

# Carawine Gorge (WA) to Karijini Gorge June 2015

The Pilbara's Carawine Gorge was a haven after the trip through the desert on the Gary Junction Road, and we stayed there for a while before continuing the journey. In this stage of the trip we travelled through more of the spinifex, hills and big sky country. This phase of the trip could be thought of as the "Gorge Section".



*Carawine Gorge*

## Special points of interest:

- Carawine Gorge
- Skull Springs Track to Nullagine
- Karijini NP Gorges

## Carawine Gorge

S21 28 55 E121 1 43

(We arrived here on 9 June).

What a delightful spot was Carawine Gorge! Set beside the lovely Oakover River, on the pebbly banks, surrounded by small ghost gums and paperbark gums, bushes and patches of grass, this was indeed an oasis to refresh and relax for a time. I knew immediately that it would be difficult to leave such a special place.

Carawine Gorge is off the Ripon Hills Road from Marble Bar, 9 kms South of the turnoff to Telfer Mine. The track in is 9 kms along a pretty good gravel road. At the end of the track it is important to not continue any further South than the airstrip if you are towing any trailer of substantial weight. Once you hit the river pebbles at the gorge proper it could be very easy to get bogged. The track which heads to the right and across the airstrip is all good solid gravel and leads to the riverside camping areas. I captured the co-ordinates for the turn off: S 21 28.58 E 121 1.953

It was the middle of the afternoon when we all pulled in, and each of us found spots well separated from each other alongside the river. But we were close enough for shared Happy

Hours!

It was Erich's birthday on the day of our arrival and so we had special reason to celebrate arriving in such a lovely, tranquil place. Lesley made some Swiss German delicacy (I couldn't pronounce it if I tried) as an accompaniment to afternoon drinks, and we contributed homemade sausage rolls and bubbly from home in Springton. All of this was on the banks of the Oakover River!



There was prolific birdlife here and among the birds we saw were pelicans, spinifex pigeons, budgerigars, ibises, swans, jabirus, hard headed ducks, Australasian grebe, black fronted dotterels, egrets, herons, rainbow beaters, coots, white plumed honeyeaters, black kites, red backed kingfishers, among the many we saw there. Oh and flocks of noisy corellas...

Up until this point, our plans had been to travel North to Derby and across to the NT on the Gibb River Road. But over a cup of tea under the van awning we made one of our famous decisions to change the plan considerably, and instead head down through WA's wheatbelt via Karijini Gorge. This would retrace some travels we did two years ago after we finished the Great Central Road. I thought at that time we had not given the area enough attention.

### **Nullagine**

After six lovely nights at Carawine, it was time to head down to the small town of Nullagine. Our options were to head up North to Marble Bar, then down to Nullagine on the better used road, but we chose the Woodie Woodie/Skull Springs track. This route was said to be scenic.

"Scenic" does not do this track justice. It was breathtaking in its scope and majesty. The track rolls over hills and across creeks, with views of valleys and rolling hills. The road itself was in very good condition, with only minor



washouts and dips. OK, there were LOTS of dips, all of which needed slowing down and negotiating carefully due to the van on the

back. It took us five hours to do 170kms, but that included several photo stops and a lunch break.

We also needed to check and deal with a hot wheel on the van, which apparently had some grit on the brakepads. It took only a few minutes for Val to sort that out (the man needs a medal) and we kept going.

Nullagine is a small town with a roadhouse for fuel, a general store and a Council owned caravan park among its facilities. We decided to stay the night at the nice little caravan park, so we could walk down to the pub for dinner. It was \$15 for an unpowered site on nice green grass which suited us admirably. After a quick visit to the small general store, we had a cup of tea sitting outside the van, rang home, and then walked down to the pub for dinner. The meal was generous and OK for a small town.

### Mount Robison Rest Stop

S 23 2 34 E 118 50 55

This was a long day of driving too. Leaving Nullagine fairly early, we drove South toward Newman (picking up a couple of geocaches along the way) and pulled into Newman at lunchtime. We filled up with diesel, pumped the tyres up after their couple of weeks of lowered pressures for dirt road travel, and then scampered down to the Woolworths. Fresh fruit and vegetables! We only did a quick shop, planning to re-supply at Tom Price, but got the essentials.



After all this activity we again hit the road for the rest stop which we knew to be popular and we were keen to get a decent spot. When we arrived at about 3pm, it was fairly busy but we found a nice spot with a view and which was fairly level. After a cup of tea with our neighbours at happy hour time (hey, you

can't drink alcohol EVERY day) we were ready for a good night's rest. Oh, and Val found the geocache up the gorge here.

### Karjini NP

Bright and early we packed up and moved to Dales campground in Karjini National Park, which we last visited nine years ago. I recalled scenery of red cliffs, white gums and green foliage. And

that is exactly how it was again. The most delightful saturated colours, and so much greenery after recent rains.

Shrubs and wildflowers were starting to flower and we could tell it would be a bumper year for wildflowers this year. The wattle had a divine perfume.



We arrived at the camp hosts tented registration area about 10.00am and

already there were vans lined up to book in. They had an archaic system there of paper maps and handwritten receipts, with much checking against a sheet of available sites to see which area is most suitable for a visitor. I guess power is an issue here (there is no electricity and no water either). We were allocated a site (#78) in Euro Loop, which was delightful. It was large and had a shaded area behind to put our tables and chairs to sit during the day. The van had access to good sun for the solar panels so we were happy. The camp toilets were not too far away but the gas barbeques were too far to be of any real use to us. With a seniors discount we paid just \$13.20 a night, a real bargain for such a lovely campground.



*Joffre Gorge*

Karijini has two camping areas, Dales Recreation Area, and the Savannah 'Eco' Campground. The latter is run/managed by a private concern (I think it is owned by the Aboriginal Development Corporation, although

I could be wrong about this) and costs \$20 per person per night (yes that is right, \$40 for an unpowered camp site!) for a camp site, with access to toilets and showers, whereas Dales was \$10 per head. Dales had a seniors discount of \$6.20 a head which made it very affordable.



*Kalamina Gorge*

We thought Savannah campground was very open, hot and dusty compared with Dales. There was access to a water tank near the visitors centre on the way in, and which was about 10kms from our camp at Dales. Each time we drove past visiting a gorge, we picked up a covered bucket of water for washing and for pumping into our tanks.

We did a day trip over to Tom Price while staying at Dales campground to do some grocery shopping and then we spent our days taking photos, watching birds, sightseeing and generally being lazy.

Karijini was the highlight of the trip so far. It was very hard to leave.