

WA Wheatbelt to Kalgoorlie in a loop

Stage 6 October 2018

After the mishaps experienced in the last report, we were glad to be back on the road again, and with the van in good mechanical order



WA Wildflowers

Outback Camps

This stage started on 25 September 2018.

So, with the spring nicely fixed, we were happy to depart the following day. It was a cool and sunny morning when we pulled out and headed to the North West and to the small town of Nungarin. Although it is only a blip on the map, this lovely Wheatbelt town has a delightful hotel with stained glass windows and an equally nice café. But of more importance to us was the caravan park located in their Recreation Complex. It had power and water and sullage to all sites and for the princely sum of \$20 a night. By this time we needed to do a heap of washing and water was needed to keep the washing machine going. The machine was going like the clappers for a few days! Alas on the last day we were there we hung out the washing and then went for a drive to nearby Trayning, only to arrive back to a torrential thunderstorm and soggy wet washing. That took a bit of drying out I can tell you.

Originally our intent was to attend a weekend event and concert at a station property near

Nungarin (at Mangowine), as friends Karen and Paul had organised for other Kedrons to be there with them. There was to be a tribute band to Roy Orbison, whose music I love. We soon realised we had to make a decision whether to head North and see the last of the wildflowers, or stay around and go to the Mangowine event. The wildflowers won.

And so we again were on the road and were armed with fairly recent information about wildflower sightings. The town of Perenjori was said to be the epicenter of wildflowers and that is where we set our sights.

First we travelled on the Bencubbin-Gabbin Road to Koorda (where we did some shopping at their excellent little general store) and up to Cadoux, then North up through Wubin and Dalwallinu. All of these were lovely little towns and worthy of a stop in their own right. And another time we may do that. Our target was a nice campground just North of Wubin, at another of the famous granite "rocks".

Buntine Rock

S29 58 13 E116 35 8

This is a large granite outcrop, with wildflowers when in season, and a view of 360 degrees from the top. If winter rains have been good, there are carpets of pink and white everlastings. There are also many varieties of orchids including donkey, cowslip, blue fairy, spider, ant & sun which can

be found around the base of the rocks and alongside the track edges leading up to it. We had quite a nice camp site, with our awning into some vegetation and we were surrounded by fields of wildflowers.



After a couple of nice days at Buntine Rock we drove North to Perenjori (a small town with a pub, café, post office and not much else) and asked where the wreath flowers were located. It was out

of town a bit, up a back road, so, with the van still attached we nipped up there.

Wreathflowers are unique and we keenly wanted to see them. Reports had said they were past their best now due to



the weather, and we had been held up with the mechanical repairs. They were quite lovely and we now saw why everyone speaks of them in hushed voices. I am unsure if they grow anywhere else than WA, but they sure have a presence.

After seeing the wreathflowers we went back to town and had coffee at the café (as you do) and then turned due West out to our camp site for the next few nights.

Camel Soak

S29 24 6 E116 37 30

Friend Stephen had told us about a campsite near Perenjori, at the site of another granite outcrop. The WA Wheatbelt is certainly blessed with these outcrops...and you can camp at many of them. Camel Soak is located 47km east of Perenjori just off the Perenjori-Rothsay Road.



This granite catchment, also known as The Rock Hole was sunk as a watering point for men and their camel teams working on the No 2 Rabbit Proof Fence from 1903 to 1905.

Camel Soak is a popular picnic destination with its natural beauty, and it makes a lovely camp site too. The only facility was a flushing toilet and some rubbish bins. From memory I think we had some marginal internet reception there too. As there had been recent rains we found there were many small wildflowers around the base of the rock and nearby.

A couple of days saw us ready to move on.

Three Springs

Three Springs is located about 300 km North of Perth on the Midlands Road. It is the seat of the Shire of the same name. wheatfarming is the main industry of both the town and the Shire and there are wheatfields all around the district. But they also proudly showcase their wildflowers too.

We had planned to stay at the freecamp here for a few days (you are allowed to stay for up to three days if it is not busy, otherwise two days). We found the spot fairly easily as it is behind the town pool and with access to the showers and toilets. It wasn't too busy and we found a spot well away from everyone else, on some nice green grass. If it is crowded we don't mind being close to others, but if there is lots of space, our preference -OK our STRONG preference - is to have a bit of space and privacy.

We enjoyed the peace and privacy until a large group arrived, saw our ideal location with its peaceful siting, and decided to set up around us. There were three caravans, five cars and numerous tents - all right in front of us. It appeared to be a number of families, with children ranging from toddlers to teenagers, and we soon decided they were a church group. I admit they

were polite and peaceful folk (there was no midnight drunken brawls and cackling) but when one of them parked across our vehicle blocking us in, that was the last straw. We left first thing the next morning.

But before we left I took photos of the truly beautiful murals in this town, at the public park in the main street.



Our trajectory was further North to the Geraldton-Mount Magnet Road where we turned left and travelled through positively lovely farming country with delightful wildflower displays. We even saw more wreathflowers! It was lunchtime when we arrived in the small town of Yalgoo, and we stopped at their town park and made sandwiches for lunch. Opposite the park was a nice little modern caravan park and I was very tempted to stay for a few days - and I now wish we had, as I have heard the town is quite lovely and has interesting buildings. Next time.....



A Bush camp

S28 9 57 E118 10 13

This night's stop was a simple camp by pulling into a roadside rest stop on a bit of a rise, and driving down the back among some mid-height bushes and trees. It was peaceful enough and we certainly did not have a heap of churchgoing campers near us! In fact we had no one near us whatsoever.



Sandstone 1

We had washed our clothes in a lidded bucket as we drove along, so we spun them out and hung them out to dry as we arrived. Given the dry weather they were dry well before sundown a couple of hours later. It was a peaceful and serene spot for the night. A plus was the presence of internet reception, courtesy of a nearby mine site.

Sandstone

Sandstone is a small town with a big heart. It is surrounded by fossicking fields and people come from interstate to spend months here prospecting for gold. Prospecting is not as it was when I was a child, when men (it was always men...) would eke out a harsh existence in the bush, living in tin shanties and eating regular diets of bully beef and panning for gold with a dish. Nowadays the gold fever is accompanied with the most expensive equipment, solid four wheel drive vehicles and often the prospector has an expensive offroad caravan to live in while camped out in the back blocks. There are many of these folks in and around

Sandstone. Often they come into the little council owned caravan park to top up with water, do the washing and go out to dinner at the pub. What they will not do is tell you where they have been prospecting.

The caravan park is a delight, as it is council owned and run and whoever does the gardens knows what they are doing. The street-front gardens were quite spectacular on this trip.

The Sandstone pub is a gem, and full of happy patrons every night, all having a drink at the bar or eating a meal in the lovely old dining room. We had dinner there and this time it was not a happy meal for me. The special for the night was two courses for a set price, with the first course slow cooked spicy pork ribs. Hmm, I don't usually like pork much but the spicy bit sounded nice and the dessert was apparently a cheesecake. The cheesecake bit sold me on the deal. When the pork arrived it was mostly gristly fat, so I handed it over to Val to eat, thinking at least the dessert would be OK. Nope, dessert turned out to be tinned peaches and custard. I declined that and walked back to the van to make a sandwich. Sigh.

Niagara Dam

S29 24 2 E121 25 40

Some distance to the East and then South is the campsite at Niagara Dam, a spot we have camped at a few times now. First introduced to it by fellow travellers Kaye and Bruce, we like it as we have



a favourite spot on rocks overlooking the dam. Usually the dam is full, but not so this time. It was a sad sight, with water levels just a puddle on the bottom. But the weather was lovely (last time we got rained out and left after packing up in gusts of rain) and it was nice and peaceful. Our view was still lovely and we had nice afternoon drinks sitting on the rocks overlooking the dam.

We had reasonable internet reception here, using the external aerial on the van, but phone call quality was not the best.

While here we drove out the back of the nearby Kookynie Township and looked at some of the "rocks" there. The colours are



magnificent and make the trip out there worth seeing the rocks.

And there is a cache there too...

Lake Douglas

S30 50 35 E121 23 36

After three nights at Niagara Dam, it was a Friday and we had promised our son in law over in Kalgoorlie that we would be there to spend time together while he was still on a rostered break. (He works in Kalgoorlie and flies home to SA when he has a longer break). So we headed into Kalgoorlie and spent the night again at the Centennial Park overnight rest stop.

The stay allowed us to do some shopping and have dinner with Charles that evening. The next day we headed out to nearby Lake Douglas, about 10 kms from Kalgoorlie. This nice spot is provided for by the Kalgoorlie Shire and has rubbish bins and drop toilets, all scattered through a large bush setting and with a dam nearby. Unlike Niagara Dam, this one was brimming full...We stayed here some years ago and thought it was quite nice then.

This time it was equally pleasant, with only a handful of other campers nearby. We were joined later the first day with some nice folk who had camped nearby to us back in Kalgoorlie and who we had shared a congenial drink with at happy hour. They proved to be equally good company until we left three days later.

The weather remained quite comfortable, with cold nights and coolish days. Each day was sunny too, which is important for the solar panels. I think I would have stayed longer but there is a limit of three days to camp here, and we always obey such rules. Our last night here we had dinner with Charles after he returned from work and called in to see us. Sitting outside with candles on the table for atmosphere was very pleasant - until the cold drove us inside!

I was amazed at how long the cool weather had held up; amazed and delighted. So far we had enjoyed superb weather, long after I had expected to be heading South to cooler climes.