

## Graham and Chris on tour Part 5

### Wolfe Creek to Kings Canyon

After the Wolfe Creek Experience we set off for Alice Springs on Friday the 19<sup>th</sup> September. This is a trip of approx 1000k's on the infamous Tanami Track. Nowadays it is called a highway. What an oxymoron that



*A better part of the Tanami in the NT*

turned out to be. For a main road this is terrible. I think I have mentioned before that the resident artist at El Questro told me that a number of tour buses had had serious problems on the Tanami with one breaking its chassis in half and another ripping out its front axle and steering wheels. At the time we took it with a pinch of salt as we had been warned about bad roads before but they had never lived up to the story. Well the WA section of the road was an absolute shocker. This is a wide, properly formed road that has been allowed to degenerate into a very brutal and rough road. Once on the NT side of the border the road improved dramatically. However it was still a litany of tyre carcasses, car parts, truck mud guards and various other bits and pieces that have fallen off vehicles while en route. In total we were on the road for 3 days and

apart from the tourists we saw at Wolfe creek we only saw 3 other tourists in the next 1000 k's.

We stopped at Rabbit Flat and as we were a little unsure of availability of fuel at Yuendumu we needed to buy some. This was rather an issue in itself. Firstly the price was \$3.15/litre. Secondly the locals were proceeding to put four different size wheels and tyres on a 1995 Commodore, fair and square in front of the fuel bowser. Just to make it a little more difficult to fit the odd size wheels, the jack they were using was stuffed, and continued to collapse leaving the car on its wheel hub. While a photograph was tempting we thought that it may be prudent to refrain. On entering the "Rabbit Flat Roadhouse" we were confronted by the owner serving through a small trap door in the side of a security cage made from expanded mesh, further justifying the no photograph policy that we had just implemented. Anyway with some clever manoeuvring we got 40litres of fuel to get us through to Alice Springs. We were planning to stay at Rabbit Flat but the owner said rain was expected in which case we would probably be stuck in the camp ground for weeks. So we set off looking for some higher ground which we found about 60k down the track, not far past The Granites mine. We pulled up to camp and found we had a puncture on the trailer (bugger). Luckily we were able to find the puncture easily,



*Lunchtime on the Tanami*



*Weather build up while camped on the Tanami*

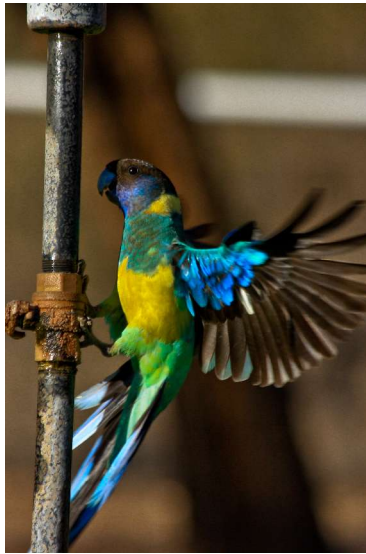
plugged it, re-inflated and put it back on the trailer then set up camp. Rain was threatening but cleared but there



was certainly some build up happening as a system moved in from the NW.



*Ringneck and Pied Butcher  
Bird compete for water*



*Pt Lincoln Ringneck*

Next day we continued our southerly journey (SE actually) and mid afternoon we started looking for a bush camp, but the Tanami does not present many camping opportunities so we reluctantly pushed on to Tilmouth Well Roadhouse. What a pleasant surprise this was. Beautiful green lawn to camp on. Swimming pool and a restaurant where we had dinner that night including a bottle of wine. Really quite amazing considering we were still around 200k from Alice Springs. One of the delights of this overnight stay was the many Pt Lincoln Ringneck Parrots in the camp ground. Just to remind us that we were still in the outback while having dinner the generator quit and left us in the dark. We finished our meal by candle light – quite romantic.

Next day we headed into Alice Springs (21<sup>st</sup> Sept). The following morning we did some shopping and bought some parts, like the water tank cap that I left in Halls Creek and a new switch panel for the camper. The old one had been effected by the dust and it was a bit hit and miss whether you got the lights to work or not. After shopping we had lunch in the Todd Street mall in an outdoor restaurant. While lunching Alice was hit by a very severe thunderstorm with extremely high winds. After scoffing down our lunch we headed back to the car with considerable trepidation. Our concern was well founded as when we got to our car it had a large gum tree lying over the top of it. The car had a broken windscreen, a couple of large dents in the roof and several dents in a number of other panels. Fortunately we were able to get the windscreen fixed the next day and we will worry



*Todd River after the storm*



*The road to our Caravan Park*

about the dents when we eventually get home. Parts of Alice Springs were without power for a number of days as a result of the storm and when we returned to the caravan park it was mayhem. Fortunately there was no damage to our camper.

With the experience we had been having with tyres we decided to buy another rim and tyre for our up coming adventures, particularly the Old Andado Track into SA.

Visited the Alice Springs Wild Life Park – this is a must see whenever visiting Alice Springs and really is an outstanding tourist attraction.





*Boobook Owl*



*Falcon*

On the 26<sup>th</sup> Sept we headed east and dropped into Emily and Jesse Gap and then headed for Trepina Gorge.



*Camp - John Hays WH*



*John Hayes waterhole (dry!!!)*



*The apprentice capturing a flower - Trepina Gorge*



*A view of the East McDonnells near Trepina Gorge*

Camped at John Hays Waterhole (4WD only). This was excellent and this late in the season we had no other campers around. Although the water hole was dry we did a couple of really great walks. The next day we did a couple of walks in Trepina Gorge. Quite Stunning. The East McDonnell ranges are very picturesque.



Packed up on the 28<sup>th</sup> to set off for Ruby Gap but a couple of walkers who had walked in to John Hayes

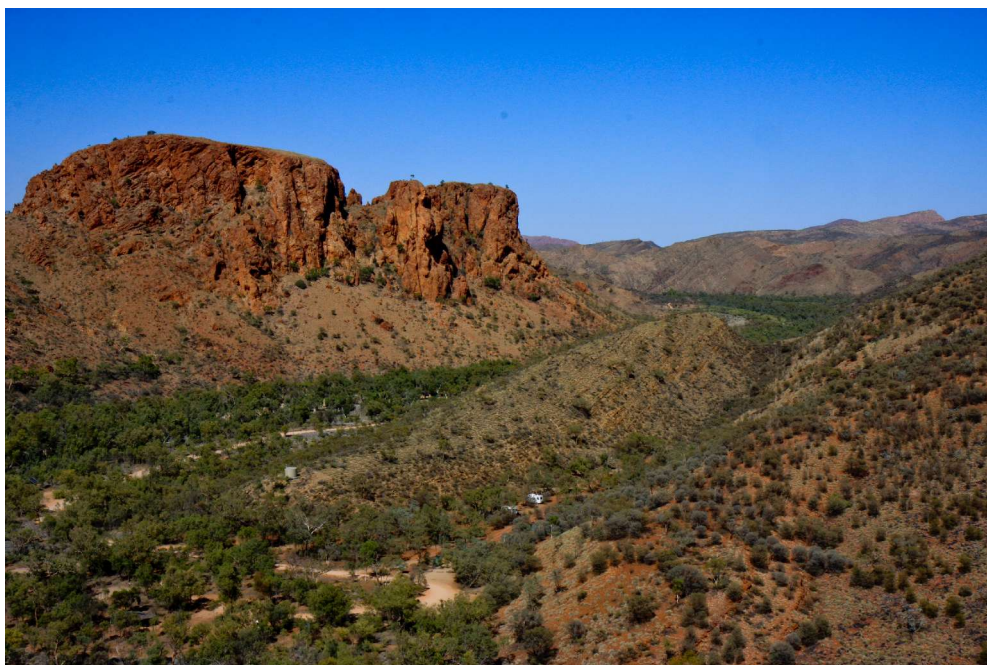


*Yours truly contemplates the next pic*



*Trephina Gorge*

Waterhole decided it was too hot and asked if we could give them a lift back to the 2WD track. Somehow we squeezed them in, chucking their back packs on top of the camper. After dropping our passengers off at their



*Trephina Gorge*

car we headed to Ross River Station and N'dhala Gorge then onto Arltunga historic gold mining town. We then continued on to Ruby Gap NP. A really interesting 4WD track through an isolated part of the Eastern



*Our Camp - Ruby Gap*



*End of the road to Glenn Annie Gorge*



McDonnell Ranges. Set up camp at a fantastic secluded camp site on the banks of the river.

Next day we set off for to walk to Glenn Annie Gorge. Drove as far as we could which was great fun along a



*Colour contrast - same rock, different weathering – Glenn Annie Gorge*

4WD track. Had a slight mishap when misjudging a path through some boulders and bent the passenger side step. Gorge was quite stunning with a remarkable colour contrast between the rock face that gets water flow and that which is weathered by the sun and wind. Glenn Annie is part of the Ruby Gap NP and gets its name



*Gorge resident - Cute Rock Wallaby*



*Packed up and leaving Ruby Gap*



from the fact that early miners thought there were rubies in the watercourses in the park. However they turned out to be worthless garnets. We were easily able to find garnets scattered threw out the river bed gravel.

Our camp site was excellent so we decided to stay a total of 3 nights at Ruby Gap NP and then we headed back to Alice Springs via the Binns Track, a recently decreed 4WD track that stretches from near Finke in SA all the way up to the top end and now we find we have done many parts of it in our travels. We rejoined the Stuart Highway about 50k north of Alice. Got another puncture in the camper.

Set up camp in Alice, next day tyre unrepairable so bought a second hand tyre for the trailer. Hung around Alice for a few days including a visit to the Telegraph Station.

On Monday the 6<sup>th</sup> of October we headed out to do the Mereenie Cicuit. This route includes the regular tourist



*Ochre Pits*



*Ellery Big Hole*

destinations of Stanley Chasm, Simpsons Gap, Ochre Pits, Ellery Big Hole, Ormiston Gorge, Kings Canyon



*Ormiston Gorge*



*Camped at Redbank Gorge*

and Uluru - Kata Tjuta (Ayers Rock - Olgas) plus a few other gems like Palm Valley and Redbank Gorge. The really outstanding attractions in our opinion were Kings Canyon and Palm Valley. Ayers Rock is a disappointing rip off that is poorly run by the Federal National Parks people (not the NT). A number of tourists that we ran across in central Australia refuse to go and pay the \$25 entry fee on top of the quite expensive camping fees.





*Palm Valley*



*Palm Valley - Unbelievable colour from setting sun - view from our camp*

The day we left Palm Valley we headed into Hermannsburg to buy a permit to travel the Mereenie loop and



*Palm Valley NP*



*Major Mitchell Cockatoo – Palm Valley*

then set off. About 30k out from Kings Canyon we could see in the distance someone walking across the road



*Ridge Walk - Kings Canyon*



*More Ridge Walk - Kings Canyon*

(Dirt) with a parasol in there hand to protect them from the sun. Most unusual as we could see no vehicles or other people and it was a very isolated area. When we reached the person we saw in the bush a severely damaged hire 4WD that had obviously rolled over with a woman sitting under the shade of a tree behind the vehicle. They were a couple of Swiss tourists who had somehow rolled their vehicle on a straight bit of road. Once checking that they were OK and had plenty of water, we headed off to report the situation to the authorities at Kings Canyon.



We set up camp at Kings Canyon Resort. That afternoon we did the short walk up the canyon then the next day we did the ridge walk that was some 7klm with a very steep initial climb. Our recommendation would be that if

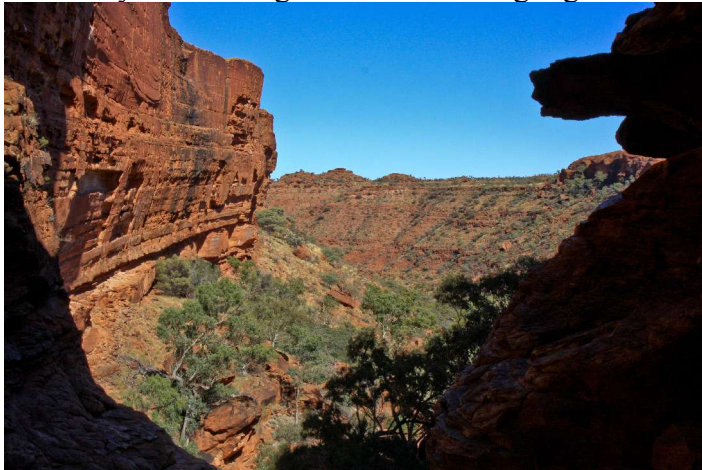


*Kings Canyon*



*Kings Canyon*

you don't wish to do the ridge walk at Kings Canyon then don't bother visiting the canyon at all. This walk was absolutely outstanding and one of the highlights of our trip so far.



*Kings Canyon*



*Kings Canyon-  
look closely to see the people on the walking trail*

End Part 5