

Trip From Adelaide to Melbourne (and Return)

This trip was planned as a two week break, taking in some National Park camping as well as city highlights. Melbourne's Lygon Street beckoned, and the Victorian markets! And to prepare for the hectic pace of the metropolitan escapade, we called in to Lower Glenelg National Park on the way.

Special points of interest:

- Temperate rainforests of Lower Glenelg National Park
- Melbourne – and al fresco dining at Lygon Street
- Bool Lagoon, near Naracoorte



Green Lake Reserve (near Ararat, Vic)

Trip report

It was nearly 8.30am when we left home in the Barossa, as we had a long way to go. The route we chose was through Tailem Bend and then south to Mount Gambier and on to Port MacDonnell, a lovely, small coastal town. We drove through increasingly beautiful country, through forests and green, fresh pretty towns with delightful gardens. The further south we travelled the greener the fields were and towns like Naracoorte and Penola had displays of roses and leafy green trees. We whisked through the wineries of the Limestone Coast and Naracoorte and straight through Mount Gambier

Morning tea was at a roadside stop, under some pine trees and facing into forest and ferns, and lunch was another stop at a similar spot. A caravan is a wonderful vehicle for stopping, making a fresh coffee and a sandwich, and even having a nap if you need.

A hard day's driving saw us arrive at Port MacDonnell about 3.30pm. We stayed at the caravan park, near Woolwash Reserve, nestled into some vegetation.

Tuckered out, we checked the emails, made a couple of work phone calls (left over stuff which

hadn't been adequately dealt with before we left) and then had dinner at the local hotel – a lovely meal. I think South Australia has Australia's best pub meals.

Lower Glenelg NP (Pritchards Camp) – 19 kms East of Nelson

S 38 03 23 E 141 13 05

(Pritchards Campground)

2 and 3 March 2011

The next day we left early and called in to the small town of Nelson to pay our fees for camping at Lower Glenelg NP. We had booked ahead by phone and needed to pay our camping fee before arriving. Our permit safely on the car dashboard we were off a further half hour to the Glenelg River.

This national park is set in temperate rainforest and is truly lovely; there are tall eucalypts and other trees, as well as ferns and native flowering plants which are fresh and cool. There are koalas in the trees if you look carefully, and wombats and possums.

There are two separate campgrounds at Pritchards, sites 1-10 and 11 to 20. Several sites fit a large rig, but on our last two trips we had stayed in site 20. This was booked out on this occasion so we took site 10 – which we were assured was the Ranger's own personal favourite. She was right – it is absolutely the best site.



We angled the van so the awning opened into a pocket of rainforest and gave us a secluded little cave of green to sit and read and talk. The site was sufficiently away from the other sites that the noise of noisy groups of children (who arrived the second day) didn't bother us. They were all having fun and well behaved anyway.

What did bother us slightly was the couple (aged in their 50's?) who played loud rock music off and on all day. They only turned it off at 10.00pm; perhaps they thought they were at a standard caravan park, and that the rules of a caravan park applied at a forest park...). In the interests of park harmony we tried to ignore it.

A visiting ranger gave us a recommendation for another spot in the national park – in the Discovery Bay Coastal Park. This is about 14 or 15 kms away from Pritchards, and is a campground called **Lake Monibeong** (see picture below). There is camping near the lake, although you are not allowed to actually camp right at the water's edge. To get there we drove along the Portland to Nelson Road (the highway) and about 1 km after the turnoff to the



Nelston-Winnap Road, a well formed gravel road (Bong Bong Road) is off to the right, up a slight incline into a pine forest. The road took us about 10 kms through the forest and directly to the Lake campground.

The campground is absolutely lovely and being open, with some shady coastal trees and vegetation, is completely different to Lower Glenelg's

Pritchard camp. It is also quieter. No aging rockers here! I noticed the water in the lake was crystal clear, with a sandy bottom. It would be ideal for swimming. Next time we are down this way, it is where we will stay – although I still love Pritchards.

There was very marginal mobile phone reception at Monibeong, but don't bank on it.

A word of warning: you should pay before arriving at either Lake M or Lower Glenelg NP – either back at Nelson or Portland, and you can book by ringing 08 87384051. No self-registration.

Green Lake Reserve

4 March

Well before lunch we pulled in to a lovely spot near Ararat, called Green Hill Lake Reserve (Camps 5 # 533). It was only 500 metres in off the highway and is a very handy spot to overnight or spend a few days. There are individual camp spots all down the lake and there is a toilet and hot shower block at the area closest to the entrance. Although some folk had pulled further down the lake for privacy most vans were clustered close to the amenities block.

The last time we were here it was free, but this time around a ranger came and collected a fee of \$5 per vehicle per night. What a great deal - toilets, showers and a \$million view, all for \$5!!

Melbourne

5 to 11 March

Ashley Gardens CP, Braybrook.

The purpose of this trip was to see family in Melbourne and we did that. We also shopped in the city, dined in Lygon Street, and went to the Caravan Show at Caulfield.

The park is pretty much what you expect of a park in the city – tight, with vans all fairly close, and very noisy from planes flying overhead 24 hours a day. After Green Lake, it does come as a shock to the system....

One of the problems we had here was the site we were placed on was adjacent to three wizz-bangs (small camper vans with noisy opening and shutting of doors). They were right next to us and as you can imagine, they made a racket at night.

Castlemaine

12 to 15 March

We stayed at the Big 4 in Castlemaine and as it was a long weekend, it was busy and noisy, but not too bad. The park is a small and pleasant spot, right near the Botanical Gardens. The Gardens are lovely to walk through and make a nice setting for the park.

While it was busy over the long weekend, with groups socialising and children playing, the noise was of happy and relaxed people taking time out from busy lives. So we just laid back and let the world pass us by.

We visited some small towns around the area and enjoyed seeing the fresh and green countryside – after the recent flooding experienced by this region.

One day we drove over to nearby Daylesford on a day trip. We called in to a chocolate shop on the way (and had a hot chilli cup of chocolate – lovely).

I had a birthday while we were at Castlemaine, and we went out to dinner at the Railway Hotel – which was a lovely experience. The food was great and the venue is reminiscent of a hotel in an 1800's setting. I believe the building to be of a similar vintage...

Bool Bool Lagoon

S 37 06 18 E 140 43 11

16 to 19 March

Located south of Naracoorte and north of Penola (SA) the Bool Lagoon Reserve is a Department of Environment and Heritage managed park. As we have a parks and entry pass (annual cost is about \$100) we get to enter and stay at such parks free of charge.

There was reasonable NextG reception and TV reception was OK too. Surprisingly, it was freezing cold at night (it was 3 degrees in the morning one day) and days were cool and sunny. Perfect camping weather!

This particular reserve is recognised as a bird watchers paradise, for good reason. Waking to the sound of the birds, and overlooking water is not to be missed. We had planned to only stay for a couple of nights, but it was so appealing we decided to extend our stay another night.

Parked on nice green grass overlooking the wetlands, we were in a pristine and pleasant environment. Val, a keen bird watcher, was in his element. There were many magpie geese while we were here and while familiar with them in the Top End, apparently they are more migratory down here in the south.

The second morning we were here, I put on my running shoes (in my case, a misnomer if ever there was one) and could feel something in the toe of the left shoe. I ignored it, thinking maybe there was some grass in there, or the sock was bunched up. So I wiggled my toes a bit, and realised there WAS something in there. By this time I was sitting in the toilet, but took off the shoe, and inside the toe area was an enormous – and very squashed- huntsman spider. I had to remind myself to breathe, I was so shocked. (I absolutely hate spiders). Val got rid of it for me.

The Lucindale Annual Field Day was on during our stay and we enjoyed a day out there, looking at the show exhibits and enjoying the food and wine talks and displays. It was absolutely enormous, and so very well organised. As usual I came away with so much stuff that the car was groaning all the way back. Wine, chocolates, nuts, more chocolates...you get the drift, I suppose.

There is so much to see and do in this region that we will come back for a week, and see everything in more detail.