

Mary Kathleen(QLD) to Norley Rest Stop Stage 2 July 2022

Our stay at Mary Kathleen was followed by more meandering through central Queensland, enjoying warm days and cold nights.



Julia Creek Campground

Cloncurry

This is a town full of wonderful history, and we stayed two days to enjoy it as well as to catch up with washing sheets and towels. We can keep on top of the laundry with a little effort while travelling (we do have a washing machine onboard but we need to top up the water tanks to replace what's used). So we stayed at a caravan park and it was busy and sites were all occupied. I wasn't comfortable here and glad we only had the two nights booked.

We thought it would be good to stay at a caravan park and be on town power and water to do the huge pile of washing which needed to be done. Sheets and towels, pillowcases, tea towels and clothes. It proved to be a mistake to stay at any caravan park at such a busy time of year. It was

crowded! We had vans on either side of us, and there was only patchy grass (strangely, as they had had a lot of rain recently). And there was no sullage, which meant we had a hose with our escaping water (mostly from the washing machine) just running onto the grass. On a happier note, we were able to walk across the road to the nearby tavern for dinner, which was pleasant.

I think the caravan park was such a contrast as we had enjoyed special camp sites all the way down from Pine Creek, with room and privacy.

Anyway it was only two days we had to endure there.

Julia Creek

We left bright and early, after a quick breakfast and hit the road due East. We were headed to the small town of Julia Creek.

By getting there early (9.30am) we snaffled one of those lovely creek spots and backed in after registering with the camp hosts. It's a by donation campground with a box to place your donation together with a completed survey form.

This was a magical spot. We had a lovely position on the creek and were able to sit looking over the water with a coffee or a cold drink at sunset. The campground was busy, but on the creek, people had to put their vans far enough away from each other to allow hitching up and unhitching, so we all had a fair amount of privacy. Unlike the caravan park back at Cloncurry....

Julia Creek is a town in mid northern Queensland located on the Flinders Highway (Overlanders Way), the main road between Mount Isa and Townsville. It is 664 kilometres west of Townsville.



Here it is on the nifty little map I created especially for Michael.

We enjoyed four lovely days here, mostly spent lazing around in chairs on the grass overlooking the water. But we also created and published an [Adventure Lab Cache](#). That took the better part of the day but we did good work on it, if I do say so myself. We included five historical points in the cache, creating five different locations to visit

After Julia Creek we headed further East and camped for the night just out of town at the Winton Longhole. There was nothing remarkable about our camp that night other than it was quiet and peaceful, as we put our van down by the creek further along from others and had a peaceful night. We had dinner at a local pub that night and enjoyed sitting outside at the verandah tables and chairs, in the afternoon sun.

So, Winton was left behind and the car turned towards Longreach, at a camp site called Macsland.

Macsland

S23 16 36 E144 7 37

Look, this is really only a rest stop beside the highway, but a really great spot. Behind the rest stop (with toilets etc) is a network of tracks and private camp spots among vegetation. It feels private and secluded. Back at Winton we had caught up with fellow Kedron owners Gae and Philip, and they joined us at Macsland. They had their van nearby and we had drinks together every afternoon until it became too cold to stay outside any longer.

The great thing about Macsland was its closeness to Longreach (23 kms) and its good Telstra phone reception. I was on call for work for three nights here and it was a perfect spot to be while still being able to do work. The weather continued to be perfect and we thoroughly enjoyed our time here.

From Longreach we needed to head South toward Quilpie. The road was a minor road, with just one narrow strip of bitumen. This meant we needed to get partially off the road if another car approached or overtook. There was a surprising amount of traffic and it was slow going. We pulled into a rest stop to stretch our legs at morning tea, and ate a biscuit while enjoying the warm sunlight. Then back onwards to our night's camp, one of our favourites from previous trips, Swan Vale.



Swan Vale

S24 35 8 E143 16 7 This is a great camp, right on a hill overlooking the valley below. There is a rest area on the highway but a track leads into the camp sites on a ridge. The only facilities there are rubbish bins and concrete tables and chairs. But it has wonderful views of the valley below and good phone reception.

We stayed the night here, after sitting with our chairs overlooking the valley for our sunset drinks.



The next morning saw us headed to Jundah (a small town with a Council fuel depot which we took advantage of (it was a good deal cheaper than the commercial fuel station) and then, on advice from the lady at the Council Chambers, we took the gravel road South East to Quilpie. We were held up for a short time at Jundah by an older couple who were valiantly trying to work out how the system worked at the fuel pumps. It requires you to use your credit card and stipulate in advance how much to pay. Eventually they gave it up as a bad deal and went to the other fuel station.



The gravel road was in excellent condition and we made good time. We had morning tea at a lovely billabong and made a note of its coordinates for a future overnight stop.

Quilpie is a fair sized town (I am guessing here, but maybe 3000?). As I am typing this at a location far, far removed from Quilpie and with absolutely no phone or internet reception, I have to hazard a guess). It is a good spot to spend more time one day, as we enjoyed a lovely camp site on the Bulloo River just outside town, and we visited the butcher and did some grocery shopping.

We also did some geocaching, which led us to a remarkable sight at the local Catholic Church, St Finbarr's. A benefactor had donated opal pieces to make an altar and side tables with matching opal facings. It must be worth a fortune, and it is open for the public to visit and access.



At this stage our object was to get to the small opal mining town of Yowah (where do they get these names from?). That was a couple of hours to the South East, down the Quilpie to Thargomindah Road.

Yowah

Again at a guess, this town would have a permanent population of about 200 and about 200 visitors. A lot of folk, mostly Victorians, go to Yowah for Winter, and they either stay at the caravan park, which is quite appealing and very cheap, or at the excellent freecamp. Well, the camp is by donation, not exactly free....but it is almost the same thing. Yowah is famous for its opals.

Our initial plan was to stay here for two or three days but we ended up staying for six. The main appeal? The hot artesian pools. Oh bliss!

We had booked into the caravan park (which we did like the look of) but the freecamp was very quiet and there was a number of lovely spots which would suit. So we found a nice spot with our awning set out into some shrubs and we had a home away from home very quickly.

Then it was zoom! down to the hot pools. We bought a weekly pass for \$20 each and were quickly into that water.



There are two pools. One is a lot warmer than the other and the idea is you transfer from one to the other. I can't tell you how nice that was. The hottest one was 41 degrees, which is pretty warm. It is hard to stay in for any length of time at that temperature.

While here we had the good fortune to be joined by friends Rod and Sue for a few days, then other friends Margaret and Lionel also arrived in a convoy of their friends. We had drinks one

evening at the caravan park where they were staying, and traded tall stories over drinks.

Our last day at Yowah was hot and dry, with swirling dust everywhere. We knew that heavy rain was forecast and by this stage we were keen for rain to settle that horrid dust. Early in the evening we got our wish; down came down the rain, about 20mls of it. This meant of course that the next morning we were parked in a sea of mud. It wasn't deep and anyway we had packed up the night before, so it wasn't an issue. I had to hold Val's arm while navigating from the van to the car, in case I slipped in the mud.

On the Friday morning we had packed up and headed off once again on the road. Finally, we were heading South West - toward home. Still a couple of thousand kms away but it was the right direction now.

When we arrived in the outback town of Thargomindah, we visited the supermarket and filled up with fuel (ouch!). The fuel station had lovely hamburgers and we had them sitting at their café. Then it was onwards to our night's camp.

The camp was at a spot just off the Thargomindah to Innamincka Road, overlooking a valley. Its called Norley Rest Stop.



We have stayed here quite a few times and we love it. Just us, a huge sky and peace and quiet.

This is the spot which we abandoned in the middle of the night last year, at 2.00am, to make a mad drive to the QLD/SA border before it was shut by the authorities due to COVID. We made it by a handful of hours on that occasion.

This year was a tamer affair, with a quiet night's sleep after dinner and a shower. And the next morning saw us headed toward Innamincka. Once there, we would have crossed the QLD/SA border.