

Yelarbon to Boulia (QLD)

Stage 2 August 2018

What a joy it was to be travelling again in warmer weather. I am sure we will regret the loss of the cooler days soon enough, but for the time being we revelled in not being rugged up in jumpers and taking half an hour to get dressed because of all the layers of clothes!

In this report we travelled North and West from the small town of Yelarbon to Boulia, ready for the Plenty Highway crossing.



Between Winton and Boulia

Outback Camps

This stage started on 14 June.

Once again we had enjoyed our stay at Yelarbon, and found the group of other campers there to be friendly and sociable. But it was time to again head on.

Our day's trip from Yelarbon was to be longer than we usually put in these days so we started out fairly early. The next destination was Carnarvon Gorge in the Central Highlands and it was 600 kms away. We didn't want to do all that in one day so we thought we would head to the small town of Injune, some 400 kms North and then have a quicker trip into the gorge the following day.

There are several camping options at Injune; one is a camp site at Possum Park, \$15 for a water and powered site; there is a free camp on the outskirts of town at the Rodeo grounds with water and

toilets; and a gravel scrape in the bush just off the highway to the South of the town. We chose the gravel scrape (**S25 51 49 E148 33 14**) which was nice and peaceful and quiet. It was a cold night and so we had all the windows shut and I doubt we heard a thing until daybreak when it was time to get up for our morning cup of tea!

Sandstone Park

We wanted to get to Sandstone Park at Carnarvon Gorge nice and early, as they do not allocate specific sites and you need to find an empty spot. We did a little food shopping in Injune and pressed on Northwards. I reckon it was close to lunchtime when we arrived and found a lovely spot to put the van, overlooking the ranges. The views are purely awesome. The park is located on a ridge overlooking a range

of hills and is one of the best camp sites we have ever stayed at.



The camp site is about 6 or so kms from the Carnarvon Gorge headquarters and start of the walks. The cultural and natural heritage that Carnarvon Gorge offers is second to none. The

remnant rainforest in the side gorges is lush with Carnarvon Fan Palms (*Livistona nitida*), ancient *Macrozamia* cycads and ferns. Carnarvon Gorge is also home to the world's largest living fern, the King Fern (*Angiopteris evecta*). The main walking track, which is all level, is enveloped by towering gum trees, among them the northern most Sydney Blue Gum found in Australia. This is a beautiful area and very special to visit.



We met up with good friends Margaret and Lionel at the campground, together with their family

members Bev and Bill, and we camped together for three lovely days. Great company and welcome happy hours spent together.

Since our last stay they had installed Telstra and Optus phone service, and that was a welcome change.

It was interesting; on our last visit here I published an earthcache (a cache with a geological feature) based on the nearby cliffs. It had only been logged twice by a finder in the year since, but while we were staying, two people separately logged it!

Bogantungan

S23 38 53 E147 17 23

Our trek Northwards took us from Carnarvon Gorge towards Barcaldine and Lara Wetlands. Fairly early we set off up to Rolleston where we stopped to fill up the caravan water tanks and then on through the day to an overnight camp about 3.00pm at Bogantungan. This spot is a small huddle of houses, mostly unoccupied, near an old historical railway siding. I was again amused at how the



town (in which we saw absolutely no human beings this time, and only one person last visit) has a street light in front of the one occupied house, and an enormous phone tower right in that house's backyard.

We put the chairs out in the shade of a poinciana tree for a late afternoon drink and then retired for an early dinner and night. It was a warmish night and we didn't need the diesel heater at all. But we had not seen the last of the cold weather...

Bogantungan was only an overnighter on the way to Lara Wetlands.

Lara Wetlands

S23 48 14 E145 11 18

Onwards we travelled to Barcaldine. This town is a little oasis in a dry area and has lovely green parks and beds of petunias and palms. We went straight through as we were heading to Lara Wetlands, a camp site on a station just South of Barcaldine. The camp is a commercial venture run by a woman who set it up with her husband before he was tragically killed in a helicopter accident.

There is a shallow lake (yes OK they do have kayaking on it but I reckon it can't be more than a metre deep) around which campers set up wherever they want on nice green grassed sites. The pièce de résistance is the artesian pool which is very hot and so welcome to soak away any stress.



It is a relaxing place at which everyone seems to socialise really well and sit outside talking all day. I could easily stay more than the three days we had here.

This was the view from our van at sunset.

We went into Barcaldine for grocery shopping and had breakfast as well. What a great way to live.

After all this fun and frivolity we again packed up after our three nights here and headed

further Westward through Longreach to Winton. Our initial plan had been to head South from Longreach to Windorah but we decided to travel on a new road to us, from Winton to Boulia. That meant continuing on the highway to Winton first. The roads were dreadful, all undulating and patchy, so the kitchen needed to be packed up securely. The bread container which usually sits on the bench will wander over and off the bench onto the floor if not secured, and the kettle needed to be put in the sink for safety. Dreadful road building skills.

We overnighted at the Winton Longhole, a camp about three kms out of the township. It was popular for sure, and there was a little water in the waterhole which meant it was popular with the birdlife too. Despite the water in the waterhole, it was dry and dusty here, and only suitable as an overnighter at present. I was glad to move on the next day.

After a cool night (we put the diesel heater on in the morning!) we drove back into Winton and parked on a backstreet while we visited the new Waltzing Matilda Visitor



Information Centre and had morning tea. After nabbing a geocache, we headed on South West to Boulia.

The road to Boulia was about 360 kms and consisted mostly of a one lane narrow bitumen strip. That means you get off the road partially if another vehicle approaches and completely if a truck approaches. There were regular overtaking lanes where the bitumen is widened for a km or so but otherwise it was a narrow and rough road. At regular intervals there were rest stops, dusty areas around a roofed shelter, and a drop toilet. These are welcome places for a break.

Of course, we also stopped to regularly nab the geocaches along the track, part of the world's longest geocache trail from Winton QLD to Laverton WA. We have most of them now. I think we are only missing one.

The first 50 or so kms were monotonous and flat terrain but then we headed through hills and escarpments. That made the trip more interesting, certainly. We stopped for morning tea at a shelter, and ate the cream buns Val had bought back in Winton (oh joy) and continued on up until the Middleton Hotel, an outback pub in the middle of the outback. Travellers are welcomed to stay overnight at the freecamp opposite the hotel in a euphemistically named "Hilton Hotel".



But we continued on to a rest area further West, at an area called Hamilton Hotel Rest Area (S22 46 21 E140 35 51). It was a pleasant enough spot, with a shelter and toilets, and bore water, and some small trees. There were others camped there, all crammed together in a knot of vanswhy do they do that? There was a heap of room but they all clustered together. We beetled over to the other side of the track and camped in solitary splendour on nice clean gravel.

The next morning we got up nice and early and after our coffee and breakfast we were back on the road again. So we then headed on to Boulia. And that will be a whole new story.

