

Stage 9 Nanga Mill to Margaret River

20 January (Hoffman Mill)

Nanga had been so lovely we knew we would come back some time. Weekends get very busy, so weekdays would be preferable!

It was difficult to wrench ourselves away from Nanga, but a weekend was approaching. So we drove down the backroad (a dirt road signed as "to Collie") and drove to Hoffman Mill (**GPS reading 33° 00' 14 S, 116° 04', 58E**). As we had driven over a couple of days before, we knew it would suit us.

There is a central ablution block with flushing toilets (bliss!) and running water taps at most camp site, so we thought we were in camper's heaven. The site was quite lovely, as the jasmine was flowering, little roses were twining over the bridge, the blackberries were just starting to flower, and there were apples and figs just ripening.

The weather was quite pleasant; cold at night, but warm during the day. As there was plenty of shade we were able to sit comfortably and read during the day.

Our site was level, and at the top of a rise looking down into the river. There was generally only one other camp group there while we were at Hoffman.

Although we had planned to be here for a week, nature dictated otherwise. On the first night we could smell smoke, and the horizon was orange – a bushfire was located somewhere to the East. It was clearly nowhere near us, but to be safe we got up (it was 1am) and packed up completely, pulling in the awning, hitching the van to the car and putting everything away. After all this activity we slept fully clothed and lightly, keeping an eye out for the fire. At 5am we had a knock on the van door – there were two young blokes who had bogged their car the night before and had walked looking for help all night in the cold and the pitch black. They were completely lost in addition to their other woes. Val took them back to their hapless vehicle and set it to rights. Regular checks on the phone to the CALM staff said to wait and see, but we were becoming uneasy. We waited out the day and in the afternoon, when the smoke became heavier decided to move to safer pastures. We rang the park at Harvey and scampered down there.

22 January (Harvey)

The Rainbow cp at Harvey is small, clean and tidy, has grassy shady sites. Our perfect park. Only it had a caravan club coming in two days so we could only stay until then.

Later that afternoon at Harvey a family arrived who had been camped at Nanga while we were there; they had been evacuated, together with another 1500 campers! from Nanga Mill as a result of the fire.

24 January (Collie)

Collie's only virtues as a site for the next five days were that it is in the centre of some nice lakes and rivers, and was not too far away from our final destination, Margaret River.

The park here – the only one - was built mainly for mine and power station workers, and had a very “permanents preferred” feel to it. But the ablution blocks were very clean and it was quiet. We enjoyed visiting the nearby forests and spent a few days just relaxing. I regularly write home letters to the grandchildren on the computer, with inserted photos of our trip, making the letters as interactive as I can for the little people who read them. “We thought the emus and kangaroos at Coffin Bay were special; ask your mummy to tell you when lived here what animals did she think were her favourites”.

29 January (Bunbury)

Bunbury is a fairly large centre, but it is located on a beach and has some lovely heritage buildings. We stayed at a nice park here (the Bunbury Glade) which is a bit out of town (2 or 3 kms), but lovely shady and grassed sites. And it had a resident family of teal ducks which visited us for regular handouts of bread.

One night we had dinner at the Rose Hotel in the main street – what a lovely interior! The meal was good, but we were delighted by the dining room which is decorated in I think a rococo style, with etched windows and a lovely chandelier.

1 February (Canebrake)

(GPS reading 33° 52' 54S, 115° 16' 50E)

Ah what a restful and beautiful spot. This would be one of my favourite bushcamps. Situated right on the Margaret River, and about 30 kms from the town of the same name, there are about 8 individual sites recessed into the forest. As each site is well spaced, it is quiet and restful. There were flowering shrubs, creepers, ferns, shady trees, wildlife and the constant sounds of birds. Well, the birds and wildlife tended to disappear when other campers with dogs arrived on the weekend (the CALM signs say “dogs on a leash” but we have universally found this is neither obeyed nor enforced.

There is a CALM self-registration post and the cost was \$5 per person per night. Each site has a table and chaired arrangement, and a wood barbeque.

6 February (Taunton Farm)

The Taunton Farm is a Big 4 park and is right beside the Bussell Highway between Margaret River and Dunsborough or Busselton.

It is a working farm so there are sheep, goats, cows and a camel for children to interact with. The park is fairly quiet and the sites were shady and well spaced. Our site (like most) faced the dam and it was pleasant to sit in the evenings with a drink in hand and looking at the animals and the water.

There is so much to see around this area that we spent 7 days but still did not see everything. We went to wineries (of course!), a chocolate factory, cheese factory, a lavender farm (twice) and a berry farm. The berry farm was special, as it had a lovely cottage garden restaurant, and the best scones and cream I have ever eaten, surrounded by little wrens and silvereye birds. We went to Augusta for the day, and enjoyed the beaches there as well as the lighthouse. We went to the Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse near Dunsborough on a day trip. We visited Canal Rocks. And we had a ball.

13 February (Perth)

As our trip to Europe is getting closer – we leave on the 25th of February) we knew we must get back to Perth to get organised. So very reluctantly we packed up and scampered back to the metropolis.