

Travelling from Brisbane to Denman

Stage 25

Queensland and NSW

In this section of our travels we picked up the new car and then the new van, and started the trek back to our new home in South Australia. The last trip report (Number 23) was completed in March of 2008 – almost a year ago! We have done some trips in the intervening year but our non-travelling life interfered a great deal.

Special points of interest:

- The new car and van
- Catching up with forumite friends Pelbo, and Kimbo
- Dangar Falls Camp ground
- Brettie Campground

Trip report

Pickup of New Van

13 February 2009

It was a raining when we left the Kedron factory in the Brisbane suburb of Brendale, after picking up the new van. Not an auspicious start to the new van's life! The van itself looked beautiful. We spent about two hours going through all the van's features before they let us take it away! When we picked it up the factory had put a leather cleaning and protecting pack on the bench as a gift, and there were placemats and Kedron cups on the table! Nicely welcoming.

This van has a washing machine so I needed to see how that worked, and it has the new Dometic windows which are a bit fiddly to operate at first.

Lake Wivenhoe

13 -20 February 2009

We drove up to Wivenhoe Dam from the factory just after lunch and arrived mid-afternoon. Setting up camp in a brand new van, while carrying stuff from the car in rain is not pleasant, but at least we had a nice clean home! It is certainly fun putting stuff in a new van. Some gear we had brought with us from Adelaide (taken from the old van prior to its sale) and other gear we had brought in Brisbane. This van is a different colour scheme to the old van and needed a new bedspread etc. What a shame, having to go shopping!!

I understand Wivenhoe is owned and operated by the QLD Water Board, and it is a small area of powered and watered sites on top of a hill, looking down into the dam. There are about 10 or so concrete slabbed sites with power and a few others which are unpowered. Also, it is quite cheap. It was \$122 for the eight nights. The view is wonderful, especially at sunset with a drink of something cold and wet. Most of the time we were here, we were the only campers, but on the weekend all sites were full.

There is NextG reception up there and it was important to have a phone for work that week (the reason why we stayed on one place for so long!). While here, we did day trips to Toowoomba and to nearby Esk and Fernvale. This is a truly beautiful area, green and fertile. And they have had recent rain. Esk is a delightful village, and we had dinner at the pub there one night.

Amamoor Forest

21 and 22 February 2009

We wanted to catch up with fellow forumite, Pelbo and his wife Marlies and had arranged to meet up at Amamoor forest campground near Gympie. As Pelbo is living in Gympie at present, Amamoor seemed a good option as it was close for us both, Amamoor is managed by the Government's Department of something-or-other and we had to purchase a permit on line, print it out and take that with us. Talk about rigmarole! And of course totally inefficient if you decide to stay another day or two, as there is no phone reception out there. But it is a lovely spot and there is a nice big waterhole for swimming. As it was a weekend, it was hopping busy.

My very favourite groups were there – two separate camping groups with small, noisy mini bikes, ridden by those who should never have one. One kid even used his to ride to and from the toilets! Why do people go to pristine bush settings and then destroy the tranquility with those silly things? Despite this we had a wonderful time, and spent ages talking over cups of tea or coffee, or a cold drink.

Tallebudgera Tourist Park

1554 Gold Coast Hwy, Palm Beach

23 to 25 February 2009

Our fellow Kedronner, Dazmit told us about this park, and it was a welcome stop over for a couple of days, in order to do the washing and do some business stuff (related to the sale of a house in Darwin) and –verrrrry important indeed – go out to dinner with my good friends Shirley and Joe. Shirley and I had a joint private practice in Darwin, a few years ago, and we shared not only the premises but lots of laughs, drinks together (of course!) and even sometimes discussed work. Ah yes, back to the topic at hand; Tallebudgera is a nice park, with lots of well spaced sites, most with concrete slabs, has some shady sites, and best of all, some sites with water views of the tidal estuary. A path goes past the park, leading to the beach. This is a lovely walk and is very popular with locals and visitors alike. We happily paid the \$40 or so a night for one of the water view sites. You could easily spend weeks here.

Girraween NP

26 February to 2 March

Near Stanthorpe, in the Granite belt, this delightful national park is one of our favourites. We took the previous van there a couple of times –both times it was freezing cold- and it was a natural choice to take the new van to this lovely location too. The cooler weather was a nice change from the heat and humidity of Amamoor, and a good chance to properly test the solar panels.

This van has four 130 watt solar panels and four AGM batteries, as well as an 1800 watt Xantrex inverter which has been built in, and available to all power points. It is an impressive array and we expect it to deliver more power than we need. If we want to, for very short periods, we can run the washing machine or the microwave while bush camped. (It is necessary to not drain the batteries so this has to be done with care). We

were so happy to see that it all worked well, and the readout meter inside the van allows us to check how much is coming in from the sun, as well as how much is going out as a load on the batteries.

Pembroke Caravan Park

Armidale

3 and 4 March 2009

Due to needing mobile phone reception we stayed a couple of days at a park in Armidale. It was a really pretty little park (one of the Top Tourist chain) and it was good to do the washing and do some housekeeping on the van. It is a constant joy to me that you can sweep and wash the floors in about 10 minutes and wash the bathroom back to a gleaming state in oh, about 5 minutes! Compare that with home.

We went out to dinner one night, and enjoyed a Thai meal near the Mall.

Dangar Falls camp ground

S 30 40 20.1 E 151 43 34.0

5 to 8 March 2009

Initially we tried to camp at another national park site run by NSW Parks, but they were doing up the nearby road, so we had to divert to this park. Interestingly, Dangar Falls campground is a free park, and the other would have cost us nearly \$10 a night, so we got lucky. I can highly recommend this bushcamp; it has a clean drop toilet, water taps at several sites, and five or six sites around a loop, all set into the bush. Most sites have a wooden table and chairs, and all have a fireplace (with wood provided while we were there).

The walks around the campground are truly breathtaking with views out over the falls and of the gorge. While here, we sat outside with either a cup of tea or a cold drink each evening, and watched the wildlife come up close. The brush tailed wallabies were all about, and the joeys were leaving their mothers' pouches and jittering around! And the birds! We put the outside speakers on in the van and sat listening to Puccini opera selections, and I swear the birds and kangaroos came close to listen. This is a beautiful place, and we nearly did not get to see it.

Bretti Reserve

S 31 47 29 E 151 54 56

9 and 10 March 2009

This lovely reserve, to the north of Newcastle, is in a lovely valley, with towering mountains in the background, and sites along a deepish river. It is completely free, and the only facilities are drop toilets. We met up with fellow Kedron owners Kimbo and Ned, who were just at the start of a big trip up to QLD, across to the NT, WA and back to Newcastle. They were in fine form and great company. Although we dislike (generally) travelling together with others, it is enjoyable to spend time with good friends in one place, like this. We basically spent all our time relaxing over cups of tea or coffee, and red wine, while talking. I must add that while we generally avoid actually travelling with others in a van convoy, on the couple of occasions we have done it, we have immensely enjoyed the company of those we travelled with (on both occasions it was with another couple with a Bushtracker – once on the Gibb River Road, and another time on part of the Savannah Way, on an unmaintained road). What makes the difference between having a good time travelling with others or having a disappointing experience, I feel, is (a) having the freedom to peel off and do your own thing if it's time for that, and/or (b) if

travelling in a more structured way, to have 'rules' thought out in advance, such as whether you will bush camp or stay at parks, how much you will each spend on extras like winery tours, etc. And you need to have an agreed plan to resolve differences of opinion when they occur, as occur they will. Anyway, back to the trip report...

Denman Van Village, Denman

11-13 March 2009

We really intended to stay at a free camp for a night, on the way to Sofala and Hill End, but we realized about lunch time (when checking emails on the computer at a rest stop) that I had to spend about a day doing some work which had been emailed to me, so we decided to stay at Denman, and combine the work with a trip to a few wineries and other attractions. The park is delightful (and \$25 a night for an ensuite site) and was central to visit a number of places. So we booked in for three nights.

While here (among attractions) we visited Arrowfield Wines, Nightingale Winery and the Pukara Olive Farm. I thoroughly enjoyed all of them! And we went out to dinner at one of the local hotels, and had a superb meal – a grilled chicken with cream, wine and garlic sauce. I might have to work on duplicating that one.