

Stage 13 Darwin to Eyre Peninsula

2 February 2007

Pine Creek NT

Leaving Darwin on a hot and sticky morning felt so good to be on the road again! An overnight in Pine Creek allowed us to say goodbye to my brothers there, and to have dinner at the local hotel. It was a great meal and we enjoyed the chance to relax after a couple of months of hectic and stressful winding up of our mother's estate.

We had a bottle of champagne to salute the start of the next stage of the travels!

3 February 2007

Dunmarra CP

The little park attached to the roadhouse is one of our favourites now. We have stayed there a few times, and we like the attractive, grassy, drive through sites which have lots of shade and space between vans. Well of course at this time of year there were no other vans anyway, but it can get busy in the middle of the year. And was it hot! It is really too hot to freecamp, and good to have the airconditioner running non-stop. The park only charges \$16.50 for the night, which is good value. This meant that we could naturally afford to crack another bottle of champagne, just to really enjoy that feeling of being on the road again!

In the past we have wandered over to the Roadhouse for a meal, but this time we made a light dinner and crashed into bed very early.

4 February 2007

Devils Marbles

Although it was still very hot when we pulled up in the Reserve at the Devils Marbles (100 kms south of Tennant Creek) it was a drier heat than in the Top End, and we found it bearable to freecamp. But the flies were definitely a menace! It gave us a chance to test the new 'chemical-free' cream we had bought at Winton, produced by Natures Botanical, it relies on natural essential oils (Rosemary and Cedar), which really does repel flies and insects. Probably Bushmans Repellent works better, but I think I can feel the stuff causing problems for the skin, and probably internally, as it is just too strong.

Given it was so warm, naturally we had to have a drink of champagne....just as well there is a carton of it under the caravan bed.

5-12 February 2007

Alice Springs

How I do like the MacDonnell Range CP. Lots of space, green well watered sites and a very well run park. So we stayed 8 days. This gave us plenty of time to do some shopping, go to the pictures, and catch up with friends. Ken and Marg had

a bright idea, a very bright idea – they suggested we go to Simpson’s Gap for a barbeque dinner. It was a magical experience; the stars were a spangle over our heads, and it was so good to sit in the cool evening breeze and talk until quite late. Good food (actually, gourmet food) and very good company; what more can one want. More champagne was consumed, but not too much, as we had to drive back to the park.

At the park they had tried to put us next to a bus which houses a family who seem to be permanents in the park. I declined the site, saying I didn’t like being next door to children if I could help it. I think this miffed the family (who were clearly told of my comment) as they pointedly ignored us the whole time we were there. My view is that children need room to run and be noisy, and a caravan park is not a suitable place for them to live on a permanent basis. If they are going to make the noise all children need to make, I prefer to be located further away. These children were actually well behaved, but they were still noisy...

13 February 2007

Camp site North of Coober Pedy, SA

Having got a taste of star-spangled evening skies, we stayed in the desert for the night. About 90 kms to the North of Coober Pedy we pulled off the Highway, and into one of those gravel pits that are to be found from time to time. Tucked away from the traffic, we had a nice quiet night, although very warm. The evening breezes we expect in this country didn’t eventuate so it was a hottish night. The generator was still playing up so couldn’t use it to relieve the heat. Val thinks the heat sensor is out, and he will have it looked at when we get to Adelaide. It’s a bloody nuisance. So were the flies – a bloody nuisance, that is!

14-16 February 2007

Whyalla SA

We have never stayed here before, and were pleasantly surprised at how nice the Foreshore CP is. We were right on the beachfront, and had some grass and a shady tree. Bliss. The first day was very windy and Val had to tie down the awning securely.

Val went crabbing while there, and caught 12 big blue swimmer crabs. Immediately he got back, he heated up the camp oven and cooked them all. I think he was very greedy to eat most of them in one sitting (I don’t like crabs) but he certainly looked contented afterwards.

Whyalla is a very pleasant town, and we enjoyed our several days there. Asking around, we discovered a lovely coffee shop-cum restaurant called Flossies, on one of the main roads through town. Had lunch there one day and afternoon tea the next. The food all looked to be home made and delicious.

17-19 February 2007

Pt Lincoln, SA

Now this is another lovely city, and the drive in to the city is quite spectacular, skirting around the sparkling blue waters of Boston Bay. The city sits right on the foreshore, and the view is special wherever one sits. Even better, the caravan park (now called "Port Lincoln CP", rather than the previous name of "Kirton Point CP") is sited on a hill overlooking the Bay. Some of the sites are a little small (OK, they are very small) but some are fine. We made sure we asked for a larger site so we could put out our annexe. It can be very windy in this part of the world, and indeed it was to be so while we were in town. An annexe can screen out a lot of the wind.

While staying here, we did a day trip into Lincoln National Park, one of our favourite bushcamping spots. But it was so hot and dry when we visited, the hot wind swirled dust everywhere. I couldn't imagine anything worse than putting the van into a hot, dry, dusty spot. So this time we gave the bushcamping there a miss. Also went out to Memory Cove for the day. To get through the locked gate into this park, it is necessary to pick up a key from the Information Office, and pay a deposit on the key. It was a lovely camp site out there, but not possible for the van to get in, due to overhanging foliage and the narrowness of the track.

All in all, it was a pleasant day in the park with a nice packed lunch and thermos of coffee. We had cold quiche and salad at a table on a headland overlooking Boston Bay. We saved the champagne for the evening.

20-22 February 2007

Coffin Bay NP (Little Yangie Bay)

Once we had moved on to the Coffin Bay National Park, we found all the peace and quiet we were yearning for. Due to the dry and warm conditions, there were only a couple of other campers while we were there. Our site was pleasant; we had the awning out into some foliage and this meant it was cool and shaded. And fortunately, the cooler weather arrived while we were there, although one day was a little warm. Still, each of the three nights were cool and that made for good sleeping.

The camp ground here is located right on a shallow, sweeping bay and has several nice hikes, varying in length and difficulty. We did a hike one day and took lots of photos. The next day we retraced our steps so we could take video footage for the grandchildren. Lovely cool, sunny days were great for walking.

Evenings here are enjoyable as dusk lasts so much longer than in Darwin. It was still light at 8.00pm, and this meant we could stay outside talking until quite late. SA has daylight saving and this adds to the matter, of course... Usually we start

the evening with Five o'clock drinks. Only one glass you understand, as a rule but it is a nice refreshing habit. Champagne goes down well in settings like this.

As there are TV programs we enjoy watching, we have set up the satellite dish and watch our favourite programs (News, the Bill, Foyles War, Greys Anatomy etc). I LOVE solar power and sat dish technology.

23- 25 February 2007

Coffin Bay CP

After a few days out in the park, we thought it would be nice to stay at the park in town so we could wash our sheets and towels and fill up with water. Coffin Bay also has a nice sailing club for meals several nights a week at good prices, so we looked forward to that too. The Club is situated right on the Bay and a better view is not to be had! The CP is small but nice; green grass, some (limited) shade) and sparkingly clean facilities. It is also right in the middle of town, so we could walk to the shops or the jetty or sailing club.

The bird life is so prolific here that at any hour of the day, you would swear you were in a massive bird aviary!

They had a Market in the Town Hall while we were there, and this was a treat. I bought some free range eggs and vegetables at very good prices, and some home made pasties and biscuits, as well as what turned out to be a very crumbly banana cake.

It was nice to sit out in the cool evening breezes with a glass of –wait for it! – champagne!!

26-27 February 2007

Lipson Cove

GPS S 34 25 846 E 136 15 677

A contributor to one of the caravanning internet forums (Motherhen of WA) had strongly recommended a spot she loved while here in early 2006; Lipson Cove. It is just north of Tumby Bay (another lovely beachside town) and on a lovely white sweep of sandy bay, with turquoise water. It is maintained by the Council I think, as there are empty rubbish bins and clean pit toilets. The designated camping spots (four or five) are along a loop of road overlooking the bay. This spot is exquisite, but it would only suit an independent camping set up as there is no water and no power. It is free. It is also 8 kms in from the Highway, along a gravel road.

We had the van positioned so that the awning was facing away from the stiff breeze and so we could look over the bay – what a view! The beach invited us for a walk straight away and we saw dolphins playing just off the shore.

The weather was kind to us, and each night was so cool that we needed to pull up the quilt for warmth; the power of a good sea breeze.

This is the sort of place which clears the head and the body, so clear and so clean.

There was even broadband coverage, if you tilted the laptop in just the right direction, and we managed to send and receive emails. And do some internet banking. Gosh, how the bank balance is affected by all that champagne!