

WA Jarrahdene to Two People's Bay Stage 9 November 2018

In this stage of the trip we meandered around the South West of WA, and were enthralled with the jarrah, marri and karri forests. This is truly beautiful country. A distinct disadvantage however is the lack of free or cheap camping spots. So we spent much of our time at either forest reserves, national parks or bush camping grounds. And we edged closer to the spot we had chosen to spend Christmas - at Kendenup.



Windy Harbour WA

Urban and Bush Camping

This stage started on 12 December 2018.

Sid's Camp, Northcliffe

This camp is quirky and individualistic! Friends Mary-Anne and Craig were staying there and so we decided to join them. It was a good choice. Set on fairly extensive grounds, the campground provides for both powered and non-powered sites as well as showers and toilets. The toilets had been cobbled together from the canopies of a Landrover and something else indeterminate (just a

ute canopy). One toilet had an old sat dish as a roof... As I said, it was quirky. Every night they had happy hour at the central gazebo and lit a huge bonfire. The happy hours were popular.



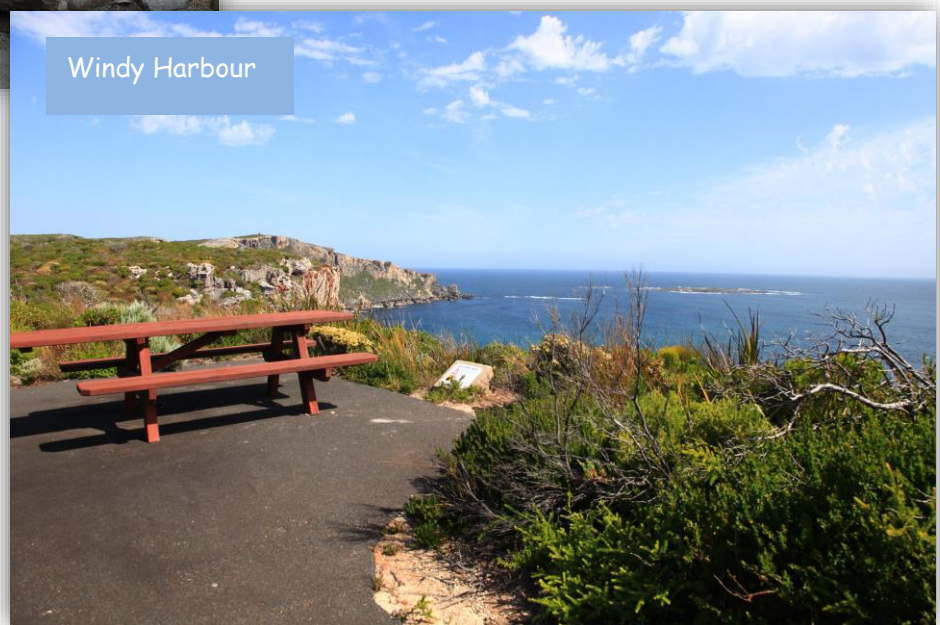
Although the camp was a good ten minutes' drive from Northcliffe, an old milling town, there were good facilities there. In Northcliffe itself there was a coffeeshop, which was quite popular, a great Visitor Information Centre, a Nursing Post, a general store and fuel outlet, a small organic produce store and a Workers Club where we had dinner one evening. People were incredibly friendly as they so often are in the country.

Val made use of the Nursing Post to have his six monthly Vitamin B12 injection, all at no cost.

And Windy Harbour was down a road about 50kms or so. Now THAT was a place worth seeing. The coastline was truly lovely, and had interesting bluffs overlooking the sea. Windy Harbour is in D'Entrecasteaux National Park and there were

interesting walks along the clifftop. One short walk went out to a table and chair set on the headland overlooking the Western ocean, which would be so lovely for drinks at sunset.

There was also a nice camping ground near the beach, set on fresh green grass and with the usual basic facilities. I thought it would be good to go back there after the school holidays and Christmas period had finished. As it happened that is what we did, but before the end of the school holidays.



School holidays and major public holiday periods such as Easter and Christmas can be tricky to navigate for travellers like ourselves. We prefer a quiet and peaceful camp and holiday makers are naturally enjoying a respite from work and home routines, often by late night partying and drinking.

Often there are noisy children in groups too, and although we don't begrudge families that enjoyment, we try to stay somewhere these groups are not. That usually means at inland spots without lakes or beaches (which families are attracted to). It's not that we dislike children or their noise, but in large groups it can be wearing.

Shannon National Park

Accordingly we headed toward the spot we had chosen for our Christmas week's camp at Kendenup. But we had a few nights before we were due there and so we chose a spot we had camped at for one night back in 2006. Shannon NP is South of the town of Manjimup, and is an old milling town which has been completely erased from the landscape and there is very little sign of the township which once had 90 houses. Now, it is a lovely campground set in the lush forest of the South West, and surrounded by karri, jarrah and marri trees, and ferns. The Shannon River runs below the camp, in a tangled thicket of ferns and vegetation.

There are two parts to the camp; one is the open, larger sites, set into tiers in the sloping area below the forest, and the older and more shaded sites are up in the forest. Those sites are pretty but very shaded which is not suitable for those of us who like our electrical appliances 😊 We chose the very best site of all, number 34. It was the highest of the open sites, looking down on all the other landscaped sites below. And the treed area was just behind us, as was the toilet and shower block. Hot water for showers is obtained by lighting a flued wood heater with the provided wood. Properly managed, the fire provides hot water up until the next morning. We used this hot water for our washing up too!



We did day trips out and about each day we were here, mostly up to Manjimup where we bought a new globe for the car headlights after one failed (fortunately we bought a spare last time we blew one, back in Tasmania) and had lunch at a lovely vegetarian café.

We also drove the two kms over to the nearby dam, and where we nabbed a cache. The dam is a day use only area and very scenic.

Finally, after four nights at Shannon, it was time to head over to Kendenup, about three hours to the South East. This was our chosen spot to spend Christmas.

Kendenup

Just a short 20 minutes' drive from Mount Barker, or an hour from Albany, Kendenup is a small

town with a big heart. The town has an agricultural showground and hall with an attached campground which they hope will attract visitors to their town. The campground is magic. They call it the Nature Based Campground for good reason; it has sites nicely spaced in and around the natural vegetation. There were about eight powered sites at \$15 a night, and could likely fit in about a dozen other rigs in and around the camp site.

We had booked a powered site on the advice of a good friend at Bridgetown (thanks Motherhen!) as we expected hot weather over the Christmas period. And indeed there was hot weather for two or three days, and we were glad to be on power for the airconditioning. We managed to get the best spot in the whole campground, with the awning opening into some cool and shady shrubs. We were to be joined by our good friends who we had met back in Kalgoorlie but they were held up elsewhere and enjoyed their Christmas at a lovely freecamp at Betty's Beach near Albany.

Christmas Day was warm, very warm, but we found that although the day was hot, the late afternoon was cool and we were able to enjoy a Christmas drink with our neighbours from across the campground.

Kendenup is one of those delightful small towns which are welcoming and friendly. We had dinner one night at the Golf Club and enjoyed a simple meal cooked beautifully by the local volunteers. Everything in this town seemed to be done by volunteers...including the management of the campground itself. Nothing was too much trouble for caretakers Steve or Ian, who both live nearby with their families. And the bread at the general store is baked on the premises. I am not exaggerating when I say that the bread was the best I have had since we last visited France. I am curious to know what they do, but it smells and tastes just like bread did when I was a kid. And I do often bake my own bread...but this was exceptional.

Due to our proximity to Albany, we went down there (an hour or so's drive) a couple of times, including having dinner one night.

On that occasion we visited the Field of Lights, an immersive display illuminating the Avenue of Honour in Centennial park and which paid homage to the troops who departed Albany for the Great War. Apparently there were 40,000 globes, each representing a troop member. It was spectacular. Folk who attended that evening were quietly reverential and clearly affected by the spectacle. It was hard to take photos as (a) I forgot my reading glasses and could not see the camera's settings and (b) I was too busy swatting mosquitoes to stand still for too long. But the photos I did take were a good representation of what we



saw.

Shannon NP

After Christmas, we needed to head back toward Bridgetown and we chose to again stay at Shannon National Park as we had loved it there last time. And we managed to get the very same lovely spot as the previous stay!

Alas Shannon does not have phone reception or internet and so we could not download our digital copy of the Adelaide Advertiser each morning, or emails etc. So we found ourselves scampering around visiting nearby town where we could not only sightsee but also get internet coverage. But this was a minor problem given how lovely the park is generally.



Maranup Ford

Once we left Shannon, we headed further North and up toward Bridgetown. As I needed good phone reception for work, we had chosen a caravan park nearby which was alleged to have good phone cover. Alas when we arrived on the Sunday we discovered the phone reception was patchy at best and so we only stayed one night. It was a shame as the park was quite lovely and we would otherwise have enjoyed staying there. So we made arrangements to stay at nearby Bridgetown.

Bridgetown

Bridgetown is a pretty town, and set in a small valley with hills all around. Much of the surrounding area is devoted to logging or the wood industry and it seems to be sustainably managed as the countryside is quite pretty.

Our stay at the caravan park was unremarkable in itself, although it is set on the banks of the Blackwood River, which had a good amount of water in it. We did have a view of the river which was nice, but truly I think the price of \$40 a night for this park is pushing the envelope, as they say. It is a basic park, although neat and clean, and sites are average to say the least.

But we were here mostly to see our friends nearby and also we needed to be in a town with good phone reception for work. I have to say though, that we got some of the cleverest geocaches we have ever seen while nipping around Bridgetown and I would highly recommend the historical school site series as worth seeing. There was also a series of clever caches at Denmark, which is recognised as having one of Australia's most innovative cachers, a person by the name of RoyMerc.

Windy Harbour

After Bridgetown we went to one of the nicest campsites of this trip. (Yes, yes I do know I keep saying each spot is my 'favourite of the trip' but this one was special). Windy Harbour is in D'Entrecasteaux National Park, and has a lovely campground. It is a green and grassy area with

both individual sites and also a large group area as well. One side of the large area is for unpowered camping and the other side has probably six or seven powered sites. But don't celebrate too much at having a powered site available...it was limited to only low amperage applications. This means you could run lights and TV but not much else. You certainly would not be able to use a



microwave or airconditioner. Anyway we did not need a powered site and tucked ourselves into a nice little nook by ourselves and enjoyed four lovely days here. This park was also pretty expensive. It charged \$25 a night for an unpowered site.

The national park nearby has nice headland walks and lookouts and we went to all of them. One

afternoon we packed a bottle of wine and nibbles and went to a headland lookout, set along a short walk from a carpark. We had an afternoon drink at a spot with million dollar views.

As it was school holidays while we were here, we had anticipated it could get busy. After all, it is close to beaches and very scenic. And there were several groups with little kids. But they all seemed well behaved, and the parents kept the children occupied with games and excursions. It was a credit to them all.



Muir's Bridge

S34 28 37 E116 54 6

This roadside stop was very handy and a great spot to spend the night. Just off the highway was a

large open space set among the trees and near the river. It was a nice, wide, clear and deep and we walked down to look at it in the late afternoon. We arrived at the camp early in the afternoon and our setting up involved no more than a quick getting out of the coffee machine, and making of a cup to go with lunch. Apart from a rubbish bin and covered table and chair rest area, there were no facilities. There was a wooden table and bench seats next to the spot we had pulled into and we used those for our afternoon drinks. Surrounded by palms and flowering bushes and nearby gums, this was a pleasant spot and we had a quiet night here with no interruptions. These spots are welcome for the travellers like ourselves.

Mount Barker Freecamp

Further to the South was the town of Mount Barker, where we had spent Christmas nearby. This time we used the town's thoughtfully provided freecamp which was right on the edge of town and within walking distance of the hotel and grocery store. We walked down to the hotel for dinner and enjoyed a relaxing drink and a meal before walking back home.

The freecamp is near, very near, to the railway tracks, and trains do run past on a regular schedule. And they are required to toot the horn as there is a crossing nearby. This can be a bit of a shock if you are not expecting it. Luckily, there was only one train during the night, and the driver gave only one little half strangled toot. I barely noticed it before rolling over and going back to sleep.

We were the only folk in the freecamp area...where are all the other travellers, we wondered.

Two People's Bay

The next target destination was a bushcamp near Albany. A nice little caravan park is set in a natural bush setting on the road out to Two People's Bay. It is owned by a slightly eccentric and very friendly bloke called John who maintains it impeccably in so far as cleanliness of the facilities are concerned.

It was a pleasant spot with all the



facilities we needed (toilets and a laundry which we did use one day to dry a load of washing). I think its greatest merit was its closeness to Albany (about 20 kms) and the beautiful

East Bay Beach

beaches nearby. It was unremarkable in all other respects.

We spent a week here, mostly doing day trips in and out of Albany, and out to the beaches. These beaches are really worth writing home about. They are just lovely.

We had a whole week in Albany and thoroughly enjoyed it. It helped too that we enjoyed good company with the folk camped near us at Two People's Bay Bush Camp.

Overall this stage of the trip had involved staying at a number of bush camps or caravan parks (five, if you count the night at Maranup Ford) which is more than we would normally use, but we had anticipated the need to either have power during hot weather or somewhere to retreat to during the school holidays. And we have discovered that Bush camps, or Nature Reserve Camps as they are often called, can have a real appeal. They are generally in a bush setting and less crowded than other parks, and usually a good deal cheaper. We didn't always connect to power at these camps.

What we continued to notice in recent travelling is the desire for those fellow travellers camping nearby to keep their distance and not interact with others. At first I thought it might just be us who were being avoided but then I observed that increasingly folk did not make contact with anyone camping nearby and kept to their own company. A couple of other travellers said they had also noticed this trend, and we wondered if it was largely due to more people being on the road for longer periods of time (or even permanently) and thus needing to create privacy and space around themselves. This is of course only a general observation and not applicable to all fellow-travellers. We still found our travels enriched by the many wonderful people we met and shared a drink with at Happy Hours.