

Stage 4 Redbank Gorge to Finke (Aputula)

5 to 7 September

Time to make tracks back to Alice, to clean up, do some washing, pick up mail and stock up on groceries. The night before we left Redbank, a mighty wind arose, which meant we had to scamper at midnight to bring in the awning. Perched high on a rocky ridge, I felt a bit vulnerable in a van in a high wind, but Val seemed calm and dismissive of my concerns! Normally we bring down the awning the night before leaving a site, but this time we had not bothered.

We re-traced our steps to the Macdonnell Ranges CP – we should have shares in the place.

Alice was getting warmer although there were still cool nights, and some cool days as well.

We had dinner my favorite Italian restaurant in the Alice; Casa Nostra, in Undoolya Road. Our budget gets a hammering from all the eating out while in town.

We are next off to Finke for three weeks, as Val made a commitment a long time ago to replace a friend who is the head teacher there, while she has some leave. It will be interesting to stay in one place for a while....

8 September

We left Alice Springs reasonably late for us; a 10am departure is definitely a sleeping in type day. The weather was starting to get warmer and we hoped it would not be too hot for a bushcamp on the road. Using Jan Holland's book on priceless campsites yet again (how I value her publications!) we found a nice spot on the Western side of the Stuart Highway, opposite a "Stonehenge" type of rock arrangement. Just off the highway is a little road which takes one behind some bushes and trees, out of sight and most of the sound of the highway. It was a nice quiet camp, among the birds and the peacefulness of the bush. Flies were bad, and interfered with the sundown champagne! We had to drink or get rid of all our alcohol, as Finke is a "dry community", meaning they don't allow alcohol. I wondered how Val would cope without a beer at the end of a day's teaching.

9 September

We arrived at Finke, and moved into the guest house; nice to have space and a big kitchen for a while. Took ages to bring into the house items we needed from the van.

17 and 18 September

We went to Dalhousie Springs for the weekend. It's about 200 kms from Finke, and a very good road. Despite it being a good road, we got 2 punctures; a

number of others seemed to have punctures as well. But Dalhousie was a delight – the springs and the warm water (35° c) were so pleasant. The weather was very cool at night and in the mornings, so stepping into those warm waters was very pleasant. The camp grounds were very ordinary. No shade and little vegetation. It was quite busy too.

We drove back to Finke, detouring slightly to see the Eringa Waterhole. Flies and more flies greeted us there, but it is a nice spot. We decided to bring the van down the Oodnadatta Track this backway rather than through Marla on the Stuart Highway, as the road is in very good condition. It will also save some kms.