

Travelling from Parnka Point to Melbourne

Stage 22

Back on the road in SA and heading toward Victoria

In this stage of our travelling, we visited completely new country for the caravan; the Great Ocean Road, and Melbourne. Special places visited include Lower Glenelg National Park and Mt Eccles National Park, as well as Aires Inlet. Wonderful places full of amazing birdlife, flora and fauna. How lucky we are that we can travel and stay in such beauty.

Some astute observers will note the distances we are travelling can be fairly high...I do wish we could get the hang of not needing to be in far-off spots in a short space of time.

Special points of interest:

- Victorian National Parks
- Great Ocean Road

Trip report

Mount Gambier, Blue Lake Holiday Park

2 to 6 February 2008

Like many others, we read the trip reports of folk who have been in the same district as ourselves with great interest. Mick and Sally, who have a website, posted their December trip to Victoria through Mount Gambier, and said they had enjoyed their stay at this park. It is one of the best we have stayed at; lovely green, lush lawns and beautifully kept gardens. And the region is a gem.

We thought the Umpherston Gardens were nothing short of superb, and a credit to the people who planned and maintain the place. I am still amazed at the scope of the place and the setting.

And the beaches at nearby Port Macdonnell were so scenic I took a heap of photos – as one does. We had a delightful lunch at a foreshore coffee shop in Port Macdonnell, a delightful seaside town with a vivid blue ocean and scenic headland. We had lunch at a great café/restaurant and enjoyed our lunch so much that I complimented the cook and asked for the recipe. This was just as delicious made in the van!

Pumpkin and Broccoli pasta in a white wine and sun-dried tomato cream sauce. (Sufficient for 2 people – generous serves, or 3 small serves)

1 large chopped onion
1 clove garlic
quarter cup chopped capsicum
1 cup finely diced butternut pumpkin
1 or 2 cups broccoli pieces (florets)
1 cup chicken stock
half cup white wine
Salt and pepper
Splash of good quality olive oil
1 300ml container cream (not light)
Penne pasta – about 2 or 3 cups.

1. Gently fry chopped onion, garlic and capsicum in some olive oil
2. Add chopped pumpkin and small broccoli florets and gently brown vegetables with onion and capsicum mix.
3. Add stock, wine and chopped sun-dried tomatoes, and salt and pepper. Reduce liquid until almost gone – about 10 minutes (mixture will be a thick mix of vegetables only by this stage).
4. Add cream and keep warm until ready to add to cooked pasta. Serve with salad and crusty bread.

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

S 38 03 23 E 141 13 05

7 February 2008

What a treat this place is. I would rate it 10/10 for a camping spot. Right on the river, and with delightful ferns, bushes and trees all around each site, it is a gem. The bird life was amazing. We pulled into site 20 which was more than large enough for us. There was 1.5 kms of good dirt road.

There were two separate sections to this campground, and we chose the second (sites 11 to 20), but both were lovely. There is a jetty onto the river at each section, and we sat at the end of the day with a glass of red wine on our jetty, overlooking the water.



The bird life was prolific here and the number of blue wrens was amazing. The weather was kind...it was cool during the day and cold at night.

No CDMA or NextG though.

A word of warning; you should pay before arriving – either back at Nelson or by ringing 13 19 63. No self-registration

Portland Vic

Centenary Caravan Park

8 and 9 February

The town of Portland is reasonably large and had a good range of facilities, including a number of good coffee shops. The town has the most beautiful setting, on a foreshore with cliffs overlooking the Southern Ocean with white beaches and the bluest waters.

Our park, which is council owned, was cheap(ish) and was on a headland not far from the town centre. But as the wind can be ferocious, they have put in a big wooden fence so you can't see the view beyond the park. Shame – sort of.

We drove out to see the nearby lighthouse at Point Nelson, and did a walk along the headland. If you were fit, you could do the Great South West Walk which travels through this part of the country. We did the washing here and generally relaxed a bit – the washing machines were only \$1.60 a load! The weather was cool and a bit wet.

Mt Eccles NP

Lake Surprise Campground

S 38 03 25 E 141 55 19

10 and 11 February 2008

This national Park is a gem. The campground is mentioned as a highlight of the region in the Lewis and Savage book on national park camping in Australia.

The campground has 22 separate sites, most well apart from each other among the gums and ferns. We tucked into probably the only one which had good sun for the solar panels (no 22) and had easy access through a little path through the trees to the toilet block (flushing toilets and a hot shower!). There were lots of koalas in the trees, as apparently they love the manna gums in this park, the last stand of the gums in Australia, the pamphlet said.

When we arrived it was overcast and quite cold – maybe this is normal for southern Australia in the height of summer? Lucky we have the Webasto diesel heater! Our second day was sunny and lovely, so we made the most of the change and did a walk around the nearby lake. The walk was a treat, with the path following the lake's edge; it reminded me of walks we have done in Europe.

There are a number of walks to do, which are all interesting. The crater rim walk was truly amazing.

One day we drove over to the large town of Hamilton and did some shopping – Val was looking for a light fitting for the van, and found it at Donohues Outdoor and Leisure Centre. We had a nice time looking at shops and having a lovely coffee and lunch in one of the main street coffee shops.

Peterborough Vic

Top Tourist CP (Eastern side of town)

12 to 14 February 2008

The town is small, and there are two caravan parks; ours was the one closest to the hotel and shops, and in our view definitely the best to stay at.

We did a day trip over to Timboon, a delightful village which has a solid dairying industry.

We visited the coffee shop at the Cheese Trap where we had Devonshire teas and bought a swag of cheeses. There was a fascinating historic pub nearby and that was a definite must do on the schedule.

One night we had tea over at the hotel, and walked all of about 100 metres to the restaurant; the meal was delicious.

Often we do day trips from a centre, and this was no exception; we spent each day while here scampering to Warrnambool or other small towns.

We had reasonable NextG coverage here too, which was a plus.

Aire Inlet, Western Campground (Otway NP)

S 38 48 06 E 143 28 40

15 to 18 February 2008

We found this campground by using the CAW book as well as the Savage and Lewis book, and what a gem. I don't think I have camped at a more beautiful spot (except maybe Lake Tinaroo in the Atherton Tablelands). The camp ground is right on the mouth of the river, and has drop toilets nearby. It is completely free, although it is in a national park. You can see our van just left of centre... While here we scampered around to local attractions, including the Otway Fly, a treetop walk (nearly \$20 a head but worth it) and nearby Apollo Bay. We found this town to be a commercialised and busy place, as busy as Noosa but without the charm.



Aire Inlet is mentioned in Camps Australia Wide 4 as site no.676 (West campground) or 677 (East), and the Western one which is where we stayed is GPS S 38 48 06; E 143 28 40. You will note that there are two campgrounds (East and West), which are on opposite sides of the river, joined by a bridge. You can approach from Sand Rd, off the Great Ocean Road. The road is a bit narrow, and if another vehicle approaches it would involve someone waiting or backing up... we had no problems.

The other road suggested in CAW (closer if coming from Apollo bay) may be the better approach, but this involves crossing the old wooden bridge. It has a gross limit of 5 tonnes. We did go over the bridge, slowly and a little nervously, and it was fine.

The Eastern campground allows fires but is smaller and has no view.

Melbourne

Ashley Gardens CP, Braybrook

19 to 26 February 2008

We stayed at Ashley Gardens CP in the suburb of Braybrook, as it was recommended on the internet forums. About 9 kms from the city, on a bus route into the city centre, and with a small shopping centre right next door, it was ideal.

The park was quite good; sites were reasonably sized, and we had a nice concrete slab next to some green grass. There is a Woolworths supermarket next door, and a nice hotel for an evening meal (the Ashley). The icing on the cake was the bus route to the city, departing from right outside the park. We went into the city almost every day, and visited Lygon Street a couple of times. Highlights of Lygon Street?

- Brunelli's cake and coffee shop, in Finlay Street, off Lygon Street, Carlton.
- Toto's pizza restaurant in Lygon Street.

On a more frustrating note, our Landcruiser developed problems while we were there. One day it wouldn't start. The local Toyota dealer took five days to correctly diagnose the problem; the diatronic chip was faulty. At first the dealer was saying it was a fuel injector which needed replacing, and which would involve between \$750 to \$3000, and a minimum of eight days....I started to suspect they didn't know what they were talking about. Val was certain they didn't know what they were talking about. There was more to the story, but we managed to escape their clutches without too much in the way of damages.

The night before we left a large, very large, fifth wheeler pulled in right next to us, and when they pulled out their extended sections, we found we were looking directly into their living room from our awning! Their extension was almost touching our annexe wall. Bloody rude. Val had a quiet word with the park manager, who apologised, saying the fifth wheeler had been told to pick an appropriate site, and that the chosen site was clearly not suitable. It really infringed on our site badly, and I was glad we were leaving the next morning. You tend not to get that sort of problem in the bush camps we prefer... This will most likely be an increasing problem, as the larger vehicles are being made, and need to be catered for in parks.

In all I was glad to leave Melbourne.