

Trip Report – Otways 18th – 26th November 2023
Trip Leader – Steve & Mel
Participants – Kevin & Megan, Gary & Jodie-Anne, Janet, Maggsy, Marc & Sandy, Mike & Jan, Obee & Dee.

Day 1: Sat 18th Taillem Bend to Wannon Falls

Our meeting place was decided as OTR Motorsport Park Taillem Bend at 8.45am for a 9am start. We did get away at 9am and headed for Keith for a fuel stop and then onto Edenhope for lunch. Quick break and a walk to the lake and back on the road to Wannon Falls. Plenty of room at Wannon falls for us all to set up for the night and have a walk down to the Falls.

Day 2: Sun 19th Wannon Falls to Dandos by Mel

We were all packed up and on the road by 9am and we headed straight across the highway to Nigretta Falls. We had a walk around the top only as the steps were closed off from damage caused by the floods earlier in the year. We stopped at Mortlake for coffee then arrived at Colac for lunch and a trip to the Visitor Info Centre. From Colac it is approx. 90 minutes to Dandos where we set up camp for the week. Couple of young groups camping that were determined for us not to sleep until 1-2am when they finally went quiet. Thankfully they were leaving the next day.

Day 3: Mon 20th Dandos – Apollo Bay via Waterfalls and Return by Mel

Headed off firstly to Hopetoun Falls (taking our first wrong turn of the trip). The falls were flowing nicely and we walked the approx. 2million steps down and then back up again. From there we headed to The Redwoods – which were a spectacular planting of California Redwoods that were planted in the 1930's. Some were up to 158 metres tall. From there we were supposed to travel along a track across to Triplet Falls – a quick stop to get our bearings and convey to the convoy where we were heading when a good Samaritan came on the radio and told us that track was gated and padlocked! Quick change of plan and direction led us to Triplet Falls. The bravest of the group did the full circuit, some of us did the steps down but then came back up the same way (which they then told us was probably more steps) and some of us just stayed up the top for a coffee and a nap. From there we had to head back the same way (because of the track closure) and we then headed to Maits Rest Rainforest Walk for lunch. A couple of participants did the 800m walk while the rest just had a lunch and a chat. Next stop Apollo Bay where we split into 2 groups – 7 went for coffee and 7 went to Mariners Lookout and walked to the top for a spectacular view of Apollo Bay. We met up again after 30mins and headed back to camp. One of the “Main C Roads” the C159 Beech Forrest was a narrow winding road just wide enough for 2 vehicles. We had a number of oncoming vehicles meet us ½ way around a bend on our side of the road. Their eyes soon shot open wide when they met a Big Nissan with a Steel Bull bar on the front.

Day 4: Tues 21st Dandos – Colac and Surrounds by Jodie-Anne

Marc & Sandy volunteered to be Convoy Leaders for the Day with Kevin & Megan as Tail End Charlie (TC). 8.30am start and headed off to Colac via Bridge Track, Ridge Rd, Pipeline Rd and into Colac via back roads. Some kangaroos on the tracks but most long gone before TC got there. At Colac we stopped for showers, fuel, shopping etc and met back at the Lake. From there we headed up to Red Rock Scenic Lookout and Memorial. Beautiful 360-degree views of multiple lakes, hills & paddocks, beautiful blend of pastel blue, greens, & yellows. We then drove around Lake Corangamite to Foxhow. There were lots of farms with dry rock wall fencing built by hand. We stopped in front of the Bungalar Fire Station for lunch in the shade and then at Simpson for toilets. Stop at G.O.R.G.E. Chocolate Factory which was filled with handmade chocolates of all types and a wide range of Alpaca products, clothing, bedding, toys etc. Driving back to camp along a mix of tracks and main roads. Egan's track had some beautiful flowering trees – purple flowers on some & yellow on others. Returned to Dandos 3.50pm. Travelled 252kms. Nice quiet night around the campfire and early to bed.

Day 5: Wed 22nd Dandos – Melba Gully and Cape Otway by Jodie-Anne

From Dando's we headed to Melba Gully where some did the 1.5km Madsens Track nature walk through the rainforest. Beautiful ferns. The Glow-worms are only visible at night. We then travelled to Hiders Access Track and Old Coach Road through the forest. Maggsy took a wrong turn which led to the group being split temporarily. Old Coach Road ended up as a no through road to the Cape so we had to turnaround and go along the Great Ocean Road to the Cape Otway Lighthouse. Some went in to look around, and some went to Apollo Bay for lunch. We climbed Wild Dog Creek Road with view down tree lined valleys on one side and ocean on the other. Well worth the drive. Stopped at West Barwon Reservoir lookout but trees had grown over the view. Maggsy climbed onto his car roof to see a bit more. Back to Dandos via alternate tracks. Back at 3.30pm. Travelled 170kms.

Day 6: Thurs 23rd**Dandos – Lake Elizabeth****by Mel**

Forgot to nominate Trip report writer again – Jodie-Anne did 2 days in a row as I kept forgetting to ask. So today it's me again. This day was planned to visit Barwon Reservoir, Lake Elizabeth, Colac for showers, shopping etc and back via some more tracks. Barwon Reservoir has a nice sedate walk across the dam wall and we could see how high the water had come previously. Lake Elizabeth was a longer walk to the jetty and back. It was more uphill on the way in which made it a bit easier on the way back and it was a track not steps- it still got the heart pumping and the step count increasing. From there we found a couple of forest tracks that were more challenging than the normal winding roads. From there we headed to Colac for shopping, showers, fuel etc. Back to camp via a few tracks on the North Eastern side of the Otways. Each day we had to make some quick track changes with track closures or tracks not being where they were supposed to be!!

Day 7: Fri 24th**Dandos – Lorne****by Mel**

Again, I forgot to get someone to volunteer for the Trip Report writer. Still had no other volunteers for convoy leader so Steve & I led again. We do have much less dust on our car and get to see a lot more wildlife which are the advantages. The cons are that if we go the wrong way then it's our fault though we just say we are exploring. Today saw us head towards Lorne & Anglesea via tracks rather than the main roads. We headed to Erskine Falls which was very pretty except we could only go to the top landing as the steps were unsafe to go to the bottom. We headed to Lorne for coffee then around to Moggs Creek and up Moggs Creek track. From there we joined Gentle Annie track and the stopped for lunch at Distillery Creek Road picnic area. Heading back towards camp we headed up Neck track. The weather looked ominous but we still hadn't encountered rain – but once we were about a third of the way up Neck Track with no way to turn around the rain came. It wasn't heavy but on clay tracks covered in leaf litter it didn't need to be heavy for the track to become like an ice rink. One steep downhill descent gave us all a bit of a slip and slide effect but everyone made it down safely. From there we headed back to camp via tracks we knew weren't too slippery and dangerous. Obee and Dee hadn't come with us today but had a very eventful day themselves rescuing a baby Koala from a pair of Wedge Tailed eagles. See the pics and story on Facebook.

Day 8: Sat 25th**Dandos – Naracoorte****by Mel**

Time to pack up and head for home. Obee and Dee left first as they were all packed and ready (bloody caravanners!!) While we were packing up, we found a couple of ant colonies had decided to call our camper home and bring their eggs as well. We spent some time persuading them they couldn't come home with us but I had to introduce them to my friend "Raid". All packed up and ready when we discovered Mike had a puncture in his tyre. The boys all got to work changing the tyre and we sent Gary & Jodie-Anne and Janet on their way to Naracoorte and Kevin & Megan on their way to Cumberland River as no point everyone waiting around. Marc & Sandy were heading to Warrnambool but couldn't get their van out till we had Mike's on the road and Marc was also helping get the tyre changed. We soon got moving and caught up with the others where they had waited for us to catch up. Uneventful trip to Naracoorte but found out on Friday Naracoorte had 68mm of rain in a 2-hour downpour. We met up for dinner at the Naracoorte hotel that had been closed the night before as part of the ceiling had come down in the rain. It was mostly fixed when we got there and didn't spoil the cooking – the meal was good.

Day 9: Sun 26th**Naracoorte - Home****by Mel**

Those that stayed at Naracoorte apart from Steve & I packed up and headed home and as far as I know all got home safely and then had the fun task of drying everything out and getting washing etc done. We stayed in Naracoorte to visit family for another night and headed back uneventfully home on Monday.

All in all, it was a great trip with great company. It's always a challenge planning and leading a trip but we got through it and there were only a few tracks that were closed or not where they were supposed to be – I think both paper & google maps have moved them!!!! We always got back to camp with very few mishaps or damage. One thing I need to remember though is ask or nominate someone to do the trip reports on a daily basis. Thanks Jodie-Anne for volunteering and thanks to all participants for making it such a great trip. Photos will be put on the website and Facebook soon.

Mel