

Trip Report - Victoria, NSW, QLD and Northern Territory 2021 Kilkivan to Carnarvon QLD

In this stage of the trip we stayed at more outback and coastal QLD campgrounds and enjoyed even more chats around campfires.

Special points of interest:

- Coastal QLD
- Of mice and men
- Carnarvon Gorge



Maryborough Botanical gardens

Maryborough

It seems on this trip we are staying longer at each location than we have done in previous years. I am not sure why that is, other than a desire to have a more leisurely travel experience. Anyway we finally moved on from Kilkivan after nearly a week (and five days at nearby Goomeri) and headed North up the Bruce Highway to Maryborough. It was strange to be on lovely, meandering minor roads through pretty vegetation and suddenly, with little preparation, we turned onto the busy Bruce Highway. That was a change of pace, I can tell you. That highway is bedlam.

At Maryborough we stayed at a campground called Doon Villa, near the airport and sited in a nice big grassed area with plenty of space between each van. There was a dump point nearby and a water tap at the entrance to the park. And there were showers and toilets but

we didn't use them. All this for \$10 a night. We really enjoyed our four days here, partly because we caught up with good friends Leslie and Erich (who had us to their home for morning tea and a lovely lunch) and partly because it is a nice area.

While there we visited the local Botanical Gardens and were impressed with the dedication to those who fought in theatres of war on our behalf.



We had a lovely four days and then moved on to Bundaberg. It's a fair sized city, with a population of about 99,000, and is roughly 25 kms inland from the ocean at Bargara.

The name Bundaberg was coined by surveyor John Charlton Thompson and his assistant Alfred Dale Edwards. *Bunda* is derived from the name of one of the kinship groups of the local Taribelang people, to which was added the Saxon suffix *berg*, meaning "town". Colloquially the city is known as "Bundy". And of course, the nearby Rum Distillery produces what is also colloquially as Bundy rum. We did of course do a guided tour of the rum distillery (as you do) and although we don't normally drink rum – I like using it in recipes like my Christmas pudding – I enjoyed the tastings afterward. We bought a bottle of the chocolate and coffee flavoured rum. It is always possible there may be some left over when we get home.

So, while we were in Bundaberg we stayed at the very centrally located CMCA RV park. It is a nice, large grassed area with trees around the perimeter, and a central "Happy Hour" shed. No power or water is available (well there are indeed water taps around the perimeter but you must access it in a bucket). Its only \$6 a night for a very central campsite. I hated how tightly they placed vans and our neighbours were too close, although they were all nice people. And I have to say we were all nice and peacefully quiet.

It was peaceful except for the night around Happy Hour, with about 40 people present, and we were all asked to introduce ourselves briefly. One bloke (only young) started by telling us all about his recent intimate conquest locally and then segued into how he advised everyone present not to have a vaccination as it is harmful, and all that's needed is a healthy lifestyle. Oh and a herbal mixture he recommended from a chemist. Before I could stop myself I sat up, waved my hands at him and told him to "Stop! Just stop right there. What you are advising is rubbish and puts people at risk". That was a conversation stopper let me tell you. A number of people thanked me afterwards for shutting him down. Muppet.

We had 5 lovely days at Bundaberg in which we caught up with good friend Peter and our other friends Jane and Potta. We had a lovely lunch at Jane and Potta's. Jane is a wonderful cook and it was so nice to have a home cooked meal.

Although I loved Bundaberg and catching up with friends, I felt more than ready to move on to somewhere which has more than 3m between vans. It was a bright sunny morning (but cold!) when we pulled out at 8.30am and headed North. The navigator (the mechanical kind) was plotting a path to Biloela, up the Bruce Highway. We had checked the map and it showed there was a road across from the highway to the small town of Monto. We duly found the turn off and were immediately confronted with a sign saying "Narrow, winding road with logging trucks. Not suited for caravans". Bugger. We did a u-turn and continued further up the Bruce Highway to Calliope, then turned West on the Dawson Highway.

We arrived at Biloela about 2.00pm and made our way to the Heritage Park, which has power and water sites for \$15 a night (bargain!). They have a lovely big grassed area with numbered sites, well spaced out. It was a very peaceful park with everyone about our age and quiet after dark. We sat around a firepit with both sets of neighbours and yarned until it got too cold, and then we retreated into the warmth of the van and its airconditioner. But while outside talking with the new friends we made some inroads on that bottle of chocolate and coffee rum. Delicious over ice.



We had two nights at Biloela and the second night was pretty nippy. It was minus 2.7 degrees....with frost on the car. I am glad we had a heater.

Allowing sun to defrost the car, we packed up and headed further due West on the Dawson Highway. By now we had left behind the dividing range and those hills (oh so scenic!) and we drove through flat grazing country at first then coal mining country. Great hillsides have been cut into and the mining activity is extensive.

At lunch time we arrived at a roadhouse in a community called Bauhinea. We have stayed here before and there is something quite appealing about it. They have a small camping area next to the roadhouse (think fuel, takeaway food and not much else). We spent the night here, as a strategy to launch off the next day early into Sandstone Park. It was popular, with every site booked out before 3.00pm. It was another \$15 a night for power and water, with meticulously clean amenities.

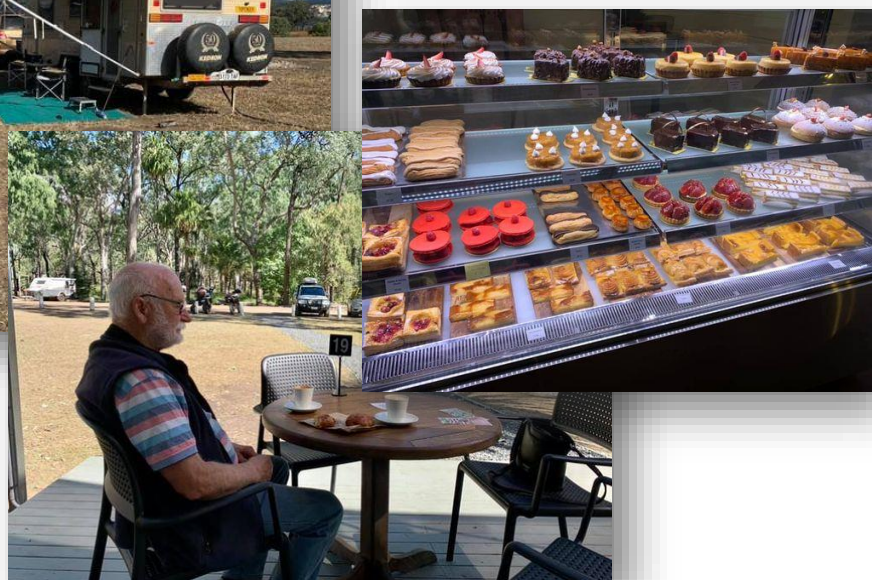
In the morning, before we left, we put a load of washing on in our machine (while we had breakfast) and simply left it in there until we arrived at our next destination, where we hung it out to dry. A great way to keep another day's washing in hand.

Anyway, we were on our way at nine am and travelled first West then South over the bumpiest and worst roads we have ever encountered. There were washouts and bumps which saw us rolling all over the place. And this was on bitumen! At the small community of Rolleston we turned South toward the turnoff to Carnarvon Gorge. This is wheat country and farmers have plowed and seeded, so they would be overjoyed at the rain overnight.

We arrived at Carnarvon at lunch time, and were allocated a fairly nice site. We had already booked and paid so it was a simple matter to check in. The lovely spot we had last time was already taken (site 38) but our site was nice enough, with good views and nice and level.



The next day we went down to the Lodge near the gorge proper, and found a newly established French Patisserie. Oh my!



The third day we thought we should stir further than the patisserie and did a walk into a rock pool. It was a lovely day for it with cool weather and well shaded paths. It was a special experience and the vegetation (palms and acacia) reminded me of the NT's Top End.

The only drawback at this camp spot was the mice. We got any number of them in the car engine bay, which could have potential consequences, as they are known to eat important cabling. Val used a heap of baits and traps and got about 15 in one night. Then we put cotton pads saturated with tea tree in the engine overnight and that seemed to do the trick.

