



The Troopy and Me

The Journey



Australia

Since coming to Australia in 1982 I have worked, surfed and windsurfed. I had only seen the coast of Australia because I was only interested in the ocean, my locations were all below the Tropic of Capricorn on the East coast round to the West coast.

I was lucky enough to have surfed Bells Beach with my son Adam, I have also surfed Cactus and Margaret River. I have windsurfed at Marrawah in Tasmania, the Pass at Byron Bay, Lennox Head, Robe, Walkers Rocks, Coronation beach, and Gnoraloo.

I retired from the workforce at 55yrs old and at the age of 65 decided I should see some of the rest of Australia, so every winter now I head off for 4 months travelling.

In 2012 I travelled north on the Oodnadatta Track, then to Alice Springs and did the Larapinta trail, King Canyon and Palm Valley.

In 2013 I travelled north from Adelaide to Darwin, then across the Kimberley, down to Perth and back across the Nullabor to Adelaide.

In 2014 I travelled from Byron Bay to Birdsville and down through the Channel Country.

In 2015 I went to the U.K France and Italy.

In 2016 I travelled north from Adelaide to Alice Springs then to Dalhousie Springs and across the Simpson Desert.

In 2017 I travelled north and went up the west coast of Cape York and back down the east coast of Cape York.

The Equipment.

My vehicle is a Toyota pop top camper with dual 90 litre fuel tanks , a 50 litre water tank.

The vehicle can sleep four people with the roof extended, it has a cooker, sink, fridge, storage cupboards for food utensils and clothing.

The vehicle has a 150 watt solar panel and a 2000 watt inverter for 240 volt power, it also has dual batteries so as to keep the fridge going day and night.

I have recovery equipment consisting of a snatch strap, high lift jack, Max trax, long handled shovel and an exhaust air jack.

Safety equipment is a first aid kit, fire blanket, 2 fire extinguishers one at the front and one at the back, a satellite phone and UHF radio.





Pastimes

Top Left; Taking photographs

Top right; Doing Tai Chi

Bottom right; Riding a bike

Right; Having a beer



I like to windsurf and have sailed and surfed some great places around Australia. When I am sailing there is only me and the elements.





I decided in 2012 i would like to be able to take photograph's of some of the things i see, but was very disappointed with the results. After a bit of research on camera's i decided to buy a Sony camera, the reason for my decision was that it had an electronic viewfinder, so what you see is what you get.



My camera, a Sony A65.
With a 16-50mm F2.8 lens.

South Australia

South Australia is a state defined by extreme wilderness. It's home to the 100km long Bunda Cliffs facing the Great Australian Bight, the empty expanse of the arid Nullarbor Plain and the red dunes of the Simpson Desert.

Its capital, Adelaide, nicknamed "City of Churches" and known for its wine regions of the Barossa Valley, McLaren Vale and the Coonawarra.

It has beautiful beaches of the Fleurieu Peninsula, Kangaroo Island and the Cooroong.

To the north is the Flinders Ranges, Coober Pedy. and Lake Eyre. It is also the place I live, at Sellicks Beach.

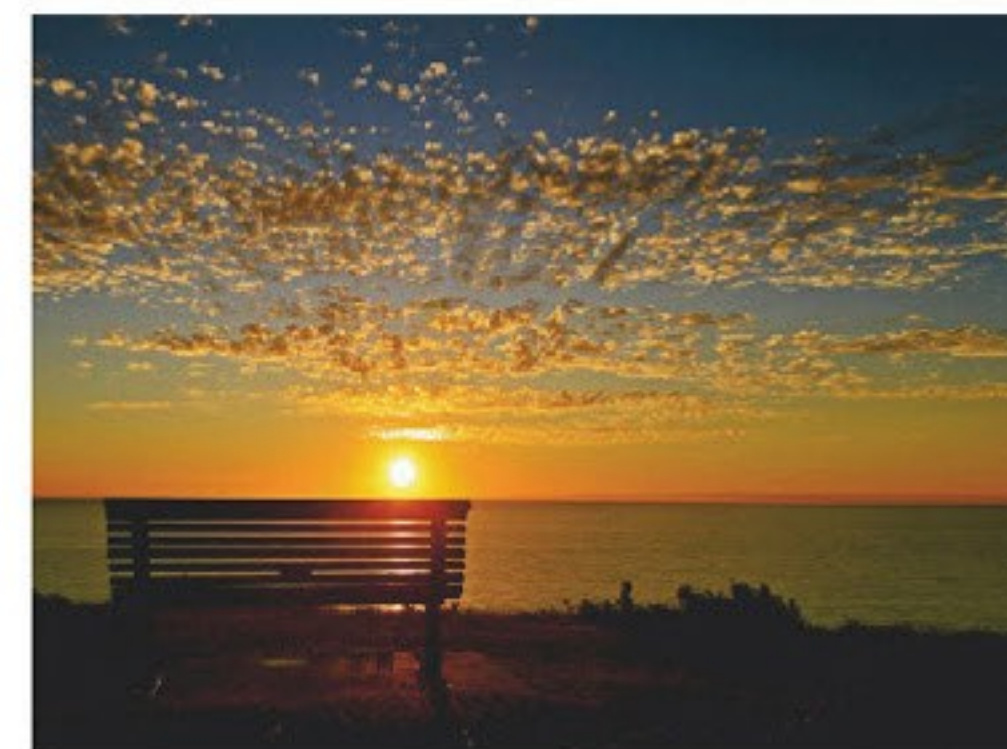


Aldinga Bay

Aldinga Bay consists of Port Willunga, Aldinga and Sellicks Beach, and is an exciting mix of history, lifestyle, farmland, holiday destination, vineyards and beaches. The Tjilbruke Aboriginal Dreaming Track has numerous artefact sites that are scattered along the coastline.

There is good surf at Port Willunga at Gull Rock, good windsurfing in winter at the Aldinga reef, and in summer at the Funnel at Button Road.

On Australia day the beach becomes packed as we are allowed to drive our cars onto and along the beach.

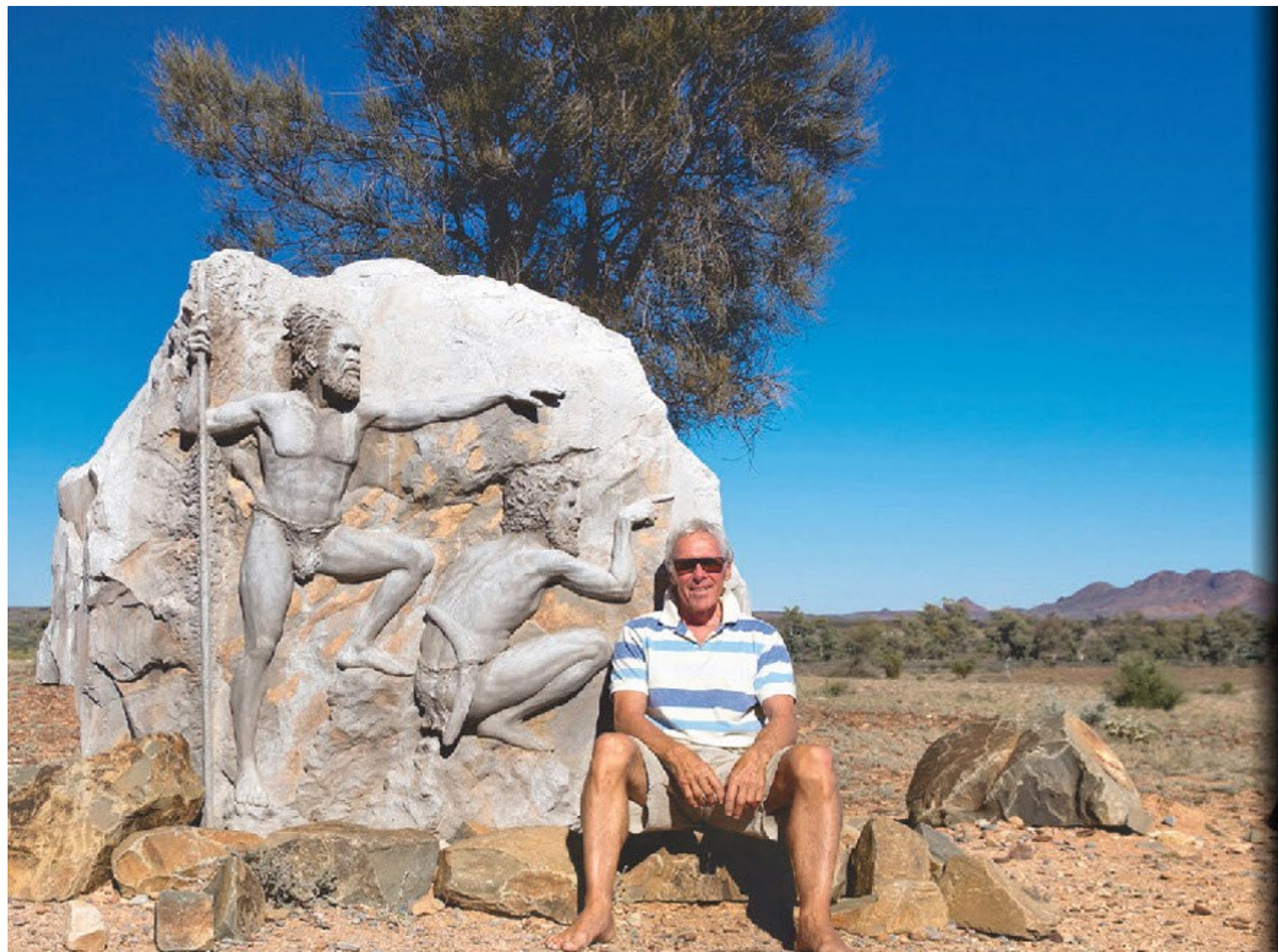




Kangaroo island

Kangaroo Island lies off the mainland of South Australia, southwest of Adelaide. Over a third of the island is protected in nature reserves, it is home to native wildlife like sea lions, koalas and diverse bird species. In the west, Flinders Chase National Park is known for seal colonies and striking coastal rock formations, like the sculpted Remarkable Rocks and the stalactite covered Admirals Arch. It is a nine mile ferry trip to the island, you can take your car on the ferry at a price, I have been many times.





Flinders Ranges / Ikara

The Flinders Ranges are the largest mountain range in South Australia, which starts about 200 km north of Adelaide. The huge bowl of Wilpena Pound has been created from an ancient mountain range that has eroded over millions of years. There are Aboriginal rock art in many places belonging to the Adnyamathanha people. It is hot in the daytime and very cold at night, the sunset and sunrise make the mountains glow red, I have been many times and never tire of the place.





Arkaroola

Arkaroola is a Wildlife sanctuary 600km north of Adelaide. Arkaroola features rugged mountains, towering granite peaks, magnificent gorges and mysterious waterholes, the home to over 160 species of birds and the shy and endangered yellow footed rock wallaby.

It is hot in the daytime and extremely cold at night, you used to be able to drive up to Sillers lookout for spectacular views of the mountain range and Lake Frome, but now you have to pay and take a tour, it is a very worthwhile experience.



Lake Eyre / Kati Thanda

Lake Eyre / Kati Thanda is the lowest natural point in Australia, at approximately 15 m below sea level. The Cooper Creek, Finke River, Georgina River and Diamantina River are the four main rivers that flow into the basin. When Lake Eyre fills, it is the largest lake in Australia covering 9,500 km².

I was lucky enough to visit Lake Eyre at Halligans Bay where there was enough water in the lake to windsurf on the lake, it was a great experience.





Oodnadatta Track

The Oodnadatta Track is an unsealed 617 km (383 miles) outback road between Marree and Marla via Oodnadatta in South Australia. Along the way, the track passes the southern edge Lake of the Kati Thanda / Lake Eyre National Park, and the outback settlements of William Creek and Oodnadatta. The Track was named by Adam and Linnie Plate owner of the Pink Roadhouse around 1980, Adam had posted round pink and white signs along the track denoting points of interest.





Coober Pedy

In the desert of the South Australian outback, in one of Australia's hottest climates, is the town of Coober Pedy. Due to the heat, much of it is underground, there are underground hotels, pubs and churches.

Coober Pedy is famous for its opals and has many opal mines, you have to be careful when walking as the mineshafts are open and if you are not looking where you are walking you could fall into one.

Coober Pedy also has the Breakaways and a 2m high dog fence, that is over 5,300km long to protect the sheep from the Dingo.





Googs Track

Googs Track is just under 200 km's and a permit is needed, travellers should go from south to north across the 300 sand dunes.

The track goes through Yumbarra Conservation Park and the dog fence. Glendambo does not have fuel or supplies and the pub is now closed, which means that you need to be completely self sufficient.

You could do the track in a day but I stayed at the lake overnight, it was raining and the lake had water and wildflowers. I visited Mount Finke next day and finished at Glendambo.



Point Sinclair / Cactus

Cactus Beach and Point Sinclair are 21 kilometres off the main road south of Penong. Between the Blue Lake and the coast there is white windswept sand dunes.

This area is a Coastal Protection Reserve, with all vegetation and wildlife considered protected species. The campsite is run and maintained by Ronnie, there is no food or water here so you need to be self sufficient. Cactus, Caves and Castles are regarded as some of the best left and right hand breaks in the country, I have surfed Cactus but never windsurfed here due to fickle winds, big swells and sharks.





Nullabor

The Nullarbor is on the southern edge of Australia between Norseman in Western Australia to Ceduna in South Australia. Nullarbor means no trees, but the Nullarbor is covered with bluebush and mulga scrub, and even wildflowers after rain. There is wildlife, including wild camels, kangaroos and emus. The distance is 1200km and hard to make it in a day, at 5pm the sun sets on the road and you cannot see where you are driving, so I always stop at Balladonia for the night. It gets very hot in the day up to 50 degrees and 17degrees overnight.





Mount Dare Hotel

Mt Dare Hotel is situated on the western edge of the Simpson Desert just 10km south of the Northern Territory border, which is the way I had to take to get here as all the tracks in South Australia were closed for weeks. Mount Dare is a welcome stop to have a beer, tucker and company of other fellow travellers. It is also the last place to get fuel for some 600 to 700kms.



Dalhousie Springs

Dalhousie Springs is a group of over 60 natural artesian springs located in Witjira National Park on the western fringe of the Simpson Desert, 180 kilometres northeast of Oodnadatta in northern South Australia. As you can see from the warning sign the water temperature is 38 degrees and a great experience to try, there are little fish that nibble your back and legs.



Northern Territory

The Northern Territory (NT) is a vast federal territory in Australia famed for its outback desert landscapes.

In the arid Red Centre is the iconic sandstone monolith Uluru (Ayers Rock), the red rock domes of Kata Tjuta (the Olgas) and the sculpted cliffs of Kings Canyon in the Watarrka National Park. Heading towards Alice Springs is Palm valley and the Larapinta trail.

Alice Springs is a town in the Red Centre desert, offering a chance to fill up with fuel, food and beer.

Further north are the Devils Marbles, Katherine Gorges, Kakadu and Litchfield national parks.



Uluru / Ayers Rock

Uluru / Ayers Rock was named by William Gosse in 1873 after Sir Henry Ayers. Uluru is the Aboriginal name. The rock was created over some 600 million years, it originally sat at the bottom of a sea, but today stands 348m above ground, and 2.5kms of its bulk is underground.

I have visited Uluru many times and have been lucky enough to see the rain coming off it, but never climbed it as some reason for me it did not seem right to do. There are great dreamtime stories to be heard from the Aboriginal people.



Kata Tjuta / The Olgas

The Olgas are made up of 36 formations, the highest point is Mount Olga, rising to 546m above ground, some 200m higher than Ayers Rock / Uluru. The Olgas were named by European explorer Ernest Giles in 1872, then in 1993 it was dual named Kata Tjuta. Most of the area is closed off to white people and Aborigines who do not have business there.

I did the valley of the winds walk, it is 7.4km, takes around 3 hours and gets very hot, but has beautiful views of the Olgas.





Palm Valley

Palm Valley, is in the Finke Gorge National Park, southwest of Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. The Finke Gorge National Park covers an area of 46,000 hectares and includes Palm Valley. Palm Valley is home to a diverse range of plant species, many that are rare and unique to the area, including the red cabbage palm which gives the area its name. Cycad Gorge and the Amphitheatre are great attractions. I was lucky enough to be there when a young fellow was playing the didgeridoo at sunset in the Amphitheatre, it sounded great.





Kings Canyon

Kings Canyon is in Watarrka National Park. The Rim Walk takes 3 to 4 hours, the view down the sandstone chasm plunging 270 metres to the canyon floor is worth it. Step down into the canyon to the Garden of Eden, a permanent waterhole surrounded by lush cycads and plant life.

Best to start the walk early as it can be hot later, there are 500 steps to climb to get to the rim, through the sandstone domes and across Jack Cotterill Bridge then down into the cool Garden of Eden, a welcome rest out of the sun.





Chambers Pillar / Idracowra

Chambers Pillar's are a sandstone formation 160 km south of Alice Springs in the Northern Territory, Australia. Erosion by wind and rain has left pillars of 350 million year old sandstone, rising 50 m above the surrounding plains. There are 3 pillars Chambers Pillar, Castle, and the Window. Dreamtime says they were created by a male and female from different clans that fell in love, it was forbidden and they were turned into stone.

The track has severe corrugations, bulldust ruts, deep sand and a large steep hill to navigate.



Finke / Aputula

Finke was renamed in the 1980s to Aputula, Aputula is a remote Indigenous community in the N.T of Australia 160km south of Alice Springs. Life revolved around the the Ghan train when Indigenous locals sold artefacts and wild flowers to the passengers. Most of the Europeans left Finke when the railway line was shifted westwards in the late 1970s following the huge floods of 1973 and 1974 which damaged the tracks. I was lucky enough while in Finke to watch the footy final. The tracks/roads can be wet and have stock wandering, the Finke River crossing was not too deep.





Rainbow Valley / Wurre

Rainbow Valley is a sandstone rock about 350 million years old, composed from a rock called Hermannsburg Sandstone. The sandstone is very soft, easily eroded by wind and water. Red and ochre colours come from iron deposits within the sandstone, oxidising as they are exposed to the air and staining the underlying white sandstone. The best time to see the rock glow is at sunset and sunrise (very cold).

I have been lucky to visit twice, once when the lake bed was dry and the other when it was flooded. The 20km track is extremely corrugated.



Alice Springs

Alice Springs is a remote town in the Northern Territory, halfway between Darwin and Adelaide (approx 1500km from each). The town is on the usually dry Todd River on the northern side of the MacDonnell Ranges. Nearby the town is the Larapinta Trail which I have visited a couple of times. One year I was lucky enough to be in the town for the camel races, a great experience. Another year I was in Alice at the time of the Todd River races, but unable to hang around to see them due to travel commitments going north to the Kimberly.





Devils Marbles / Karlu Karlu

The Devils Marbles are in a Conservation Reserve of 1802 hectares, there are lots of marbles in the park. In 1953 an 8 tonne rock was taken from the area and put on John Flynn's grave in Alice Springs (the founder of the Royal Flying Doctor Service). The Warumungu people were upset by the removal of the rock and took until 1998 for the rock to be returned to the reserve. In the Aboriginal dreamtime the Devils Marbles are the eggs of the Rainbow Serpent.

There was a dingo that seemed to be resident of the camping area too lazy to hunt for food.



Kakadu

Kakadu National Park is an large, nature reserve in Australia's Northern Territory. With large wetlands, rivers and sandstone escarpments, it's home to some 2,000 plant species and wildlife from saltwater crocodiles, flatback turtles to many species of birds. There are Aboriginal rock paintings, dating to prehistoric times. The park has the biggest termite mounds I have ever seen.





Litchfield National Park

Litchfield National Park is home to several stunning waterfalls that cascade into crystal clear pools (Florence Falls being the most popular), iconic magnetic termite mounds and clusters of weathered sandstone pillars at the Lost City. It also has a track called the Reynolds Track which takes you to Sandy Falls and Surprise Falls via the Daly River which is a challenging water crossing, deep enough to require a snorkel on the vehicle.



Western Australia

Western Australia, covering the entire western third of the country, is mostly arid outback.

Its population is concentrated in the fertile southwestern corner, including the Margaret River wine region and its riverside capital, Perth.

In the far north, the Kimberley region is home to ancient Aboriginal rock art, the Bungle Bungle sandstone domes and Broome, with its pearling industry and Cable Beach camel rides.

Western Australia has 176 mines, mining gold, diamonds, iron ore and copper.

Further south is the World Heritage Ningaloo Marine Park and the World Heritage Shark Bay.



Wyndham and Lake Argyle

Wyndham is where the King, Pentecost, Durack, Forest and Ord Rivers flow into the Cambridge Gulf. Cattle were driven north to Wyndham slaughtered then loaded on ships to England.

Lake Argyle, is the biggest manmade lake in the southern hemisphere, created by the Ord River Dam.

During the wet season Lake Argyle holds a staggering 32 million cubic metres of water, contains lots of fish plus fresh water crocodiles.

I had a swim in the lake it was very cold





Purnululu National Park

The Purnululu National Park is in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia. The 240,000 hectare is a World Heritage site, located between Kununurra, and Halls Creek. The orange and black sandstone domes, known as the Bungle Bungles, rise 300 metres above the grass covered plain of Purnululu. If you take the time to drive down among the Bungle Bungles you will see the Cathedral and Echidna Chasm. The colours at sunset are great, it is well worth staying a night or two.





Halls Creek / Fitzroy Crossing

In 1885 a prospector named Charles Hall struck gold, a huge 28 ounce nugget, at the edges of the Great Sandy and Tanami Deserts in remote North West Australia. By 1954, old Halls Creek was all but abandoned as people moved to the new town site. The original Fitzroy Crossing town sprung up around the river's narrowest point, and soon became a hub for travellers. Crossing the Fitzroy River was by a concrete crossing which was built in 1935, keeping the Kimberley accessible in the dry season until a new, high clearance, bridge was built in 1974.





Windjana Gorge / Tunnel Creek

Windjana Gorge National Park is part of a 375 million year old Devonian reef system. Carved by the Lennard River, Windjana Gorge is over three kilometres long with 300 metre high walls. At the base of the gorge, deep freshwater pools have freshwater crocodiles and are surrounded by native fig, cadjeput and liechardt trees. Close by at Tunnel creek, under the Devonian plateau, is a series of caves which we climbed through. The 750 metre tunnel is home to bats and stalactites and was used as a hideout by Jandamarra an infamous 'outlaw' in the 1890s.





Gibb River Road

The Gibb River Road travels some 700 kms through the central Kimberley Plateau from King Sound at Derby to the Cambridge Gulf at Wyndham. The road was a former cattle route that stretches in an east west direction through the Kimberley. There are many attractions, and obstacles, including Lennard Gorge and Bell Gorge, Tunnel Creek, Dimond Gorge and Sir John Gorge, the Pentecost River and Ord River, Galvans Gorge, Manning Gorge and Manning Falls.





Derby

Derby is a small town, located on the edge of the King Sound in far north Western Australia. Derby's has the highest tides of any Australian port 11 metres (or 36 feet) the picture top left shows low tide, the picture top right shows the water a couple of feet from the top of the jetty at high tide. Derby also has the Prison tree where prisoners were kept overnight on their way to the court house in Derby.





Broome

Broome is in Western Australia's Kimberley region. The white sands of 22km long Cable Beach has sunset camel rides and water was so warm when we had a swim. At Gantheaume Point nearby, dinosaur tracks are revealed in the beach's red rocks at low tide. During low tide you can walk out to a WW2 plane wreck at Roebuck bay.

We were in Broome for the Pearling Festival and also the stairway to the moon which occurs at the full moon. We also went to an evening movie at the Sun open air movie house.





Cape Leveque

Cape Leveque is the northernmost tip of the Dampier Peninsula in the Kimberley region. Cape Leveque is 240 kilometres north of Broome, the drive can be very sandy in places. The beach is kilometres of powdery white sand, interspersed with red rocky sections, and dotted with treasures the tide left behind.

We took a sea plane out to Talbot Bay, then a jet boat to Horizontal Waterfalls. When the jetboat blew an engine we were rescued by a seaplane. A great experience.





Karijini National Park

Karijini National Park is 627,422 hectares, located just north of the Tropic of Capricorn in the Hamersley Range. In Dales Gorge, with its red terraced cliffs, weathered by centuries of exposure, there are ferns, pools and waterfalls, Fortescue and Fern Falls being the most popular. On a hot day Circular Pool is the coolest place to be, due to the large cliffs.

A short drive away is Weano Gorge. To get to the gorge you have walk through cliffs and water and then down a steep incline with a hand rail into the gorge.





Hamersley Gorge

Hamersley Gorge in the north west corner of Karijini National Park, has gorges and waterfalls. Cliffs in gorge are stunning red and green in colour, the water is refreshingly cool in the heat of the day.

Visitors are warned to exercise due caution when walking in the Vampire and Wittenoom Gorges near the northern boundary of the park due to the presence of blue asbestos.





Tom Price

Tom Price is 1500km north of Perth. This township is controlled by mining giant Rio Tinto, and located inland, in the heart of the Pilbara region. The Tom Price mine has been producing iron ore since 1965, now has it's own railway line to Dampier on the Western Australia coast. The trains have 90 to 100 carriages each containing 100 tons of iron ore which are pulled by 3 diesel engines. The iron ore is then loaded onto ships for export. We did a mine tour, the equipment they have is huge.





Dampier

Located just 20 kilometres west of Karratha, the port town of Dampier is named after the English buccaneer William Dampier, who visited in 1688. Built by Hamersley Iron in 1965, it's the largest tonnage shipping port in Australia and houses the massive export facilities of Hamersley Iron, Dampier Salt and the North West Gas. It is also the home of the legendary Red Dog which wandered around these parts, a movie was made about Red Dog at the Mermaid pub.





Exmouth

Exmouth is a resort town on Western Australia's North West Cape. It's a gateway to nearby Ningaloo Marine Park with its coral reefs, colourful fish and migratory whale sharks.

Cape Range National Park has kangaroos, sheer cliffs and red, rocky gorges. The Cape's northwest coast is a seasonal nesting grounds for marine turtles and has beautiful beaches like Torquoise Bay. At the bottom of the cape is Yardi Creek, a very sandy water crossing that takes you to Coral Bay via the Ningaloo Marine Park, an army defence reserve and Point Cloates.





Coral Bay



Coral Bay is protected from the Indian Ocean by the Ningaloo reef lying between Carnarvon and Exmouth. It is Australia's only fringing reef, where the coral starts right at the water's edge so viewing fish and coral is very easy. You can take a boat out and snorkel in the deeper sea where the coral and fish are much larger. I managed to snorkel both this trip. My journey this time was from Exmouth via Yardi Creek, through the army firing range, Ningaloo Station and Point Cloates, very sandy but much nicer than driving all the way round on the hardtop.



Gnaraloo

Gnaraloo is a working pastoral station located in Gnaraloo Bay, Carnarvon Shire, Western Australia. It is adjacent to the Ningaloo Marine Park and 150 km north of Carnarvon.

The waters are crystal clear, full of clams and coral. You can surf in the morning with no wind and good swell, then windsurf in the arvo when the wind comes up. The main surf break in the area is known as Tombstones, a heavy barreling left hander. I have sailed Tombstones many times, only once being too big for me, 30ft plus, so I just watched.



Red Bluff

Red Bluff is located on Quobba Station and is one of Australia's most spectacular, rugged, outback coastal working stations.

It has turquoise waters, a beautiful beach, and surf. Plus the most majestic sunsets and star filled desert night sky you will ever see.

Quobba has the Blowholes where water is forced up through a hole in the rock several metres into the air.

There is also lighthouse to warn shipping of the dangerous coast, the Korean Star sunk here in 1988.





Shark Bay / Monkey Mia

A world heritage listed site of 2,300 hectares, Shark Bay is the most westernmost point (Steep point) of Australia between Carnarvon and Kalbarrie.

Within the park is Monkey Mia, where you could freely feed and swim with the dolphins, but this is now controlled by the ranger. I liked it when it was unpatrolled and remember seeing a boy running up and down in the sand as a dolphin followed his actions in the water.

There are Manta rays, sea snakes and Dugongs. I have been so privileged to see this unspoilt wilderness.



Kalbarri

Kalbarri National Park contains almost 2000 sq km of wild bushland, stunning river gorges and eroded coastal cliffs.

Nature's Window, or Inyaka Wookai Watju, is the most popular attraction, a natural rock arch that providing different views of the winding gorge below. The Murchison River winds it's way through Kalbarri National Park, the gorges having been carved over the years to form dramatic sandstone cliff faces.

The pictures show the yellow sandstone dirt track through the park, dolphins surfing at Jaques Point and whales frolicking in the Indian Ocean





Geraldton

Geraldton is on Western Australia's Batavia Coast, with the Moresby Ranges creating a stunning backdrop. Geraldton has great beaches, warm sunny weather, making it good for water sports, particularly yachting, windsurfing, surfing, diving and fishing. For many summers i have travelled over to Geraldton to windsurf at Point Moore (Hells Gate), St Georges Beach (Sunsets beach) or Coronation Beach (Spot x). The last time I sailed there i was 68yrs old and after 6 weeks hard sailing ended up in hospital , then flown by flying doctor to Perth.





Nambucc NP / Lancelin

Lancelin is only 127 kilometres north of Perth. It is a fishing town with cray boats moored there. Massive sandhills surround the town and you can drive through them to Wedge Island. The winds called the Freemantle Doctor, occur after lunch making ideal conditions for windsurfing, which I don't have at both the Hole in the Wall and Hells Gate.

Pinnacles Desert is in Nambucc NP. The stone rises out of the sandy desert like the remains of an ancient city. Made by wind and rain these stone monuments are only 4 kilometres from the beach.



Queensland

Queensland is an Australian state covering the continent's northeast, with a coastline stretching nearly 7,000km.

Its offshore Great Barrier Reef, the world's largest coral reef system, hosts thousands of marine species. The city of Cairns is a gateway to the reef and also the tropical Daintree Rainforest.

North of the Daintree is Cooktown and Cape York the northern most place in Australia (Pajinka).

The west of the state is Birdsville and the Simpson Desert.

The capital, Brisbane, is flanked by the surfing beaches of the Gold and Sunshine Coasts.

Finishing the Simpson Desert crossing



The Simpson Desert

The Simpson Desert is the largest parallel sand dune desert in the world, Having more than 1100 sand dunes to cross, and is part of 3 states South Australia, Queensland and Northern Territory. This meeting place is called Poeppel Corner. The Simpson Desert was nothing like I imagined, it had lots of water, wildflowers, animals and mud. It was 630kms and took me 7 days to cross. A wonderful experience, it was very cold at nights and hot in the daytime.





Birdsville

Birdsville's busiest week of the year occurs in September. The population for Birdsville goes from 120 to some 7000 people, visitors coming from all parts of Australia and the world for the annual two day Birdsville Racing Carnival. The first race meeting was held in 1882 as an event for hack and stock horses with just a few local spectators. The Birdsville pub is a great place to have a beer, but at \$9.00 a beer it's best not to have too many. There is a hot spring to wash your vehicle down after coming across the desert.





Diamantina

Diamantina National Park, is a 507,000 hectare park, home to many rare and threatened species. Lake Constance and Hunters Gorge are important wetlands and support breeding populations of many resident and migratory birds. There To the east are weathered sandstone ranges. Floodplains of the Diamantina River and its tributaries, cross the Mitchell grass plains to dune fields as seen in deserts further west. All the waters from the north flow though the Diamantina to the channel country and then south west to Lake Eyre / Kati Thanda.





Overland Telegraph Track

From Bramwell Station, north is the Overland Telegraph Track with up to 15 creeks to cross, the first being Palm Creek. A further 7 creeks took me to Fruit

Bat Falls for swim, the water being surprisingly warm. There is only Scrubby Creek to cross to get to Twin Falls for another swim, no cross here. Another 7 creeks to cross, the bridge at Cypress Creek was tricky with the troopy. Logans and Nolans were the deepest to cross with water up to the windscreen, but no problem for the troopy.





Fruit Bat Falls / Eliot Falls

Fruit Bat Falls on the left is one of the Old Telegraph Track's most popular sights. The broad, steady stream of water over the edge of the falls spreads out into a clear pool (called The Saucepan).

North of Fruit Bat Falls through Scrubby Creek is the stunning Twin Falls. Twin Falls steps down from Eliot Creek to wash over and split into two distinct flows before settling in a pool at its base, making it one of the most photogenic attractions along the Old Telegraph Track. I had a refreshing swim at both, the water was not cold.



Cape York

Cape York Peninsula located in Far North Queensland, Australia. It is the largest unspoiled wilderness in northern Australia and one of the last remaining wilderness areas on earth.

The Peninsula Development Road (PDR) heading north from Musgrave, is very corrugated with washouts, creeks, and bulldust holes, so care should be taken.

Once you cross the Jardine River you are among rainforest, beautiful beaches with crystal clear waters, but you cannot go in the water as salt water crocodiles are found in the sea, creeks and rivers.





Chilli Beach

Chilli Beach, is sandwiched between the reef and the rainforest. It is near the north east boundary of Kutini Payamu (Iron Range) National Park.

The roads into and through Kutini Payamu National Park are suited to four wheel drive vehicles only. Crocodiles live in the rivers, creeks, along the coast and offshore of the national park. The beach is littered with rubbish blown here from Indonesia. I stayed 2 days here and it is well worth the trip to see such a beautiful place, the sunrise is just awesome.





On the Road

Life on the road can be hot in the day and freezing at night. It is not uncommon to be 40 degrees in the day then to find ice on the car in the morning. Road conditions change from blacktop to dirt, bulldust, corrugations, mud and water. It is just me, the troopy and the beauty of the ever changing wide open space's. At the end of the day you catch up with fellow travellers, having a yarn and exchanging stories. The solitude and the night sky is something everybody should feel and see, then to wake in the morning to birds calling.





Fraser Island / K'garl

Fraser Island is the largest sand island in the world (measuring 120km by 15km), and is the only place in the world where rainforest grows on sand. Inland the vegetation varies from dense tropical rainforest and wild heath to wetlands and wallum scrub, with sandblows, mineral streams and freshwater lakes opening onto long sandy beaches. The island is home to bird life and wildlife, including the famous dingo, while offshore waters have dugongs, dolphins, manta rays, sharks and migrating humpback whales.

I booked to do a couple of days on Fraser island and 7 days later I was still there. It has so much to see, I loved the inland lakes, the crystal clear water and the whiter than white sands, the coolness of the rainforest for when you been in the sun all day, the noise of the birds in the tall trees. If you were brave enough to go through Ngala Rocks to Indian Head (I am at Indian Head in the picture on the right) you were rewarded by stunning scenery, but you have to be aware of the tides as there is no beach at high tide.



The trip through Australia started in 2012, and is still on going at the time of writing this. I have been privileged to see some of the most spectacular places in Australia.

I love talking to the local Blackfellows and Whitefellows to hear their stories. Out in the bush it is so nice to be visited by birds at sunset, experience the night sky and be woken by the birds for sunrise.

Bob Caddell 70 yrs old.

