

Trip Report - Victoria, NSW, QLD and Northern Territory 2021 Barossa to Bogan Weir

It had been three years since we had managed to travel away from SA due to COVID in the latter stages and family stuff in the first of those years. Last year (2020) we actually enjoyed staying in SA and travelling to places in our own state which we had not visited before. But this year we looked forward to a trip further away. It was a later than usual start to the trip on 14 May, but at least it was a nice sunny day when we pulled out.

Before leaving I downloaded every state's QR code reader and put the apps on both our mobile phones. This was a smart move and saved us having to fiddle with it the first time we entered an interstate premise.

Special points of interest:

- Cool weather camping
- Outback NSW



First night, at Linga, Victoria

We left late on the first day, as we wanted to have morning tea with our favourite son in law Charlie (AKA as our ONLY son in law) before heading off. It was the Mallee Highway we took, as it was taking us via a fairly straight route Northwards and Eastward.

Linga Bushland Reserve (near Underbool)

S35.171398°,E141.692608°

Although we had planned to stay at the little town of Underbool in Victoria, we saw on WikiCamps trip App that a nice sounding camp site was just to the west of the town and having driven in to have a look, we found it quite appealing. Its simply a clearing in the bush with mallee trees around, and signs of an earlier township. Where we pulled the van



was previously the site of the cricket and tennis courts but very little was left of either. There was a wooden table and chair and a fireplace, and we made use of both. As there was plenty of mallee roots lying around we made a fire and drank a bottle of bubbles to celebrate the first night away. As we were the only people there, it was a lovely quiet night.

There was reasonable phone coverage and TV here too.

The next day we left fairly early and headed toward Mamanga NP in Yanga NP near Balranald.

Mamanga

S34.664117°, E143.514336°.

We have stayed here once before in 2018 and it still had the same quiet and peaceful charm. Due to COVID, it was necessary to go online and pay a booking fee of \$6 for the stay (it is otherwise free to stay here). The campground is on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River, and campers have a



view of the river. Although you can have a fire here, it was fairly dry surrounding fields and in any event we had not picked up any wood. We stayed only the one night, a cold, crystal clear night, and pressed on the next morning.

But first we deviated to nearby Balranald, a wide streeted town with lovely green parks and a quiet air of prosperity. Calling into the supermarket for some fruit and vegetables, we asked the young woman at the checkout why there was no QR code reader at the store, a Foodland supermarket.

She told us she didn't think NSW was using the readers.... Mental note to self not to take too much notice of checkout staff opinions on important matters. (Yes, it IS required throughout NSW but not at supermarkets).

Hay

Our next night's destination was Hay, NSW. A reasonably large town (population approx. 2406) the town welcomes travellers. There are several freecamps as well as a Showgrounds where we could stay but we chose the Sandy Point



Reserve, a nice spot right on the river, with a toilet block and a picnic area. We found it reasonably quiet although a few other travellers were staying over for a night or two. Each camp site had its very own little QR code reader beside the site. So much for NSW not using them!

The town has also installed new art work on the silos, celebrating local identities who served in various arenas of war.. Here is just a couple of the super works.

The local bowls club has a lovely Chinese restaurant and we enjoyed the meal so much on our first night, that we went back the next night as well. Just doing our bit for the economy.



From Hay we turned North East toward Griffith. It was a relatively uninteresting drive but the

vegetation started to perceptibly change and there was more agricultural land, with cotton fields closer to Griffith.

Lake Wyangan Campground

A delightful spot, this campground is about ten kms out of the city of Griffith and on the man-made lake. Although the campground is gently sloping down to the water's edge, with careful chocking of the wheels to get the van level, sites can be had with a gorgeous view.



It costs nothing to camp here (there is not even a donation box) and there are clean flushing toilets and washbasins provided. I was surprised it was not more popular as there were only three or four other vans there each night. But on our third (and last) night there were more vans.

It was quite cool at night but the days were just lovely, nice

and sunny. We managed to get a couple of loads of washing through the machine and they were dry in under four hours, which was a blessing.

Griffith itself is a lovely town, situated on a river, which is always a plus.



Griffith is a major regional city in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area that is located in the north-western part of the Riverina region of New South Wales, known commonly as the food bowl of Australia. It is also the seat of the City of Griffith local government area. Like the Australian capital, Canberra, and extensions to the nearby town of Leeton, Griffith was designed by Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin. The city was named after Arthur Hill Griffith, the first New South Wales Minister of Public Works and was proclaimed a city in 1987. It had a population of 20,251 in June 2018. (As you drive around, you can see the roads are set out in circles like Canberra).

The Italian heritage is clear in this city and there are some lovely restaurants in the main street. We ate at Guiseppi's and Il Corso, and thoroughly enjoyed each meal.

As an aside, we had coffee at Guiseppi's earlier in the day and came back for late lunch. It was just as well we did as we were informed by the friendly staff that we had forgotten to pay for the earlier coffees. Gulp.

Recovering from that small faux pas, we travelled on to the North East and all of 66 kms later arrived at the small town of Barellan. This is the alleged birthplace of Yvonne Goolagong, and who knows, it probably is. Anyway, they have a giant racquet and ball in a town park in her



honour. The town was only small (maybe population of about 600) but had a nice old heritage building hotel, and a coffee shop. It also had a bowls club with a Chinese restaurant, so we traipsed along on the Saturday night for dinner. Its just as well we were early as the entire footy team and all their families arrived shortly after us. I reckon all 600 were there that night.... OK, only a slight exaggeration.

We stayed out at the Showgrounds, about a km from town, where they provide powered sites, showers and toilets for \$10 a night. The caretakers told us the fee may be increased shortly.

The caretakers were the friendliest people and they invited us to share their afternoon fire both nights. They also allowed us to cut up some firewood from a recently felled dead tree, and so we had a nice amount of wood for the next camp/

Having done a large load of washing (sheets and towels etc) we moved on after two nights. This time our destination was a campsite which is on our top 5 camps of all time; Weddin Mountains National Park.

Ben Hall's Campground, Weddin Mountains NP

This is truly a lovely spot. The campground is to the East of Forbes and to the West of Grenfell. It took about half an hour to drive to Grenfell where we did some shopping and had morning tea.

Only a small campground, there are 11 separate sites, with only two or three able to take a caravan of our size. But we managed to arrive early and the site we have had previously was free. Yay.

Weddin Mountains is one of those places which remains in your memory as a lovely place and we enjoy coming here. There is a drop toilet and each site has its table and chairs but those are the only facilities. The only fee is a \$6 booking fee which covers the length of your stay.

It was absolutely lovely weather for our stay of four days, and although nights were cool (about 14) we spent days under crystal clear blue skies and temperatures of up to 22. And this is right on the

cusps of Winter.

The campground is bordered by a state forest which was positively bristling with dead wood (which you are allowed to cut up) and each site had a fireplace and wooden table and chairs. So we had a fire each night and shared it with other campers the first night.

There were day trippers each day doing the walk up to Ben Hall's Cave (you all know the story of how Ben Hall would hole up in the cave, high up in the cliffs, and be able to see the approaching police, thus escaping). I have a published earthcache there which I prepared back in 2017.



While staying here we did day trips over to Grenfell (a largish town) which has some lovely old heritage buildings. And we managed to get some cream buns at the bakery café. Yay!

An interesting phenomenon we noticed here for the first time and then as we later travelled through NSW, was the non-use of QR codes at businesses. At first I idly noticed that no one at

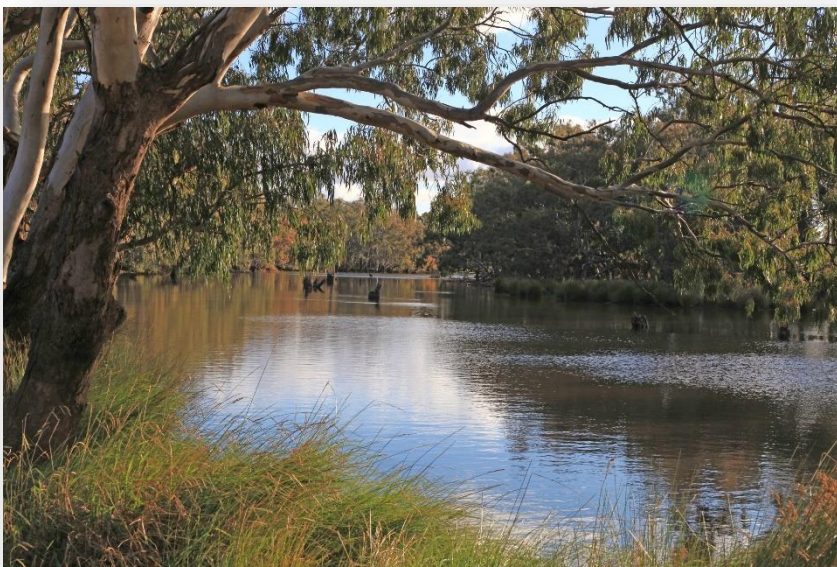
the bakery café was checking in with the reader (which was prominently displayed on a table). Later at Forbes and then Peak Hill and Dubbo we noticed the same thing; folk were treating the QR reader purely as a pretty decoration. Interstate visitors were using the readers, but not locals.

Anyway, this curiosity to one side, we were enjoying lovely mild weather (the only time it rained up to this point was overnight at Weddin Mountains NP).

After our four days here we again moved on North West to first Forbes (where we did some food shopping) and then up the Newell Highway to Peak Hill. This is a lovely old Western NSW town, with a rich gold mining history. The heritage buildings in town are worth seeing all by themselves.

Peak Hill has a population of **around 700**. The town was established when gold was discovered in 1889. Peak Hill is centrally located on the Newell Highway in the Parkes Shire New South Wales - the Newell Highway is the main highway link between Melbourne and Brisbane. Peak Hill is 49km

north of Parkes and 71km south of Dubbo.



Our view at Bogan Weir

And just out of town is a picnic and camping ground called Bogan Weir. We have camped here before and did so again this trip. And it was just as lovely as on previous trips. The Shire provides this facility free of charge, perhaps recognizing that it brings in visitors who will spend money. We certainly spent a bit, having a couple of morning teas and a meal at the RSL.

The area adjacent to the weir is large and freshly mown, and could accommodate many vehicles. But each night we were accompanied by only a couple of others. And my, it was cold! It was below zero a couple of the four nights here, and it took the diesel heater a good half hour to heat up the interior of the van in the morning. Although the heater uses very little power (less than an Amp Hour per hour) it does use a bit of diesel on a cold night. Roughly we can get 3 to 4 hours from a litre of diesel so the cost would add up...

There were mice here too. Lots of them. On our last night here we sat outside for longer than usual around a fire with two other sets of travellers. The mice were scampering around and one actually ran up the back of one woman and perched on her collar!