

Travelling from Darwin to Parnka Point (Coorong, SA)

Stage 2 I

Back on the road in SA and heading toward Victoria

We again set out on our travels after a 10 week stint of teaching (Val's contribution to the coffers) in a remote NT school, leaving Darwin on 14 December. I was in Alice Springs conducting a workshop for a couple of days, so Val picked me up there and we continued the journey....

This stage of our travels saw us spend family time in Adelaide, some quality time in the Barossa (the siren sound of the vine), and then heading slowly along the south east SA coast toward Victoria.

The highlight of this stage? Probably Parnka Point, and the chance to get back out bush.

Special points of interest:

- Darwin to Adelaide
- In and around Adelaide
- The Barossa
- SA Camping

Trip report

Darwin to Adelaide

14 to 19 December 2007

Val left Palumpa on a charter flight at lunch time on Friday 14 December, picked up the Landcruiser in Darwin and immediately drove down to Pine Creek. Our van had been in storage at my brother's in Pine Creek while we were out in remote, and it had been so well stored that there were no ants or bugs in or around it, and the van was clean and fresh inside. Well done to Kevin!

After a nap in the van, Val hooked up the van to the LC and started pushing south to Alice Springs. He arrived in Alice (1500 kms) on Saturday afternoon. He picked me up there (I had been presenting a workshop) and after a night's good solid sleep, and re-provisioning of foodstuffs, we set out early Sunday morning (the 16th) for Adelaide.

We had a delightful night's rest about 90 kms to the north of Coober Pedy, by pulling off the road behind a gravel heap. The night was crystal clear and there was a cool fresh wind blowing all night. Most unusual for this time of the year!

Mambray Creek Campground, Mt Remarkable NP

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17 and 18 December

We pressed on to Mambray Creek Campground (in Mt Remarkable NP, about 50 kms south of Port Augusta, and spent two lovely nights there, among the gums and bush ferns. By this time we needed the break. Yes it



was hot, but not unbearable. I used the time here to clean out a couple of the van's pantry cupboards, throwing out stale and old food packets. It is very liberating to have clean cupboards!

Adelaide Beachfront CP, Semaphore (Adelaide)

19 December 2007 to 5 January 2008

As we were catching up with family in Adelaide over Christmas, this park was an ideal place to base ourselves. It is close to Val's mother's, right next to the beach, and with yelling distance from delightful Semaphore Village shops and pubs! While staying here we enjoyed a lovely pub meal or two in the Village and had fish and chips near the Semaphore jetty. After so long out bush, without any restaurants (nary a café!) and living in a 'dry' community, we relished the chance to once again have an evening drink sitting outside the van. Bliss.

Our son and his family joined us for a week and a half while we were in Adelaide, parking their camper trailer behind the caravan at the caravan park. This was a winning formula, as it meant the little people (there are four grandchildren, aged between 6 and 1 years) could visit us at will. They scampered off as a family each day, and did the tourist thing, while we tended to stay put and vegetated. I so admired our son and daughter in law's parenting, being so patient and energetically keeping those children physically and mentally stretched every day.

I came down with a bad cold while here and was brought quite low with a particularly vicious cough that wouldn't go away. A doctor was finally seen who diagnosed 'virally induced asthma' and prescribed Ventolin and another inhaler for inflammation of the bronchi. This worked like magic! I won't have asthma under normal conditions, only when I get a cold. I can now see that the colds I have had in recent years were a part of this same condition. It is no fun to have a bad cough when you are in a caravan park, and you know you are keeping folk awake in the van next to you, while you cough at 3am.

Adelaide's weather was predictably weird during our stay; it was either freezing cold (jumpers and woolen slippers) or baking hot. I don't know how they can live like this!

There were trips to the zoo, to the Port Adelaide Railway Museum, shopping at Westlakes Centre, and just mooching around Semaphore. We did day trips to Hanhdorf and down to the Victor Harbour area.

Barossa Valley Tourist Park, Nuriootpa

5 to 25 January

While our daughter and her husband were in Europe, we had the care of Sammy, her dog. This meant we needed a caravan park which allowed us to have a dog with us. What a change this was for us - normally we prefer to avoid parks with dogs! Sammy was a model inmate and rarely barked (she's been very well trained - she is allowed one bark as a warning, and no more) and we enjoyed having her with us. But we did find that it was extremely restrictive to have a dog. We couldn't go out to dinner (no dogs allowed in restaurants!) or to wineries, etc. But we do miss her now she has gone home!

This park is delightful. It is owned by the Town/City Council, and immaculately maintained. The gardens are a delight, and lots of gum trees shade most sites. It is also incredibly cheap (\$21.50 a night with a Top Tourist discount). We spent half our time there on a slab site (site 3C) and then moved to a nicer spot beside the river on the grass (site 15A). It was very quiet down there (except for some muted nearby road traffic).

The park is wonderfully centrally located, and handy for all the Barossa attractions. We are particularly fond of the Angaston Farmers Markets on Saturday mornings, and enjoy buying produce direct from the growers or producers.

One night at the park, we sat outside with our evening glass of champagne (OK it was more than one glass this particular night) and decided to go ahead with some plans for a new Kedron van. Six months ago we had asked Kedron to prepare some plans for us, but we held off on committing to it, while we thought long and hard about the additional expenditure involved. Over a glass of something cold and bubbly (Grant Burge pinot noir chardonnay) it seemed absurd to allow a little thing like money to come between us and a nice new

van. We want to continue to live in the life we have become accustomed to. This current van has got dirty and scratched; we decided we wanted a new, clean one! Just joking.

A new van would be a foot longer (19 foot internal) and allow us to have a washing machine inside, as well as a cupboard which would accommodate my work files. So we decided to make a quick flying trip up to Brisbane and the Kedron factory to arrange the production of our new Kedron Top Ender. We flew up for just three days, and sorted out the plans as well as some features which are important to us. Some of the features we have come up with include double light fixtures, so we can have both LED and halogen lights in a few spots (LED is better when bush camping).

Lake Albert Caravan Park, Meningie

25 to 28 January

What a lovely area is the Coorong. We have driven through here years ago, but on this trip we spent time looking around properly. In parts, it reminds me of the Yorke Peninsular. A day drive along the Coorong, down to 42 Mile Crossing was quite rewarding. We stopped in at Parnka Point, and had morning tea on the narrow peninsular, overlooking the lake. Beautiful! And the drive in to Chinaman's Well was extremely interesting, with interpretation signs provided by the Parks and Wildlife folk.

One day we went over to Narrung to look at the free campground there. It was lovely; lots of green grass, flushing toilets, and a view of Lake Alexandrina. It was pretty busy though.

At 42 Mile Crossing Campground, I noted that SA residents observe signs saying "National Park, no pets" about as well as those folk in WA do; there was a large family with a dog there. When will people realise that dogs are a threat to the wildlife? Wild animals can smell that a dog has been present, and will avoid the area.

The weather was superb while we were in this area; cool, sunny days. Perfect for camping out, except we were at a caravan park, thinking that campgrounds would be full and chaotic. At least a park is regulated. Except that on this occasion, we found the nearby campgrounds were relatively quiet. And the folk in the caravan park were not all peaceful and quiet at all. There was a large family group with lots of noisy, loudmouthed men, keen to get as much alcohol in as possible. They did make a bit of noise, but the park management seemed to contain it reasonably well.

There is a nice café and restaurant right next door to the caravan park (The Cheese factory) and we had a pleasant afternoon tea there one day, and dinner another night.



Val at Pt Malcolm Lighthouse

The water levels are down in Lakes Alexandrina and Albert, due to the drought, and the fact that QLD, NSW and Victoria hive off water from the River Murray before it gets here. Locals seem understandably peeved about it.

Parnka Point NP Campground

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29 January to 1 February

Having visited Parnka Point a few days earlier, we decided the campground down there in the national park was too lovely to not take advantage of. So we took the van down, and backed it into a lovely site among the

wildflowers and bushes, overlooking a stretch of Coorong water. We had the most fabulous views!

We chose campground no2, as it gave us the best views, as well as lovely bush all around us. It was so peaceful and quiet, as the school holidays have ended and all the families have gone back home.

The Coorong National Park stretches right from Alexandrina to just before Kingston SE and is made up of salt pans and dunes along the Youngusband Peninsula. The park is a great place for bird spotting as there are plenty of species of bird in the area, 238 species being recorded, including ducks, pelicans, swans and waders. For the plant lover the park offers 278 flowering plant and fern species. A variety of 23 mammals, 21 reptiles and 7 amphibians offer the animal lover something to appreciate. We have a friend who will appreciate this information (hi Potta).

The Coorong National Park is of world-wide biological significance. with bird watchers. Long Point has a boat launch, jetty and is a nice spot for a bit of fishing. Parnka Point offers great views of the lagoon and a boat launch. Jacks Point has a viewing deck and walking trail and an observatory with high powered binoculars to view the large numbers of visiting or breeding birds on the islands. You can stay at Camp Coorong, or alternatively you can bush camp in the National Park itself (although you will need a permit to stay here), which you can get from Meningie and Salt Creek. We had a two month pass (bought back at Mambray Creek near Pt Augusta) and so we didn't need to buy a permit. (The pass costs \$50, and covers all park entry fees as well as camping in all except two SA parks).



Parnka Point, Coorong