

# Desert Trek 2009 - Santora Rosa to Canberra

## *Graham and Chris on tour - 2009 Part 4*

On the morning of the 15th of August we set out for Ka Ka Mundi section of Carnarvon NP. We were really hoping for something special. We gleaned a short cut out of our Magellan GPS as there was not a lot of informative signage on the road. Not far along the short cut we came to a creek crossing and on the other side of the crossing was an old Toyota 4WD ute in the middle of the road with its engine idling. We looked a little further down the road and there was a cocky picking up something on the road



that had obviously bounced out of his ute. What do you do but say “Gudday Mate”. Then we asked him if we could get to Ka Ka Mundi by this road. It seems that a straight yes or no was simply out of the question. “Well you could I suppose but you could go a number of other ways too. But then you would have to go on private property and it wouldn’t be too good on some of the tracks with your trailer.” I informed him that we would prefer to stay on public roads. Well to cut a long story short, his name was Peter Squire and we would have talked to him for a good hour. Both cars parked in the middle of the road but hey, there is no traffic in

*Magnificent Carnarvon Ranges—en route to Ka Ka Mundi*



*Main entrance to Ka Ka Mundi—not a path well trodden*



*Exploring Ka Ka Mundi*

those parts. Told us how him and his mates (fellow station owners) do a lot of exploring in the Carnarvon ranges on Quad Bikes, as it borders many of their properties. In particular he looks for Aboriginal Art.. On that score he told us of some non publicised artwork in Ka Ka Mundi plus a few other things of interest that weren’t publicised. He also told us of a number of features on his own property (like petrified trees) that if the Parks and Wildlife people were to find out about would probably cause him some grief. He was very interested in the fact that we had seen the Bradshaw Figures in the Kimberley’s and asked us to email him some photos.

Eventually we were on our way and arrived at Ka Ka Mundi and went to the only camp spot. Now Ka Ka Mundi is a bit of a disappointment. There is virtually no signage and you have to do a lot of guessing as to where tracks head. Peter’s directions and advice were invaluable. While there wasn’t a lot to see we did a lot of exploring and the camp spot was pleasant so we stayed 3 nights.

From Ka Ka Mundi we headed for the town of Springsure. We decided to go the long way along dirt tracks that skirt the northern edge of the Carnarvon Ranges. A most enjoyable drive of about 120Km. I think we saw one other vehicle, farmer on his way to somewhere, and arrived in Springsure in time for lunch. We set up camp at the local caravan park and then wandered





*Unpublicised Artwork which took some finding*



*One of the more colourful residents of Ka Ka Mundi*



*Bottle trees abound in Ka Ka Mundi—much more elegant than the Boabs of the Kimberleys*



*We fitted in a bit of a local tour of the Springsure area—this range overlooks the town.*

around to the local Toyota Agent to see what the likely-hood of getting an oil change and filter was. To our absolute amazement, he said if that's all we wanted done he could do it straight away. So we strolled up the street, had lunch and did the shopping. Picked up the car and did the washing at the local Laundromat. We then did some exploring around town and the nearby country side. What a pleasant town with very friendly people continuing the outback QLD hospitality we had been experiencing elsewhere. Another place worth revisiting. We rang up and made a booking for the Carnarvon Gorge Caravan Park for the following night. Carnarvon Gorge is the main attraction of the Carnarvon National Park and is therefore very busy with tourists, caravans and campers. Hence the requirement to book ahead, something we don't like doing as being fixed to a date is not what the whole idea of our adventures are about, but sometimes it is necessary.

The drive to Carnarvon Gorge via Rolleston was very enjoyable albeit on bitumen and the associated caravans and road trains etc. We did take a shortcut for the last 50Km however, that took us along the eastern edge of the Carnarvon Ranges. Carnarvon Gorge is a very well organised park and has an upmarket resort to boot. It is a spectacular gorge gouged out of the limestone ranges. The monopoly that the caravan park has was reflected in the cost of staying, \$38 per night plus entry fees into the park. We arrived before lunch and then did a 14Km walk in the afternoon, We headed straight to the "Art Gallery" where we were fortunate enough to speak with a tribal elder about the Aboriginal Art. Very interesting and very similar to the artwork in Ka Ka Mundi. Even the tribal elder was unaware of the artwork that we had found in Ka Ka Mundi. On returning we visited

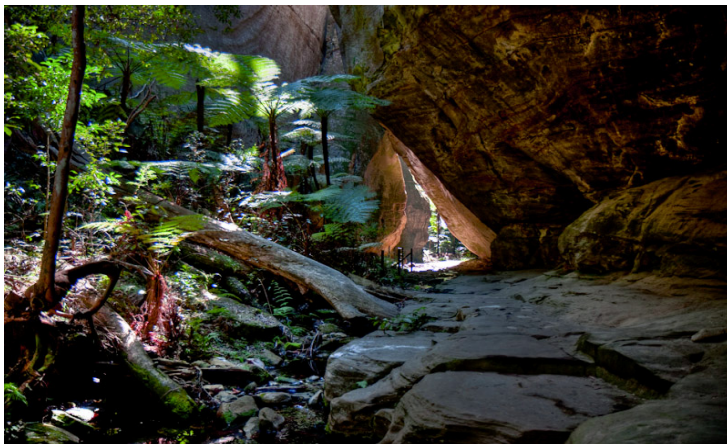


*"The Amphitheatre" - Carnarvon Gorge*





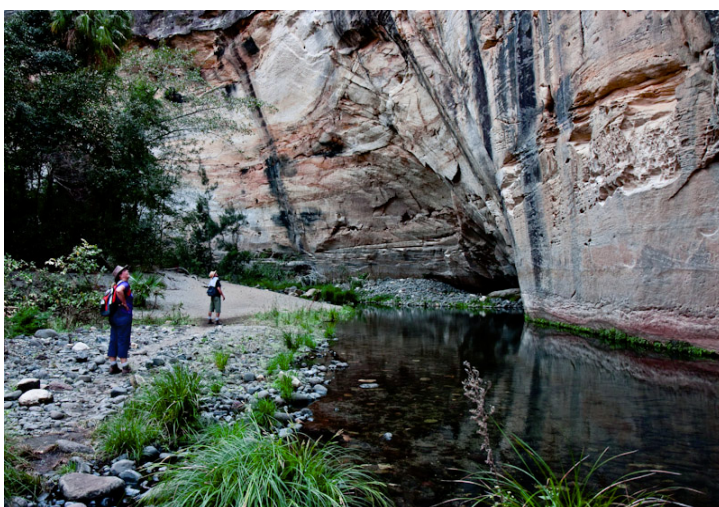
*Just one of the scenes from our walk up Carnarvon Gorge*



*Ward's Canyon - serene*



*Chris is dwarfed by Booinda Gorge*



*End of the line—"Big Bend" is at the end of the 20Km walk in Carnarvon Gorge.*

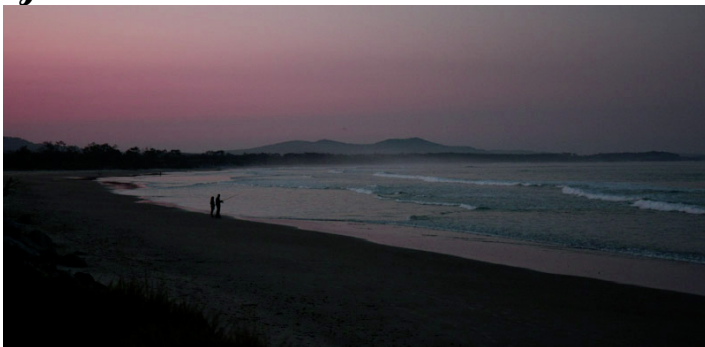
Ward's Canyon. An astonishing place that seemed to create its own weather conditions. Very serene creating a real sense of wonder. The next day we did the 20Km walk to "Big Bend" taking in "Cathedral Canyon" and "Booinda Gorge". Booinda gorge is remarkable. Chris and I have never seen a geographical feature like this before. You can see from the included photo the unusual shape of the gorge and how Chris is dwarfed by its size (you have to squint to see her). The unusual gorge extends for more than a Km. After a 2 night stay we headed for Brisbane to catch up with my brother and his wife so we have left a couple of small walks for us to do whenever we revisit. While the photos of Carnarvon Gorge do not do it justice it does go some of the way in showing the splendour and beauty of the gorge. The diversity of the gorge was quite remarkable and really is a "must see" for anyone travelling in this part of Australia.

We were not in a rush to reach Brisbane as it was Friday and had told my Brother we would arrive on Sunday afternoon, so we camped on a lake (more like a billabong but they called it a lake) near Condamine and then next night we camped on a river bank just out of Bowenville. The morning we set off from Carnarvon after it rained for most of the night, we had not released the water from a rolled up section of our camper and consequently we had wet mattress and bedding so at Bowenville we had the perfect opportunity to dry out all of our bedding. My brother had informed us that they were off to Brooms Head for a couple of



*Camped near Condamine*





*Brooms Head beach at dusk*



*Brooms Head Beach from our Camp Site*



*Celebrating our 40th wedding anniversary at Brooms Head*



*Carrot Slice, Cooked on the Cobb*



*Plenty of deserted beaches that you can walk for many Km around Brooms Head*



*Nankeen Kestrel gets very agitated with my approach*

weeks camping and wondered if we would like to join them. Well that was a whole lot better than hanging around Brisbane so after we had our tyre replaced that we had carted all the way from just north of Marree on the Birdsville Track, so that we could claim it under warranty and also had the strange noise in our rear drivers side wheel fixed (supposedly) by Rod's (my brother) mechanic we headed off for Brooms Head. Brooms Head is not far from Grafton on the northern NSW coast. The nearest town is Maclean - Scottish settlement with every electricity pole in the main street painted in a different Tartan. What a beautiful place - the camping ground situated right on the sea front. We had a wonderful week and celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary with a



## Graham and Chris on tour - 2009 Part 4

Page 5

sparkling shiraz (or two) and home made stew on the Cobb Cooker overlooking the Pacific Ocean. While talking of our Cobb Cooker, which is like a mini Weber BBQ, we do eat very well when traipsing the outback. If we can have an open fire, we use a Dutch Oven or otherwise the Cobb Cooker to cook roasts, bread, damper, carrot slice, coconut slice or fruit cake. My favourite being the carrot slice—see photo.

While out driving around the Clarence River, Chris and I came across a nankeen kestrel nest sitting very high on a pole on the banks of the river. Got out my long lens (400mm) and climbed through the farmers fence. The kestrel was immediately aware of my approach and became agitated. She (I assume it was mum) endeavoured to distract me from the nest and flew in large circuits around me either trying to scare me off or to distract me from the nest. Eventually, once convinced she was not going to deter my intent to get closer, she landed on her nest and prepared to defend. While I think I got some great shots of her flying, the one above, defending her nest, I think was the pick of the bunch. Once I had gotten a few photos I left her in peace to her great delight, settling back down on the nest which I guess contained eggs.



*A couple of the waterfalls along "The Waterfall Way" the one on the right supposedly the highest (longest drop) in Australia*



*Camped at Goulbourn River NP*



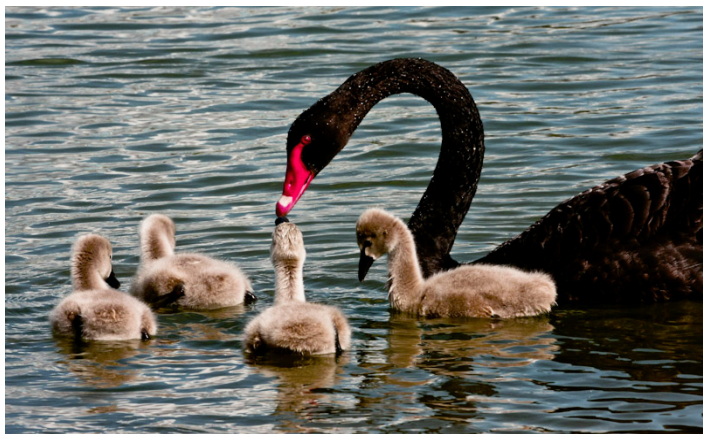
*Exploring Goulbourn River NP*

After a week we said our farewells to Rod and Bette and headed towards Canberra to meet up with our daughter and her family returning to Australia from a 2 year posting in the Philippines. They were to return temporarily to organise the renovations to their home and then were due to return on a permanent basis later in October. We were required as cheap labour to help with the remodelling of the garden, in particular the veggie garden in readiness for their permanent return. We were also to take the



*The Floriade in Canberra*





*Pen and Signets on Belconnen Lake*



*Madeleine—Belconnen Lake*

grandchildren camping, something that was not possible in the Philippines and our daughters happy memories of camping in the NT when she was young, was something that she wanted her children to experience.

On the way to Canberra, we found some wonderful potential for future exploring in and around the National Parks of NSW in the area of the Great Dividing Range. Of particular note was the Goulbourn River NP and the “Waterfall Way”. We were very reluctant to head south into the cold but we did have a commitment. Goulbourn River NP was a gem of a find. My brother put us onto it and we had 2 delightful days there. Days were beautiful, around 25 Degrees but the first night was cold. Had 2mm frost on the top of the tent and on the car but to make matters worse there was also 2mm ice on the under side of the tent which melted and dripped over everything as soon as the sun hit it. It was seriously cold that morning but warmed into a magnificent day. It was here that I discovered the noise/hand brake problem that I had fixed in Brisbane had returned much to my disgust of \$160 down the drain.

In Canberra we met up with the family, Amanda and Christian, then a few days later Christian went to Melbourne to pick up the kids from there other Grandparents and brought them back to Canberra. In the meantime we took the opportunity to visit “Floriade”, the annual festival of flowers. I also went to the Toyota agent to get the hand brake in the rear drivers side wheel fixed *AGAIN*. To my delight and amazement the repair at Toyota cost \$111 including parts and labour. Must be a first for Toyota dealer to be cheaper than an independent. This time it got fixed properly and the mechanic in Brisbane has now sent me a cheque for \$160 and is very embarrassed.

A few days after the kids arrived from Melbourne we took them with us to Sydney to spend some time with their cousins, our son Damian’s kids, and then in the morning of the “big sand storm” in Sydney we set off with Amanda’s kids for Murramarang NP near Batemans Bay to take them camping.

As the weather bureau were predicting 100Kph winds we decided to book ahead for a cabin at Depot Beach. So after stopping in at Fitzroy Falls, just south of Mittagong for lunch, we arrived at Depot Beach around 4pm. The kids were delighted



*Lunch at Fitzroy Falls*



*Madeline (Maddy) introducing herself to a resident*



*Sebastian (Bassy) checking on a family of Wallabies checking out our camp*





*Grandma reads the kids a story*



*Depot Beach*

with the wildlife. Parrots and Kookaburras on the front verandah of our cabin and wallabies in the campground. The next morning we set out to find a camp ground, nothing too basic for the kids first camping experience, and after a few hours we decided that the camp ground at Depot Beach was the pick and so returned to set up camp. Over the next 4 days we did some exploring, went into Batemans Bay and tried to keep our two delightful grandchildren entertained. Keeping the wildlife at bay was a task in itself. First night in the cabin we had a Kookaburra come inside while preparing tea and refused to leave. Then tried to steal a chop of the dinner table. Second night in our camper I was awoken by a Kangaroo pushing his way into the tent alongside were the kids were sleeping. Second afternoon we returned to find a Kangaroo in the tent trying to get at a loaf of bread. Third night we were woken by 2 Possums getting into the tent and we found them sitting on top of the kids beds while they slept. Got rid of them without waking the kids.

The grandkids were both recovering from a fairly serious bout of gastro and so the old parenting talents were tested to the limit—especially Christine's.

We dropped Amanda and the Kids off at the Airport to return to Manilla (Christian had returned to Manilla already) and then set off for the Gawler Ranges in South Australia, a little known wilderness area in Northern Eyre's Peninsula.

End Part 4

