop toilet at Talbotville. In recent years volunteers from the Land Rover Owners Club of Gippsland and Parks Victoria staff have built picnic tables and concrete fire rings. A worthwhile loop drive from a base camp at Talbotville is along the Crooked River Track with its many river crossings. Take time to walk up to the New Good Hope Mine part way along the track. Continue up Bulltown Spur, then down Collingwood Spur and back to camp. The Talbotville Camping Area is within the Grant Historic Reserve and adjacent to the Alpine National Park.

Eaglevale.

An excellent easily accessible camping area beside the Wonnangatta River. There is a long drop toilet and some new tables and fire rings. Eaglevale has plenty of camping room along the flat grassy clearing and shade trees for hot days. From Eaglevale it is a short distance to Billy Goat Bluff Track for a day

Wonnangatta

Report and images by Greg Rose



Iconic Drive



drive to the Pinnacles Lookout. Crossing the river at Eaglevale onto the steep but short Eaglevale Track, Cynthia Range Track can be reached for a drive into Wonnangatta Valley via Wombat Range Track or the steeper Herne Spur Track.

Billy Goat Bluff Track.

Signposted as double black diamond, difficult, the track is a long steep climb. There are two stages to the track. From the bottom, where there is an interpretive sign board, the track climbs to a helipad. The views from the helipad are quite spectacular. From the helipad to the top of the track is a long steady climb ending in a rocky narrow neck, great for photos, before the track levels out.

Pinnacles Lookout.

After the low range climb up Billy Goat Bluff Track or a drive along the two wheel drive Moroka Road and Pinnacles Road there is a small carpark and some picnic tables near the Pinnacles. The walk out to the rocky crag is steep in places, but there are steps and it is reasonably short. The views are spectacular. On a day of good visibility, it is possible to see the Gippsland Lakes to the south and Mt Hotham to the north. There is a fire spotting lookout at the Pinnacles.

Horseyard Flat Camping Area.

The camping area is beside the Moroka



River. There are several camp sites dotted among the trees, many featuring new tables and fire rings, once again constructed by the Land Rover Owners Club of Gippsland volunteers. There is a long drop toilet built by the Macalister Four Wheel Drive Club many years ago. From the camping area there is a walk through snow gum woodland into Moroka Falls, a series of waterfalls. The walk to the first of the falls is fairly easy. The terrain beyond the first falls into the Gorge gets more difficult as there is no marked route to follow the river downstream.

Moroka Hut.

A fine example of a typical cattleman's hut. The hut was built in 1946, by bushmen and cattlemen, who had just returned from World War Two. The construction is a good example of saddle notching, a stable method of



corner notching and one requiring great skill with an axe. With its log and corrugated iron construction, it is a classic design. The hut can be most easily accessed from the small carpark on the Moroka Road. There is a short walk through open forest, crossing a footbridge over the narrow Moroka River, to the grassy clearing where the hut sits.

Dimmick Lookout.

Accessed from the Howitt Road via a short two wheel drive track, Dimmick Lookout is quite stunning. There are views down into the valleys and across the many peaks on the horizon. A good lunch spot on the drive along Howitt Road.

Guys Hut and the Bryces Gorge Circuit.

Guys is a classic and historic cattle man's hut at the end of a walk from a

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carpark on the Howitt Road. There is a longer walk, the Bryces Gorge Circuit, from the hut to view Conglomerate and Pieman Falls. Gaiters are a good choice of safety wear as the track meanders over tussocky country with some wet spots much loved by reptiles. The Guys Hut carpark makes a good picnic or overnight camp location. There are some fireplaces, picnic tables and a long drop toilet.

Howitt Hut and Howitt Plains.

It is believed the original hut was built by the Bryce family in the early 1900s. In the 1930s an iron roof was installed covering the shingle roof, which can still be seen today. The plains behind the hut are interesting to stumble through; there are lots of grassy clumps and rocks. The Caledonia River, a mere rill at this point, gurgles through the plains. The hut has a link to the Wonnangatta murders. The body of John Bamford was found near where the hut stands. Around Howitt Hut carpark there are some shady spots to camp and a long drop toilet.

The high altitude plains along the Howitt Road are fine examples of snowgrass and herb field plains. They are fragile plains and environmentally important and should not be driven over. A fantastic area for photographers when the plants are in bloom.

The places above are all shown on the Wonnangatta Iconic Drive map. The following points of interest are not shown, but well worth visiting.

McFarlane Saddle.

The highest altitude point on the Moroka Road. The shady carpark is generally used by bushwalkers as the northern trail head for the Tali Karng network of walking tracks. It makes a good rest point and there is a long drop toilet.

Mt Wellington and Millers Hut.

The mountain is off the Wonnangatta Drive however it makes a day trip destination from a base camp at Horseyard Flat. The drive to the summit is rocky and slow. The rewards are views to the south over the Avon Wilderness Area and the peaks to the north. The 1634m summit is marked by a cairn. There are jagged rock features that make excellent photo foregrounds. Driving further on from the summit the track reaches Millers Hut. This is another classic style cattleman's hut with some good areas for camping nearby.

Kelly Lane.

As an alternative to driving all of the Tamboritha Road to Arbuckle Junction and then onto Howitt Road, Kelly Lane is an interesting route that links the two roads. There is camping at Thomastown just off Tamboritha Road and a long



drop toilet. Crossing the little wooden bridge over Shaw Creek the track passes some pleasant small grassy campsites. McMichaels Hut and Kelly Hut are along the lane. McMichaels, the more recently built of the two, is reached via a track leading down to Shaw Creek. There is a fire ring at the hut. Kelly Hut is much older and has a great setting. There is a parking area and picnic table at Kelly Hut. An interpretive sign board explains the importance of the surrounding peatland. Near the end of Kelly Lane there is another good sheltered camping area accessed by a track before the concrete bridge.

Vallejo Gantner Hut.

Just north of Zeka Spur Track is the small carpark for the Mt Howitt Walking Track. There is a long drop toilet hidden in the trees. Vallejo Gantner Hut is about an hour's walk from the carpark. The refuge hut is a modern "A" frame design and was built in the 1970s. The really unique aspect of the hut is the "Loo With A View". Sit a while and contemplate the awesome vista. Beyond Gantner Hut you can follow a well defined walking track skirting the headwaters of the Wonnangatta River in under the Crosscut Saw to the summit of Mount Howitt. The walk requires all hikers to be prepared for Alpine conditions.

Lost Plain Picnic Area.

Near Arbuckle Junction on Tamboritha Road is Lost Plain. The plain used to be a popular cross-country skiing area in the 1980s. There is a carpark, picnic tables and another well hidden long drop toilet. This plain is a great spot for wildflowers in the spring.

Bennison Lookout.

This lookout is easy to find as it's right on the Tamboritha Road. The fact that it's right on the road means that you can get covered in dust from passing traffic while you photograph the scenery. There are views across to the Sentinels and Gable End.

In order to make the most of the Wonnangatta Iconic Drive it should be undertaken over a few days. Consider the following points in your planning.

- Many of the tracks are rated as "difficult".
- There are river crossings.
- On some tracks there are steep rock climbs.
- Clay surfaces on some steep tracks could be dangerous after rain.
- Seasonal closures apply on many of the access roads and four wheel drive tracks along the route.
- The drive should not be attempted in days of extreme fire ratings.
- The drive traverses remote areas requiring mechanically sound high clearance vehicles with good fuel range.
- Mobile phone coverage is "patchy".
- Be prepared for self sufficient all weather camping.

There are several access routes to join the drive. The most popular entry points are:

- From Heyfield through Licola.
- From Dargo.
- From Myrtleford or Porepunkah.

There are some excellent books about the High Country and Wonnangatta Valley in particular. Hema and Rooftop have maps of the area. Parks Victoria's parkweb.vic.gov.au is a good source of up to date information on conditions and closures.

Allow plenty of time for your next Wonnangatta adventure and explore some of the best four wheel driving experiences and destinations in the High Country.

Thanks to Mike Dower and all the Parks Victoria Foothills and Southern Alps team for their assistance in putting this article together.

Greg Rose.

**FWDV Regional Representative,
Southern Alpine National Park.**



Victorian Four Wheel Drive Show

Lardner Park, Warragul. Sunday 17 February 2019

After a finding a new home last year, February rolled around again all too soon it seemed, and the Victorian Four Wheel Drive Show was upon us once more.

Saturday saw the many volunteers from the Land Rover owners Club of Victoria, the show's organisers, working away flat out, seeing exhibitors to their sites and putting finishing touches to the grounds. Exhibitors rolled in in dribs and drabs, wandering off to their sites to begin setting up in anticipation of a profitable day to come.

Dave Roberts, Board member and office volunteer, Colin Oates, FWDV Vice-President, and Ian Fletcher, FWDV Projects Officer, set up the FWDV site in the marquis, almost in the middle of the whole show, ready to tell the world about FWDV, who we are and what we do, and our constituent clubs. It was hard work in the hot and humid conditions.

Then as evening fell, the volunteers and those staying on-site overnight, gathered for a meal. And what a wonderful feast it was! Beautiful roasts and veggies and gravy cooked to perfection, with a choice of deserts to follow. A great time of catching up with old friends and making new ones. Thank you to all those who helped make the evening such a success. And so done, people drifted off to bed for the night.

Sunday morning dawned cooler, but still and humid. A thick fog covered all, cutting visibility to less than 15 metres at times. But that would burn off and be gone as the sun rose. People roused from their sleep, began to filter around the site as other exhibitors arrived and set up as well. Breakfast was the order of the day and lines quickly formed at the food vendors for coffee and egg and bacon rolls.

On the FWDV site, Dave, Colin, Ian, and Alison McLaughlin, our office manager having arrived, were ready to face the world. Our President Michael Martin and one of our Trainers, Greg Corfield also arrived to help out as well as representatives from Parks Vic, DELWP and Affinity Insurance

Brokers, three of our partner organisations, were there in support with DELWP providing a Mercedes Unimog fire truck for display alongside our Amarok and they drew large crowds. Parks and DELWP also had another site where they had another Unimog and a couple of G-Wagen fire trucks, again drawing large crowds, showing that the public is interested in what they do and why.

Things started slowly, due to the more spread out site taking longer to negotiate and the public to filter through. But as the morning progressed, we became busier, with a steady stream of visitors enquiring about a range of subjects and even queries about forming clubs and joining the Association were fielded. Parks, DELWP and Affinity also had many queries and conversations with the public. Many other club members dropped to say hello and have a chat. Traffic was brisk, but by mid-afternoon, things were beginning to slow and eventually petered out just before closing. The Parks and DELWP staff were impressed by what they saw and the level of public interest. They said that they would like to come back and do it again next year.

A quick pack-up and we were gone by just after 4:30. A big thank you to all the volunteers, LROCV and the many other exhibitors for hosting a successful event, and we look forward to a bigger and better event in 2020.



“...as the morning progressed, we became busier, with a steady stream of visitors enquiring about a range of subjects and even queries about forming clubs and joining the Association...”



Gippsland Land Rover's New Facility

Gippsland Jaguar Land Rover has moved to a new facility relocating from Morwell to 5535 Princes Highway Traralgon. The exciting new complex features showroom space for Jaguar and Land Rover products, a dedicated vehicle delivery room, customer lounge area, sales office, service reception, state of the art workshop, spare parts and merchandise areas. There is even a free electric vehicle charging point available for customers. The eight-bay workshop is home to the factory trained technicians

able to service and repair all Land Rover models. Utilising the showroom and forecourt space twenty new vehicles can be displayed. The 1400 square metre building, costing over three million dollars, indicates that the management have confidence in the brands and the local economy. Fifteen people have a hand in the day to day operation of Gippsland Jaguar Land Rover.

The Gippsland Land Rover dealers have had a long and close association with four wheel drive owners. The Land Rover Owners Club of

Gippsland enjoys full financial support from Gippsland Land Rover covering all club running costs and providing a meeting venue. Sales Manager Charlie Calafiore has been a very active member since the formation of the club in 1994. Gippsland Land Rover are supporters of Four Wheel Drive Victoria and Trackwatch advertisers.

Reflecting the Land Rover Owners Club of Gippsland's association with Gippsland Land Rover Club, members were invited to display their Land Rovers at the public

open day of the new facility on the 9th of February. Cars from the Jaguar Owners Club were also featured on the day. It was an interesting exercise in style and function to wander from a 1950s Series 1 Land Rover to a Jaguar of the same period. The staff at Gippsland Jaguar Land Rover would be happy to show you around the facility, so drop in if you are passing.

Greg Rose.
President, Land Rover Owners Club of Gippsland.



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PROFICIENCY COURSES



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Saturday 6th April - PC190406 - Practical

Tuesday 30th April - PC190504 - Theory

Saturday 4th May - PC190504 - Practical

Tuesday 28th May - PC190601 - Theory

Saturday 1st June - PC190601 - Practical

Tuesday 2nd July - PC190706 - Theory

Saturday 6th July - PC190706 - Practical

Tuesday 30th July - PC190803 - Theory

Saturday 3rd August - PC190803 - Practical

Tuesday 3rd September - PC190907 - Theory

Saturday 7th September - PC190907 - Practical

Tuesday 22nd October - PC191026 - Theory

Saturday 26th October - PC191026 - Practical

Tuesday 19th November - PC191123 - Theory

Saturday 23rd November - PC191123 - Practical

Tuesday 3rd December - PC191207 - Theory

Saturday 7th December - PC191207 - Practical

Training Course Refund Policy

Situations occur where for various reasons courses are cancelled by Four Wheel Drive Victoria (FWDV) or students need to cancel. Below describes the refund policy that is applicable.

Fee refunds: If students are unable to attend the course that they are registered for, the following refund fees below apply:

- 30 days prior - less 10% of course cost;
- 29 days – 15 days - less 25% of course cost;
- 14 days to 8 days - less 50% of course cost;
- 7 days prior - no refund allowed. *Refund applications must be made in writing to FWDV.*

FWDV agree that they will allow for one transfer in a 12 month period to another course date without penalty, with a minimum of 8 days notice, (see below).

Transfer to other courses: Students can transfer to any other course up to 8 working days prior to commencement at no cost. Students transferring to another course 7 working days or less prior to commencement will be required to pay a transfer fee of \$50.

Course Cancellations: FWDV will make a full refund of all fees paid should a course be discontinued. FWDV reserves the right to cancel a course if a minimum number of participants are not achieved or for Occupational Health and Safety reasons. Should the students desire to take an alternative course with FWDV, fees will be fully transferrable to that course, for one transfer in a 12 month period. In the event of a course for which the student was enrolled being unavailable or no acceptable alternative course is available, fees are fully refundable.

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VALE - BRIAN PROTHERO

Brian Prothero passed on the 28th January after a battle with cancer.

Brian along with his lovely wife Heather owned the Gap Getaway at McAdams Gap near Woods Point.

At an elevation of approx 1300 metres ASL there was usually snow guaranteed to make trips interesting. It was a popular destination during winter for 4x4 groups, bike groups and anyone else who enjoyed the spectacular beauty of the High Country.

Our 4x4 club have had the last 3 years staying at the Gap. We have so many wonderful memories. The huge boiler in the middle of the bar was always inviting after a day out driving in the snow.

He built the Gap from scratch with help of family and friends. The large dorm style accommodation block came in sections from Portland and more recently he added some cabins overlooking some of our High Country's most breath taking scenery.

Brian, with Heather by his side, ran the Gap Getaway for over 25 years and oh my, didn't Brian have some stories to tell.

Brian was trusting, kind - a true gentleman who will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

Our deepest sympathy to his wife Heather and their families.

Shez

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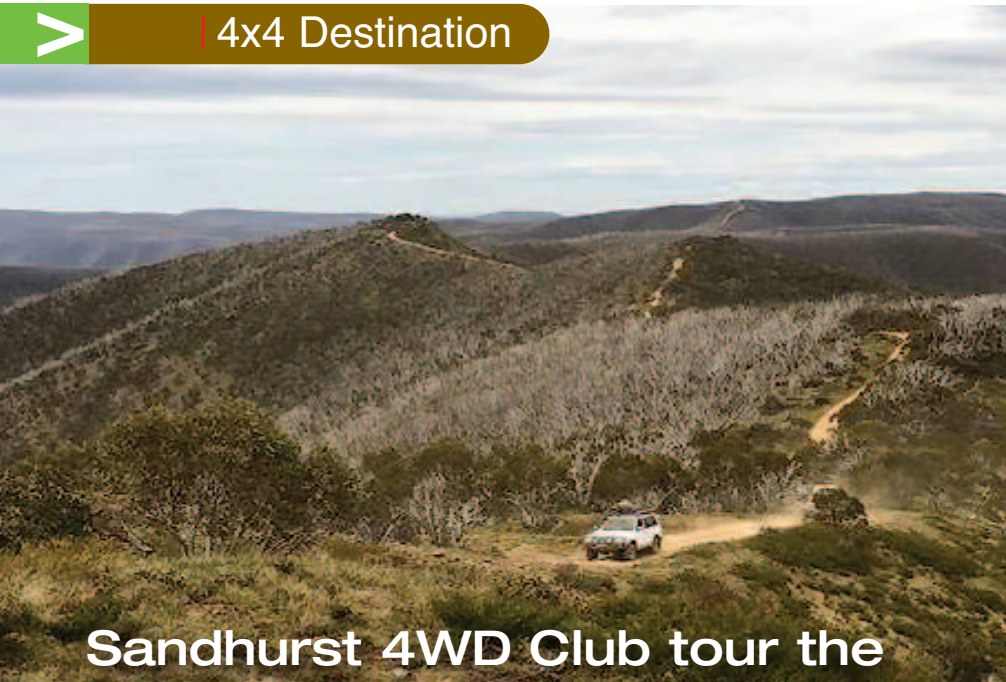
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Sandhurst 4WD Club tour the BUCKLAND VALLEY

Buckland Valley up in the High Country, was going to be 4 days of great campsites, tough tracks with steep climbs, sensational views with snow peaked mountains in the background, oh yeah, and a total of 53 river crossings.

We know Buckland Valley for its gold mining back in the 1850's and there is great history up there with the abundance of mine shafts spread across the hills through the valley. The trip wasn't about exploring the history this time, we were taking 13 vehicles on an epic trip.

Day 1 – Bendigo to Camp Flat

We made our way over leaving Bendigo on the Friday at different times and we all met at Camp Flat Campsite, all finding a spot to set up in the large camp area.

The fire was lit and we gathered around full of excitement, talking about the weekend and what we were going to encounter.

Day 2 – Camp Flat to Talbotville

Saturday morning we woke and everyone packed up fairly quickly, we had a quick briefing and were on the tracks by 8.30am.

Heading out of Camp Flat passing plenty of mine shafts on the way, we crossed the Buckland River on to the Buckland Valley Rd, (there are plenty of campsites along Buckland Valley Rd for anyone interested in the area).

At the fork in the road we turned right up Mt Selwyn Rd for about 2-3 km, before turning left onto Dingo Creek Track. Into low range and through a tiny creek and we were straight into it. This track is steep, rocky and slippery in spots. We heard over the UHF that motorbikes were behind us and kept falling over because it was so steep. We



made it to the top with the track coming back onto Mt Selwyn Rd on the other side of Mt Selwyn.

We turned right and headed for the Summit of Mt Selwyn, turning right again onto the Mt Selwyn Summit Track. It is a fairly overgrown, skinny track and the last climb up is really hard, rocky, slippery and plenty of holes to test your suspension out. On top there is only enough room for about 5-6 vehicles but

we managed 11 vehicles at the top. Andrew in his Triton was the last to come up, and we saw him bounce out of a hole and into a tree (thank God for scrub bars, there was no damage). On top of Mt Selwyn there are 360 degree views of the Valley and the whole High Country from 1425m.

Driving back down was easy and we went left onto Mt Selwyn Rd, then this becomes Tea Tree Rd with an easy drive up to Mt Sarah where we stopped for an early lunch and a line-up of the vehicles for a photo shoot.

After lunch we took off taking the Sarah Spur Track passing Guys Hut which is now blown down. The track takes you through some big bog holes then a steep decline which looks like you are driving straight off the mountain; this track takes about 2 hours to drive, heading down and through the Wongungarra River and then it's a steep 1st gear low range climb to the Bald Top Helipad.

Finally we reached Brewery Rd and turned right towards Talbotville. We arrived at Talbotville, crossing the Crooked River and into the Campground. Talbotville was full so we kept on going and took the Crooked River Track going through 24 river crossings (trying to find a camp to fit 12 vehicles was going to be difficult). We couldn't find a camp so we headed back towards Talbotville finding a nice little spot tucked away in the bush just after the 3rd crossing and the start of South Basalt Knob Track, where we had a big fire and a great night.

Day 3 – Talbotville to Dargo High Plains

Sunday morning we woke after a good night's sleep and managed to get onto the tracks by 8.30am.

One of the members informed me that he had to leave the trip because he had no brakes or hand brake in his 47 Series Landcruiser, so we headed back through Talbotville and took the





Crooked River Rd. When we got to Collingwood Spur Track, Dale left the trip and headed for Dargo. Meanwhile, we turned left up Collingwood Spur Trk, which is a great little steep track taking us up to the top of the Helipad with views back to the Pinnacles and Billy Goat Bluff Track. The track then winds its way around to McMillian Rd turning left and back into Talbotville.

At Talbotville we turned right back onto the Crooked River track through 3 river crossings and up South Basalt Knob track. This track is just steep, straight up with rock steps that you have to negotiate all the way to the Helipad, and this is where Leigh and his Jeep had trouble and broke the bolts in his tailshaft. Leigh had to reverse all the way back down and left the trip as well to head back to Dargo to fix it.

We headed along South Basalt Knob track, which has a few more steep little sections but not too bad at all, then the track turns into Ritchie Rd and we were back into 2wd. We stopped at the Old Railway Carriage for lunch.

After lunch we took the North Basalt Knob Track which is a nice little rocky track with a tight switch-back up to Blue Rag Track. At Blue Rag we turned left heading up the ridge-line, which is one of the most spectacular drives in Victoria. It was fairly busy up there with plenty of other vehicles in the area. We finally made it to the Trig Point and it was a beautiful clear day and the views were sensational, especially Mt Hotham still covered in snow.

We didn't want to leave, but after about 45 mins of admiring we headed off back along Blue Rag to Dargo High Plains Rd turning right and headed up here for about 2km to a great campsite up on the High Plains. We fitted 10 vehicles in easily, and after we set up camp there



was plenty of firewood for the fire as it gets very cold overnight on the High Plains.

Day 4 – High Plains to Beveridges Station

Monday morning we woke to rain and wind, so we packed up quickly before getting too wet. We were on the road by 9am travelling the Dargo High Plains Rd towards the Alpine Way. The clouds had come in so we didn't get to see the spectacular views on the way out.

Soon as you get to the Alpine Way it's a sharp left onto Twins Jeep Track. This track usually has sensational views but was restricted by the low lying cloud cover and rain; every now and then it would clear for the views and a photo.

We continued up to Mt Murray when I realised that I had done a CV because I had only rear wheel drive; I kept on going and it didn't slow me down. On reaching the top of Mt Murray the cloud cover was that bad you couldn't see in front of you, so we headed back down turning left back onto Twins Jeep Track through the gates and a right down Mt Murray Track. It's a great easy drive with heaps of tree ferns and little river crossings.

We found a dead tree along the way that had been cut, so we split it up and loaded the tree onto the vehicles for the fire and headed into Buckland Valley. We pulled into Beveridges Station at about 11am then I had to tell everyone that I'd done a CV and that was my weekend done.

Five of us set up camp and four headed for home. For the rest of the afternoon we just sat around the fire, went for walks around Beveridges Station, turning in early that night as we were very tired.

Day 5 – Beveridges Station back to Bendigo

Tuesday morning we woke to a very dark sky; it was about to pour rain and we were expecting 20-40mm.



It came down at about 8am, so we packed up quickly and took off heading for home, airing up at the Buckland bridge in the rain.

Detour around Mt Buffalo

On Tuesday morning a couple of us decided to take a 4WD track or two before getting onto the bitumen. I decided that sounded like a good idea, so we headed off in a two vehicle 'convoy'. The plan was to head up over Goldie Spur track, and then take the



Yarrarabula Creek track north to Lake Buffalo where we would hit the bitumen and the highway drive home.

We headed off north down Buckland River Road and turned left onto Goldie Spur track at Buckland Bridge. There are some reasonably steep sections but it's well graded and rocky, so the heavy rain we were having didn't have much effect. The views were hampered by lots of low cloud, but the glimpses I got from time to time convinced me I should drive it again when it's clear weather.

As we were coming down the hill towards the intersection with Yarrarabula Creek track, Paul came on the radio asking if I wanted to head to Lake Buffalo or continue west on the SEC Access track which links up with the Rose River Road. 'Why not stay on the dirt,' I said, having just been eying off the track as it weaved its way up the other side of the valley. The first half of the track was very easy, much like Goldie Spur but flatter, with a few gentle climbs but more or less following the contours.

About half way along the track we passed an excavator parked off the side of the track. They'd been doing some widening and shaping. The track just past that point was rough but still easy with good grip. Then around another couple of bends we came across a parked dozer. This was past where the track started to get steeper as we descended into the Rose River valley. The track after that point had been reshaped and widened by the dozer, and the now very wet and smooth surface was extremely slippery and very soft in places.

Paul said on the radio that he was going to put his rear locker in, and almost immediately after that his rear stepped out. He got the locker on and managed to straighten the vehicle up and crawl down the slope. I put my rear locker in as well, and I also had a little moment trying to stop to do so. We both crawled down the hill trying not to slide off the side of the track as the drop off was very steep. After a couple of kilometres of pretty scary 'just in control' crawling down the track hugging the cut batter side of the formation, we made it to the bottom.

We then enjoyed a relaxing drive along Rose River Road to Cheshunt where we aired up, before continuing to Whitfield for a very nice lunch at the Mountain View Hotel, and then headed for home.

**Russell Thorsen and Andrew Mertens
Sandhurst 4WD Club**

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MAD does Uluru

and the Oodnadatta track, Alice Springs, Kings Canyon and Coober Pedy

Words and photography by Allyson Watts

Firstly I should explain that we belong to the Melton And District four wheel drive club, commonly known as the MAD4wd club. And yes we play on the acronym saying that 'We're all MAD here'. Secondly we have a 'hook award' presented at our monthly meetings and brought along on longer trips. Well 'Korn and the Kernels' (Kay, Vaughan and their 2 young children) had a trip to Uluru on their bucket list, so they organised the club trip 'MAD does Uluru 2018', and what a fantastic trip it was too! We included the Oodnadatta track, Lambert's geographical centre of Australia, Alice Springs, Kings Canyon and Coober Pedy. There were 8 vehicles and 14 people ranging in age from young children to retired, in a variety of accommodation from swags, camper trailers to pop-up campers and caravans old and new. Some, like us, had a bit longer than 3 weeks for this trip, so we headed off a few days earlier and came back a few days later.

One of the best things with travelling with a group is the banter that goes on - jokes, sarcasm and friendly rivalry in



true Aussie style. Three weeks was a perfect amount of time for this. We headed out with the Patrol and Jayco Heritage, this being our first 'big' trip in both these vehicles. We had another couple with us in their camper trailer and we showed them the Silo Art Trail on the way to Renmark where we joined the others. Read my article about the Silo Art Trail in the October 2018 edition of Caravan and Motorhome On Tour magazine.

As we were coming from Victoria, we waited until we were in South Australia before buying our fruit and vegies. There is a quarantine check east of Renmark to stop fruit fly and other diseases being brought into South Australia.

We joined the rest of our group at

Plushs Bend just out of Renmark, right beside the mighty Murray River. What a brilliant way to start our adventure together - free camp, friends and a nice camp fire. Being June, we didn't let the cold rain and mud, bother us at all. Fine weather was in store for us the further we headed north. Burra was a lovely historic mining town to stop in for lunch. You could easily spend a lot more time here using their 'passport key' from the Visitor Centre to do a self-guided tour around the town and the historic sites. The key allows you to get into some great places, like the Redruth gaol used in the Breaker Morant movie.

Out through Lyndhurst we stopped at the Ochre Pits for a look before continuing on to Farina. This historic 'town' actually had the underground bakery cooking up



MAD does Uluru 2018!

Russell joined us at the Patchewollock silo



Ready to tackle the 'remote areas'

the attractions. In the hotel is the Tom Kruse room of memorabilia, and then outside near the old railway station is one of Tom Kruse's old mail trucks. Along with some old Ghan train engines, a wooden sundial in the shape of a camel, an old Afghan church and the Lake Eyre yacht club, even though Lake Eyre doesn't have water very often at all. Before you leave Marree and begin the Oodnadatta Track, you'll need to fill up with fuel as the next fuel stop is William Creek.

Now the famed Oodnadatta Track turned out to be more like a dirt highway for us, as it had recently been graded.

Those of us with caravans were especially thankful for that. So with our convoy spread out to avoid each other's dust, we headed north. Things of note along this section were Planehenge, where two airplanes have been mounted on their tails in the desert. We stopped to have a look at this outdoor art gallery of metal sculptures.

DON'T MISS ATTRACTIONS

Alice Springs Telegraph Station

Address: Herbert Heritage Drive
 Cost: up to \$15
 Phone: (08) 8952 3993
 Website: <https://alicespringstelegraphstation.com.au>
 Email: trailstation@outbackgroupnt.com.au

Segway tours

Address: Kuniya car park on the southern face of Uluru.
 Cost: \$129
 Phone: 08 8956 3043
 Website: <https://www.ulurusegwaytours.com.au/>

Old Timers Mine

Address: Crowthers Gully Road Coober Pedy
 Cost: Family: \$40.00
 Adult: \$15.00
 Standard concession: \$12.00
 Child: \$5.00
 Phone: (08) 8672 5555
 Website: <http://www.cooberpedy.com/old-timers-mine>



The start of the Oodnadatta Track

some delicious delicacies. Friends of Farina spend about 6 weeks a year volunteering to rebuild the old town and raise money by baking in the original underground bakery and selling to the lucky people who happen to visit. The campground there is a good

WHERE TO STAY FREE - FREECAMPS

Name and camps 7 book number: Plushs Bend 108
 Address: 6km sth of Renmark, beside Murray River
 Features: Toilets, shade trees, river, scenic

Name and camps 7 book number: Marree Hotel 382
 Address: Railway Terrace S, Marree, SA
 Features: Toilet, fee showers

Name: Finke River Two Mile camping area
 Address: Dispersed camping along Finke River
 Access track nearly opposite Glen Helen Resort, West MacDonnell Ranges, NT
 Features: Finke River, scenic, shade, no facilities

Name and camps 7 book number: Agnes Creek Rest Area 461
 Address: 93km S of Kulgera, SA
 Features: Table, bins, shade

cheap camping option too. In Marree we all free camped at the back of the Marree Hotel. This was great as it was Charlotte's 7th birthday and with prior arrangement, the hotel put on a birthday party for her, with our own room, cake for all of us, party hats, balloons, a present and all. So we bought our dinner there and Charlotte didn't miss out on a birthday party. The 12 staff that run the hotel do a great job, especially as there were also 2 other bus groups staying there. Marree is a small enough town that you can walk to all



Gordon and Janet remember when this sign was outside



Our convoy on the Oodnadatta Track

Each year a new art piece is added, so there are quite a few things to look at now.

Further up the track is a look-out over Lake Eyre south. I think I could see the glimmer of water amongst the salt in the distance. Next were the mound springs called the Bubbler and Blanche Cup. It is incredible how the water bubbles up out of the ground at the top of these mounds. Coward Springs is also near there where you can actually get into a little 'hot tub' and soak. There's a nice little walk to the old engine driver's hut too, which is now an interesting little museum.

As we got closer to William Creek, the Oodnadatta track had more corrugations. William Creek is a tiny out-back 'town' consisting of a hotel, park and campground. Lots of people happened to be staying here tonight. With a couple of buses and several camping groups like ourselves, the population exploded from 4 to over 100 with a full campground and the William Creek Hotel booked out for dinner.



Rest stop at Duff creek

The Oodnadatta Track was a bit stonier with a few more dips as we headed north to Algebuckina Bridge. We found averaging about 70kph seemed about the right speed for us. You really just have to drive to the conditions and let a bit of air out of the tyres if it's too corrugated. This was June and there were quite a few other vehicles around. I would say there were about 20 vehicles per hour going past us. The Oodnadatta Track follows the old Ghan railway line, so there are some ruins from old railway sidings and some old railway bridges to look at. The Algebuckina bridge was a massive engineering feat in its day and is still something to marvel at. It would be a good spot to free camp at too.

We continued in to Oodnadatta for fuel and supplies at the famed Pink Roadhouse.



The 14km in was sandy and corrugated to the geographical centre of Australia!

Now another thing on our bucket list was to visit Lambert's Geographical Centre of Australia. Well, as the Oodnadatta Track had been pretty good so far, we thought we'd go up to Finke from here, and then across to Lambert's Centre of Australia. We did do this but the road was a whole lot rougher than expected. It was corrugated and sandy with some fist sized rocks. Red dust gets in everywhere, and I don't think you ever really get it all out. But that doesn't matter, it just reminds you of a great outback trip. Eringa waterhole was a lovely place for lunch and would also make a peaceful free camp. Having all the water and the lovely big trees out here in the desert really was a sight to behold. It was also a good spot to check for loose nuts from the corrugations. As it turned out we had some loose nuts on the suspension of our caravan - so that was something to tighten up and keep a close eye on from now.

The road got worse as we turned towards New Crown. We slowed down to about 30-40 kph to Charlotte Waters. We had a brief stop at New Crown before tackling the wider Mt Dare road with more corrugations. It was corrugated all the way to Finke. We had a brief look on the bitumen at Finke (oh how smooth!), before even more corrugations on the road to Lambert's Centre of Australia. The track in to Lambert's was just wide enough for the caravan.

The 14km in was sandy and corrugated, but we made it to the geographical

CARAVAN PARKS

Name: Ayers Rock campground
Address: Yulara Drive, Yulara
Phone: 1300 134 044 or +61 8 8957 7001
Website:
<https://www.ayersrockresort.com.au/accommodation/ayers-rock-campground>

Name: Gap View Hotel campground
Address: 123 Gap Road Alice Springs NT
Phone: 08 8952 6578
Email: info@gapviewhotel.com.au
Website:
<https://www.gapviewhotel.com.au/gap-view-hotel-alice-springs-campground>

Name: Riba's Underground camping
Address: 1811 William Creek Road, Coober Pedy, S.A.
Phone: (08) 8672 5614
Email: ribas@camp-underground.com.au
Website:
<http://www.camp-underground.com.au>

CHEAP TREATS

Cheap or free activities in the region

Grab your camera and get your walking shoes on:

Kings Canyon Rim walk

Address: Watarrka National Park, NT
Website: <https://nt.gov.au/leisure/recreation/bushwalking-hiking/watarrka-national-park-short-walks>

Ranger guided Mala walk

Address: Uluru
Phone: (08) 8956 1128
Website:
<https://northernterritory.com/uluru-and-surrounds/see-and-do/free-ranger-guided-mala-walk>

Ormiston Gorge

Address: Namatjira Drive, 135km west of Alice Springs.
Phone: 08 8956 7799
Website: <https://nt.gov.au/leisure/parks-reserves/find-a-park-to-visit/ormiston-gorge>

centre of Australia! Photo shoot around the flag then we all set up camp nearby.

Lots of things had rattled loose in the caravan. We re-screwed the pelmet over the bedroom window, and then swept up half a dozen screws we haven't found a home for yet. The next day we took it slower over the corrugations, spending nearly 3 hours driving out to the bitumen at Kulgera. After a good look around here we all headed north to Alice Springs, glad to be on a bitumen road.

We stayed 3 nights in Alice Springs at the Gap View Hotel campground, having a good look around at the sights. There was Anzac Hill for great views over the town, and the Telegraph Station is an interesting place. The Telegraph Station was opened in 1872 and used for communication via morse code between Australia and England and Europe. There is something for everyone in the 'Alice' with museums, Royal Flying Doctor service, School of the Air and wildlife centres. There are also a good range of shops for some much needed repairs and don't forget an opportunity to do the laundry.

West of Alice Springs along Larapinta Drive there are lots of great scenic spots. Simpson's Gap, Standley Chasm & Ellery Big Hole were on our list today. Everyone was suitably impressed with the rock formations and the beauty of nature. Standley Chasm is privately run, Cost \$12 per adult or \$10 concession to walk the 1.2km down to the chasm. A well maintained track with cycad palms leading to the chasm with its magnificent high red cliff walls about 5m apart. It was past midday so we didn't quite

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VISITOR INFO

Alice Springs Visitor Information Centre

Address: Cnr Parsons St & Todd Mall, Alice Springs NT.

Phone: (08) 8952 5800

Website: <https://www.discover-centralaustralia.com>

Yulara Visitor Centre

Address: 127 Yulara Dr, Yulara NT.

Phone: (08) 8957 7324

Coober Pedy Tourist Information Centre

Address: Lot 773 Hutchison St, Coober Pedy SA

Phone: (08) 8672 4617

get to see the sun on the chasm floor.

Ellery Big Hole had freezing cold water, but a beautiful setting. You could easily spend a couple of days camped here. The campground seemed quite busy though, so others have already beaten us to that idea. Past Ormiston Gorge and nearly opposite Glen Helen Resort we had chosen Finke River Two Mile bush camp. Some of the area was soft sand so the caravans had to take it pretty carefully, but we all found a spot by the creek to camp and set up. There are no facilities here, but the views are just magical.

We spent the next day exploring the beautiful Ormiston Gorge with its stark white ghost gums contrasting with the red cliffs and the brilliant blue sky. The Ochre Pits and Glen Helen Gorge were also great places to see, topped off with a magnificent red sunset from Mt. Sonder lookout.

Kings Canyon was next on our bucket list. Now we had 2 choices to get there. We could go the long way around back through Alice Springs and south all via bitumen, or we could follow the Red Centre Way and take the much shorter Mereenie Loop. We chose the shorter option even though it meant more red dust and corrugations. We bought our Mereenie Loop Pass from Glen Helen Resort as the road crosses through aboriginal reserves.

First stop was Tyler's Lookout over Gosse's Bluff. This Bluff really stands out amongst the flat plains. It's 5km in diameter and dates back to a comet hitting the earth 142 million years ago. When we got to the dirt road we let our tyres down again for the corrugations as we headed south towards King Canyon at around 40kph. We all stopped at the Watarrka sign to air up for the bitumen - Watarrka being the aboriginal name for Kings Canyon. We all camped at Kings Canyon Resort for a couple of nights so



We stopped at Coober Pedy on the way home

we could spend all the next day at the canyon. The Rim walk was exhausting but so worthwhile! Take food and water and have plenty of rests along the way as it is 6km but takes a good 3 to 4 hours walking. Early morning is best before the day heats up. The sheer cliffs are truly awesome and admiring them is a good excuse for a rest! We did some extra side tracks along the way and ended up walking nearly 8km in just under 4.5 hours. Some did the Kings Canyon creek walk as well and others opted for magnificent views from a helicopter.

We're going to Uluru! Out onto the Lasseter Hwy we had good views of Mt Conner. Most of our group got so excited at their first sighting of 'Uluru', I had to bite my lip not to tell them it was actually Mt Conner. A mistake made by many. It was a good thing we had pre-booked Ayers Rock campground at Yulara, as it was full by early afternoon. We spent 3 nights there and some extended it to 4 nights as there were so many good things to see and experience around Uluru. These included air flights, helicopter rides, walking tours, segways, camel rides, field of lights, sunrise and sunsets for both Uluru and Kata Tjuta. Yulara is about 14km outside the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park which costs \$25/adult for a 3 day pass. The free ranger guided Mala walk around Uluru was worthwhile and very informative and so was the Cultural Centre. Walking up 'the rock' is closed if it's too hot, wet or windy and will be permanently closed from 26 October 2019.

We all did our own thing at Uluru, coming back to regroup around the campfire in the evenings. Our group split up from here with some continuing north to Darwin, some making a bee line home, and others opting to stay an extra night. We spent 2 days driving to Coober Pedy, overnighing at Agnes Creek rest stop for a free overnight

camp on the way. At Coober Pedy we met up with some of our group as we stayed at Riba's underground camping. We enjoy camping here as you have a choice of above or below ground camping, in your own tent in an underground alcove, or in the comfort of a room with a bed. You even get a discount if you also do their underground opal mine tour.

The next day we drove a loop around to see the Dog Fence and the Breakaways. Great lookouts as we marvelled at the different colours of nature - truly incredible! Back in Coober Pedy we had a look around several underground churches and some underground motels, Old Timers Mine opal shops, the Big Winch and Boot Hill cemetery with its quirky headstones.

On the way home we called in to Woomera where there are many different rockets on display in the park. From here our group all went their own way. What a wonderful bucket list trip! In hindsight, the Oodnadatta Track was quite good, but cutting across to Finke was probably a bit too rough and corrugated for our particular caravan. Also the Mereenie Loop corrugations shook the van around a lot too. With more time you can go the longer way to Kings Canyon along a bitumen road.

There is so much to see in the Red Centre. Take your time and enjoy it all.

Allyson Watts
Melton And District FWD club

WHEN TO VISIT

The best time to visit Uluru, Kata Tjuta and Australia's Red Centre is between May and September. The weather is cooler, making it easier and safer to walk. At this time of year, the colours of the rock are also more vibrant.

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