

# Desert Trek 2009 - Arkaroola to Adelaide

## *Graham and Chris on tour - 2009 Part 6*

This is part 6 and most likely the last part for this year. We packed up from Arkaroola on Sunday the 18th October and headed west towards Copley (Near Leigh Creek). Our intention was to do some investigation of the Gammon Ranges NP before heading south to the central and southern Flinders Ranges.



*Camped at Arcoona*

The information on access to the Gammon Ranges (that are actually part of North Flinders Ranges) was a little sketchy so we went down some dead end tracks that had been closed for some time thinking that would could gain access to some of the more remote areas of the ranges. However we soon discovered that the track we needed to take we had passed some km back and we did not feel like backtracking so continued on. We ended up camping at a spot called Arcoona which is on the back track into Arkaroola. This track would also have gotten us into the most remote areas of the Gammon Ranges but would have necessitated heading north and east, towards where we had travelled from and as we were would soon need supplies before heading for the Southern Flinders Ranges we decided to camp at Arcoona for a few days. While we were still fairly remote it was not a long drive into Leigh Creek when and if supplies ran out. We didn't see a solitary person for the 3 days that we camped there.

The back track into Arkaroola however does need some further investigation which we may fit into our wanderings in 2010. The scenery at Arcoona was not spectacular but was pleasant and we enjoyed our 3 days of solitude. We then headed into Copley and Leigh Creek for coffee, shopping and lunch (in that order) and then headed down the main drag to Warraweena. Access to Warraweena was through the town of Beltana, which has almost become a ghost town. An old mining and railway town on the original narrow gauge Ghan railway line. Warraweena is a privately owned Conservation Park about 50km off the main highway. It is also the site of an old copper mining precinct of "Sliding Rock". The camping there was comparatively expensive even compared to Arkaroola. \$24 per night with the only facilities being a "long drop". You could get a shower if you



*Beltana - ex mining and railway town with few inhabitants*



*Sliding Rock Mine - Warraweena*



*Warraweena*





*Wildflowers on Warraweena CP*

drove up to the Homestead which for some camp spots could be as much as 15-20km. However on the up side, when you get given a camp site it is secluded and at least 500m from the neighbouring camp site but more commonly a number of Km from the next camp site. To make it even more private there is a chain across the track into each campsite to prevent others from entering once you have set up camp. The camping fees only gave you a camp spot. To tour any of the really good 4WD tracks on the property it cost \$40 per vehicle per day. We camped at "The Miners Camp" and stayed 2 nights, checked out the free tracks and were impressed enough with the dramatic scenery to vow to return for a more complete investigation. The tracks that attract a fee are fairly extreme so we would be looking for another car to accompany us. Apparently it is a popular haunt of the Adelaide based Land Rover Owners Club who I think get special treatment as they apparently help with property maintenance. They also allow shooters onto the property to shoot feral animals, mainly

goats, pigs and sheep. They are able to lock off parts of the park and let the shooters go for it. I guess this is a win win as the feral animals are controlled at no cost and some red neck amateur shooters get to have their jollies.

After Warraweena we headed back down the main road and popped into the Prairie Hotel in Parachilna for another one of their



*Heyson Range - Southern Flinders Ranges*



*Razorback Range - Southern Flinders Ranges*



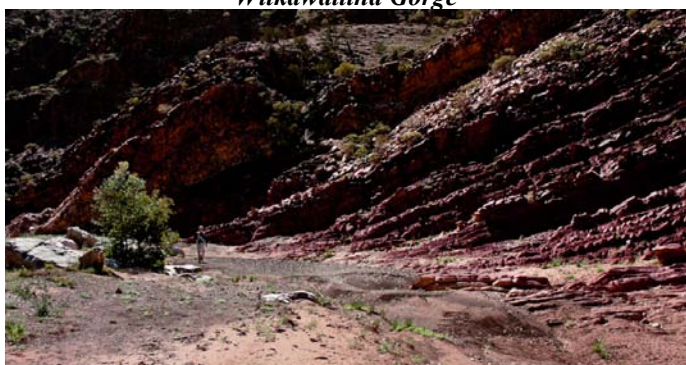
*Wilkawallina Gorge*

fabulous coffees and then headed down to Brachina Gorge with no particular destination in mind. After investigating a number of camping spots we settled on the East Brachina Gorge Camping Ground. This was an excellent spot and as it is late in the season we had it pretty much to ourselves. We decided to use this as a base for checking out the area included Wilpena Pound. That afternoon we did some touring then the next morning (Sat 24th Oct) we set off for Wilpena Pound. It was overcast and there was the threat of rain. Heading towards Wilpena along the Bunyeroo Gorge Road we were lucky enough for the early morning sun to break through the clouds and light up the Razorback Range resulting in a brilliant photo opportunity which we were not expecting to get. This drive is quite spectacular and I think should be done in the early morning light.

We spent the day in Wilpena, did the walk up to the look out, had lunch at the café and then did some washing in the afternoon before heading back to camp.

Wilpena pound while very unusual in its formation is not very spectacular on the inside but quite stunning when approached from the outside. However the country side around Bunyeroo Gorge and Brachina Gorge is spectacular and would rate right up there with the Kimberleys and the McDonnell Ranges.

The next day we hang around camp (rest day) then on the 26th October packed up and headed west to check out Wilkawallina Gorge as a potential camp spot. The camping was very ordinary but we walked up the Gorge for a few Km and then headed for Rawnsley Park the long way through Martins Well. We arrived



*Chris brings up the rear while walking Wilkawallina Gorge*





*En route to Rawnsley Park - the long way*

at Rawnsley Park in time for lunch. Rawnsley park is an operating station but has tourist facilities with good camp ground and some up market tourist accommodation. Had lunch in the Shearing Shed Restaurant - very, very good coffee. Had a long chat to the restaurant lessee and while nattering notice a wine rack with a number of different reds but one stood out as something unusual to see in the outback. Upon making a remark to the Chef/Proprietor, "you don't see that wine much in restaurants" he immediately replied, "you mean the 'Basket Press'". He is apparently on first name terms with all at Rockford's. We should have stayed for dinner just to have a bottle but good sense prevailed and we headed for

Quorn. Set up camp in the Quorn Caravan Park and ran into a bloke that has a Tracktrailer Topaz camper. Sort of a cross between a caravan and a camper that we are mildly interested in. Had sundowners with him, his wife and another couple that they were travelling with. They hailed from Perth and members of the Landrover Owners Club. When I enquired as to why they were driving Toyotas they simply replied that nobody in the Landrover Club would be silly enough to actually own a Landrover. Their name for the Discovery 3 is Disaster 3. The Tracktrailer Topaz was fairly impressive but I think we have found something



*A neighbouring camper at Quorn caravan park*



*The elusive Yellow Footed Rock Wallaby*

better out of Qld. The only reason we are looking at a new purchase for mobile accommodation is that the Kimberly Kamper is getting a little tired and there are so many good rigs on the market now we feel like an upgrade after one more trip next year. Hopefully the financial markets will continue to improve and we can buy new camper and car. The 2006 Prado is now up to 110,000 Km on some very dodgy roads so once again after a final tour next year (only 3 months we think) a new car seems to make sense. Anyone interested in a very well used 4WD????

Anyway, I digress. Next morning had coffee and cake at the Quandong Café with the Landrover Club guys, went shopping and then hung around camp. Next day did a tourist drive around the local ranges (part of the Flinders Ranges) including Buckaringa Gorge and Warren Gorge, and to our delight we saw and photographed a Yellow Footed Rock Wallaby. We have been keeping our eye out for one of these throughout the Flinders Ranges. SA Parks have a recovery programme in place to try and build up



*Walking Mount Remarkable NP*



*Wildflowers - Sugar Gum Lookout*





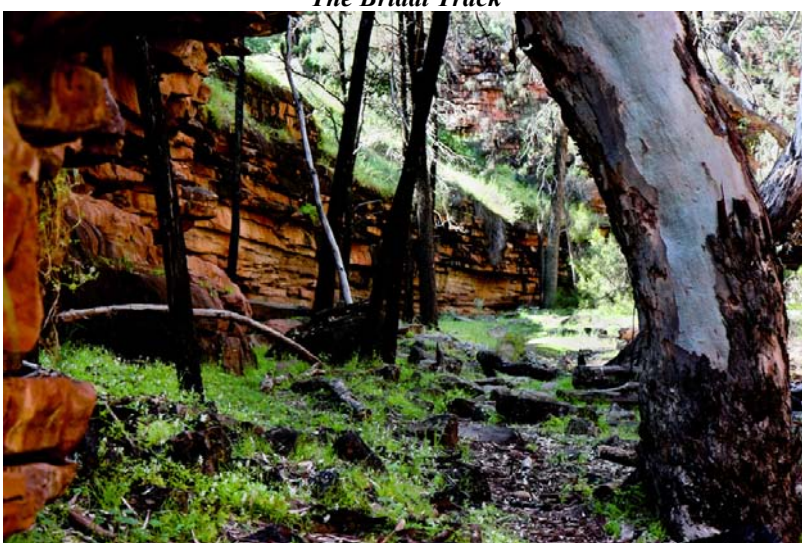
*Along the Walking Track to Sugar Gum Lookout*



*The Bridal Track*



*Alligator Gorge - cool on a hot day*



*Alligator Gorge*

the population of this wallaby as it almost become extinct and is still quite rare.. The result mainly of CATS, CATS bloody CATS!!!!

Next day we packed up and headed for Mt Remarkable National Park and set up camp in the only camping area in the Park at Mambray Creek. Did an evening walk overlooking Spencer Gulf and the following morning did the 8k walked to Sugar Gum Lookout, then headed to Melrose via Port Germaine with its 1.5Km jetty (it needs to be otherwise the water is only ankle deep) and then the Bridal Track. The Bridal Track is a 4WD only track across ridge tops and the views are spectacular. Unfor-



*Bush bees like wildflowers too*



*"Lady Beatle" - Tiperra Rocks*



## Graham and Chris on tour - 2009 Part 6

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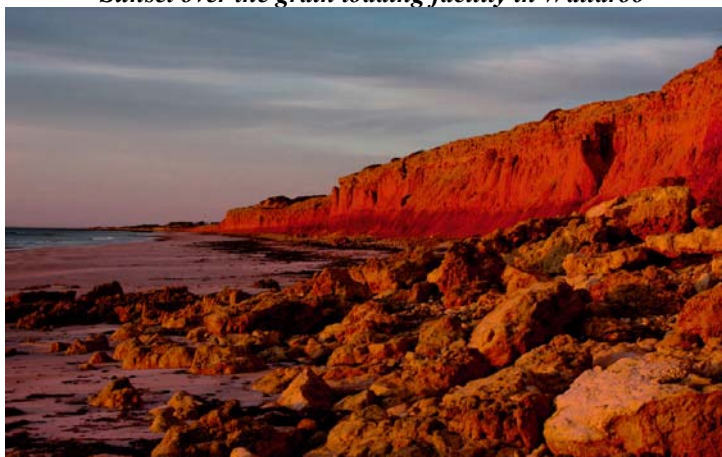
Unfortunately as luck would have it the day was very hazy and the views across Spencer Gulf very poor. We reached Melrose in time for lunch at the pub (very nice) and had a look around, headed back to camp through Germaine Gorge, visited Telowie National Park and did the walk up Telowie Gorge and then returned to camp. Fairly hectic day for a couple of old retirees.

Eager for more punishment we set off early the next morning for Alligator Gorge that is situated at the Northern end of Mount Remarkable NP. We headed up the western side of Mount Remarkable dropping in at Hancock's Lookout then through Wilmington to the gorge. It was about 40°C and a fair walk through the gorge, but fortunately the gorge was deep and cool with plenty of shade. Very difficult to get good pics though due to the narrowness of the gorge. It is a little hard to believe but back in the 50/60's the National Service Conscripts did their training in this area and would bivouac in Alligator Gorge. We then returned to camp down the eastern side of Mount Remarkable NP via Melrose (coffee) and then the Bridal Track (hoping for a clearer day than previous).



*Sunset over the grain loading facility in Wallaroo*

Next morning, Sunday 1st November, broke camp and headed for Pt Pirie to do some shopping then headed for Wallaroo and set up camp in the Caravan Park with a beach view. Following day was very windy with cool change (cold actually) in the afternoon. Good sunset though. Camp was covered in sand. Next Morning broke camp as soon as possible due to threatening weather and got to Moonta for coffee then headed back to the coast and found a protected bush camp at Tiperra Rocks on the beach. Well when I say protected, protected as much as possible considering the terrible weather. The weather however was on the improve and the beaches were remote and untouched. Walked pretty much each day and decided to stay for the weekend. Had



*Dusk - Tiperra Rocks - 30m from our camp*



*Coastal Wildflower*



*Crested Terns at Tiperra Rocks*



we moved we would have run into weekenders from Adelaide (2 hrs away) pretty much anywhere that we went, and as we had an excellent private camp spot we decided to stay a total of 6 nights. The little town of Balgowan was only 10 minutes away and so we could go into town for a decent shower whenever we wished. We also used it as a base to visit Maitland and Ardrossan. If ever you are in Maitland, under no circumstances should you go to the bakery for a cup of coffee. This establishment has now





*Juvenile Pacific Gull*



*Mature Pacific Gull*

won the honours of having the worst coffee in Australia, totally usurping the previous worst coffee winners of Murray Bridge and Tailem Bend. The silly part about it is, I watched the lady make the coffee and what she did left me so dumb struck I could not bring myself to complain. I also think she would probably have been perplexed by my complaint. Truly, there should be some sort of law that if you have an espresso machine you must undertake barista training. Also that to make a “flat white”, it is not simply a matter of replacing instant coffee with a shot of espresso and then topping up with hot water and a dash of cold milk. I guess to her mind that is what she made, a very flat white coffee.

On Monday the 9th, broke camp and set off down the coast and arrived in a little town called Port Rickaby. It's the first town that is not known to our GPS navigator. On arrival we discovered that all we had left on the electric cabling to the trailer was a frayed bunch of wires. The very rough and undulating sand track that we had taken along the coast had caused the electrical plug to the trailer to pull out and then the last 4k along bitumen had worn away the plug completely leaving bare wires only.

The caravan park at Port Rickaby is a real treasure, right on the beach, lawn sites, friendly people and fantastic coastline with good fishing. We didn't do any fishing but everybody else did and they caught fish from the jetty every day. We used Port



*Port Rickaby - Plenty of excellent walks along untouched beaches*

Rickaby as base to explore some more of York Peninsula, visiting Minlaton, where we got a new plug for the trailer, Point Turton, Levens and Parsons beaches and many others. On the Wednesday night of our stay the Caravan Park had a sausage sizzle which was a great night, plenty of liquid cheers and a great bunch of people. The temperatures had increased to the high 30's but the nights were comfortable sleeping with the afternoon sea breeze.

On Friday the 13th we headed for Adelaide and set up camp at Chris' sisters house, took part in a magical mystery tour of the McLaren Vale wineries on the Saturday and then set up camp at the Moana Beach Caravan Park where we stayed for 2 weeks. Bought 3 dozen wine, mainly Pertaringa and had them shipped home. Good reason to think about heading home.

The end, or almost, may do a small journal as we intend to head down the Limestone Coast on our way home.