

SE SOUTH AUSTRALIA LOOP 2017

What a wonderful short loop of SA we have just undertaken! We had four weeks to complete the trip and enjoyed late Spring/early Summer weather. Each camp spot we stayed at was just lovely, and generally we had camps either completely to ourselves or with other campers suitably at a distance nearby. The exception was at the Showgrounds and one caravan park we stayed at in the four weeks; we had neighbours beside us at both spots. After weeks of solitude it can feel strange to hear a neighbour's TV or voices right next to us.

Where did we go? To each of a Conservation Park, a freecamp on a lake, a National Park, another National Park, a Showground at Mount Gambier and then a caravan park at Port MacDonnell. After that we found a gorgeous freecamp on a rural volcanic lake, and finally we again stayed at a RV camp in Kingston.



I can commend this short loop to anyone, whether you have less time or more, but urge caution if the weather is hot.

Weather forecasts said our state would experience hot weather, so we headed first for Deep Creek Conservation Park, near Victor Harbour. Trig campground, site 7 is our favourite, and we had a quiet spot with our awning into cool shady trees nearby. As it turned out, the weather was great and the expected heat didn't eventuate, and our four nights here were superb.

On the Saturday we headed over to Victor Harbor's iconic markets. As it was Schoolies Week, many stalls were absent but it was still a Pleasant day out and we bought chocolates, cheese and bread, and some jam. Locals were less than impressed with Schoolies Week, and who could blame them. Large groups of hormone-affected youth ranged around town and partied heavily. Apparently they left great swathes of rubbish after overnight sessions in parks. I guess it is only one week in the year...

After Deep Creek we decided to call into a camp site we had found when a Facebook friend posted its details a year or so earlier. If it was busy, we thought, we would keep travelling to the next spot. But no, Sturt Point was delightfully peaceful with only a couple in a tent down near the water's edge, and we were in solitary splendour up on the ridge overlooking the water. Point

Sturt is near the small town of Clayton, where we used the dump point to empty our toilet canister, and accessed on a good gravel road of about 5 or 6 kms.

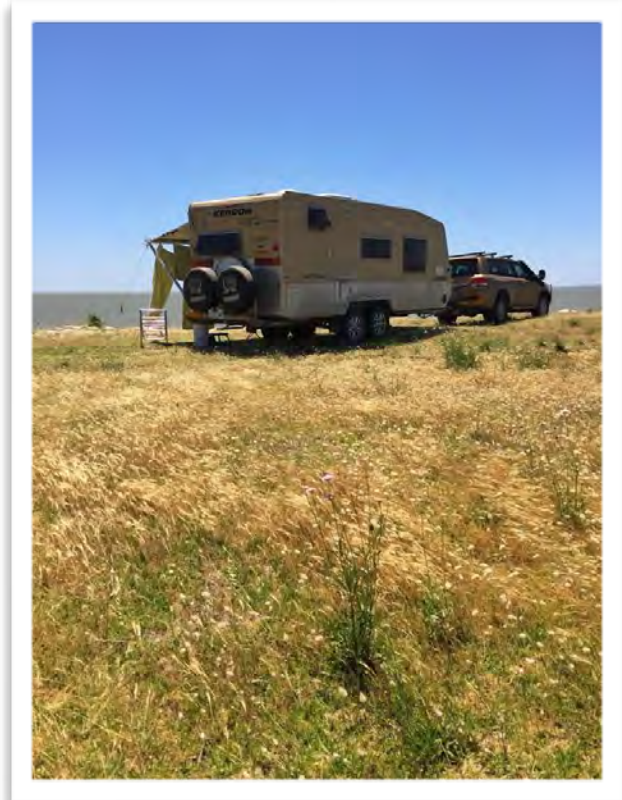
The co-ordinates are S35 50 05 E139 02 46.

This is a pretty special place and one we know several friends stay at. Nevertheless we were the only people there for the four nights we stayed. Perched overlooking Lake Alexandrina, we had a superb view of birds and water. There are literally no facilities here so one must be self contained.

At Point Sturt, a head cold which had started back at Deep Creek, got a heap worse. I developed a dreadful cough, and found it very hard to sleep due to the coughing, and my breathing became quite wheezy. Thank goodness there were no neighbours to be bothered by my constant coughing! This cold stuck around for nearly two weeks....



It did get windy at Point Sturt and we had to pull in the awning one morning. But apart from one



warmish day, the weather continued to be comfortable, and with cool nights.

We enjoyed a trip over to a local winery called Rusticana, and had a lunch platter there, with a glass of wine overlooking the grapes. Their deep red wine made from Druid grapes is a sure fire winner with us and we bought some to take home.

But eventually we needed to leave and so we pulled the awning in and headed for the Coorong, skirting past Meningie (where we stopped for lunch at the bakery) and pulled in to the 42 Mile Crossing National park camp site. **S36 17 13. E139 42 42.** There is a good toilet there, and a tap with bore water, but those are the only facilities. We had a lovely spot on green grass, and sheltered from the nearby ocean breezes by a sand dune which was covered with vegetation. Again the weather was cool and sunny, just perfect. A German cyclist pedalled in late afternoon, and we spent a couple of hours talking with her over a glass of white wine. I think she was fairly grateful to be offered a coffee from our machine too. Val gave her so much wine to drink it was as well her tent was only metres away.

By this time my chest infection was worsening so we drove to Kingston (50 or so kms) and consulted a pharmacist there. She gave me some decongestant and a fresh ventolin puffer (mine was out of date by three years and probably had been of little or no use whatsoever). These two measures made all the difference and within twelve hours I was feeling much better.

As we only had four weeks for this trip, it was time to move on. But we felt there were still some spots nearby which would bear exploring and we would try to get back to this camp soon.

Our next destination was Bool Lagoon, South of Naracoorte. A pleasant campground and managed by SA's Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, this is a bird sanctuary and home to thousands of birds. It is quite expensive to camp here, at \$20 a night and a \$10 one-off entry fee applies. Val gets camping free through his CFS volunteer work so the cost was not an issue for us. It is a truly lovely place to camp, and the bird walk was a highlight of the entire trip. We could see a flock of swans from our caravan awning and it became almost compulsive viewing as we watched three little cygnets being cared for by their parents. The care



and attention paid by the adults was something to see. Constantly, one adult stayed alert, with the head and neck raised in an 'upright periscope' position, swivelling at each sound or possible danger. This must be very tiring for the parents.

We stayed six nights here and thoroughly enjoyed the time. Each day we did trips to surrounding wineries, or in the town of Naracoorte, and did a little geocaching as well. As there was a tap with water here, we put a load of clothes in the washing machine, but it is hard work carrying the water from the tap, so we saved most of our washing for our next stop at Mt Gambier.

A major plus at Bool was good quality phone and internet reception, which is a recent innovation for the spot. On previous trips we have had no phone coverage whatsoever. As I was working and needed the phone, it meant we could stay here and not move to a spot with better coverage.

From Bool Lagoon we travelled South on the Riddoch Highway through green fields and forestry plantings, and headed to the Mount Gambier Showgrounds. At \$22 a night for power and water, and in a pleasant enough green grassed area, we thought this was a great camp. The toilet block was clean and well maintained and there was even a little herb garden for residents' use. It will be recalled that we had a bit of washing to do, so as soon as water was hooked up, the washing machine went into overdrive. Bedding linens and towels were done, as well as our clothes. This took quite a bit of time. I am glad we have our own washing machine as traipsing back and forth to the laundry would have been exhausting!

The weather was still favourable but we had sunny days interspersed with showers so the drying of the washing had to be carefully managed, and brought in as soon as there was a hint of a shower. One of the good things about caravanning is the small amount of housework. There is not a lot of cleaning to do, due to the small space. I know when I get home how I sigh over the hour or so it takes to do the floors in the house. In the van? About six minutes.

While in the Mount we visited a few places in the region and stocked up on our groceries. This is such a pretty town and always seems refreshingly green. One of the places which is a must visit is the Umpherston Gardens and they are a true delight.

Another highlight of staying at the Showgrounds was the Family Truck Show display and associated fair which was held while we were there. We only had to walk 100metres or so and could visit the display, which included a Studebaker Coupe that Val found of some interest. How good was that!

Our stay in Mount Gambier was only three days and we moved on to the caravan park at Port MacDonnell, to another



powered site. In the four weeks we only stayed at two parks with power and both times felt claustrophobic due to nearby neighbours. Both (the Mount Gambier Showgrounds and Port MacDonnell) were lovely places to stay but we definitely prefer a freecamp or national park.

The nice feature of Port Macdonnell's Foreshore caravan park is its siting right on a stretch of beach about a km from the small town of Port MacDonnell, and the relatively private sites with hedges of vegetation in between each two sites. But our neighbours were uncomfortably close and as they were in a poptop van we could hear every word they spoke. I would hate to travel in a poptop van due to the lack of sound privacy. I do hope we did not make too much noise or bothered them; if near a poptop we try hard to keep all our noise to a minimum, including keeping our voices low.



The region around Port MacDonnell is breathtaking with its scenic beaches and headlands as well as the forested region toward the coast and border with Victoria. We drove over to Lower Glenelg NP, near Nelson, intending to camp at one of the riverside camps for a few days. But the Victorian parks administrators had closed the area to camping, citing maintenance before the school holiday

season. Never mind, we can always come back another time. As a side excursion we drove over to Lake Monibeong, (S38 08 01. E141 11 08) nearer the coast and also a national park campground. It is in the Discovery Bay coastal park. This camp has a flushing toilet and no other facilities other than a tap with (presumably) lake water. We have camped here before years ago and although the campground is somewhat sparse, the lake is just gorgeous. I think the ocean was about a km away. We also drove in to look at Ewen Ponds and were surprised to realise it is permitted to swim there.

The coast is absolutely beautiful and is alone worth a visit here for the purpose of seeing the scenery.

Several days earlier we had found a gem of a campground while driving around in the forest areas near Millicent. After checking with the relevant Council that camping was allowed there, we drove over with the van after leaving Port MacDonnell. The roads are minor and the last short stretch before the campground is good gravel. Well before lunch we arrived at Lake Leake. I am not going to give its coordinates because it is such a special place and if anyone wants to find it they can do so with a little research. This is an extinct volcanic crater which has filled with water and is



now a valued recreation area for local communities. There is a working gas barbecue, a toilet block and a covered picnic area. And camping is on the lovely well mown grass. There was prolific birdlife and we enjoyed watching the swans from our lounge area. We spent three lovely days and nights here.

Hard as it was, we had to leave and head closer to home as we needed to be there for Christmas, and prepare for the longer trip away to Tasmania in the New Year.

So again we packed up and this time we tossed up between a re-visit to the Coorong or a stay at the Kingston SE RV camp. **S36 49 40. E139 51 01.** Sited right on the Esplanade foreshore of this lovely town, it is a 48 hour limit and a fee of \$10 covers both nights. Whether you stay one night or two, it was the same fee. A ticket machine is at the camp entrance and it even takes credit cards! The good news is it was only 100 metres to the pub for dinner. We stayed for the two nights and had a pleasant enough spot on green grass near some flowering shrubs and a small pine tree. The weather continued to be delightful and we had a cool sea breeze the whole time we were there. This was the end of our month's loop and from Kingston we headed home, ready for Christmas.

