

Peake Trip through the eyes of a 4WD rookie - Nov 18

Brief Intro - I have had my 4WD for 3 years and really had not done any serious 4WDing, a few trips down the beach to the Murray Mouth to fish was about it. Through a work colleague (Vanessa) I was introduced to the Southern Explorers 4WD club. My first 4WD run was the Yankalilla Trails, being inexperienced I had plenty of questions and kindly received helpful advice over the UHF in return. From this first day out I knew I had picked the right club for what I hoped to achieve in 4WDing.

Peake Weekend - Turning off the Mallee Hwy at the small town of Peake the massive sand hills where I would spend the next 2 days listening, learning, watching and having a crack came into view. Arriving mid-morning Saturday my first lesson began, I had a Tyre inflator but realised I had had this for a few months but had never used it, even to practice, so with some guidance from Ian, my tyres were down to 20psi (I mention this as it comes into play on Sunday) and a small group including Ian, Bruce and fellow 'rookie' Vanessa headed out with Nick joining us later in the day. We started off with some rock crawling then hit a few smaller climbs. From the beginning there was never any pressure put on us newbies to do tracks/climbs we were not comfortable with attempting.

One aspect of this weekend was learning to travel safely in convoy. Like, when climbing hills wait for confirmation from the car in front over the UHF that they have reached an area where it is safe for you to attempt it. I found we also got tips once the first car has completed a climb like, track condition, recommended lines and any possible issues down the other side.

It didn't take me long and I was stuck on a slope with my back wheels buried. After a few attempts to get myself out my fellow convoy members wondered up and with some handy shovel work and a few well-placed MaxxTrax I was able to reverse back down, I did note before helping me most of the team found time to get photos of my dilemma first!!! After a full day of driving and some valuable experience in the bank, we sat around the fire chatting into the night. Ian and Jim headed out for a night drive starting by going up Camp Hill, in the blackness of the night, you could hear the sounds of them tackling the terrain long before the lights came back into view.

Sunday started fairly casually, a nice feed for breakfast then we hit the tracks about 10am. The group was Jim (with Chris in the passenger seat), Bruce, Brett, Ian and Vanessa. Just before 11 we all stopped driving, so by 11 we could honour Remembrance Day with 2 minutes silence.

Later one particular hill had me beat, on the 3rd or 4th attempt Chris kindly hopped in with me to give me some pointers on the go, we got so close, but still no luck. He asked about my tyre pressures, on checking them most were up to 24-25psi, they had increased since yesterday. Lowering them to 15psi with the help of Jim & Chris, the next attempt, giving it all the beans we made it over that hill. Two important things I picked up from this experience, firstly keep the power down all the way up, only when you hit the top and over the tip should you think about taking your foot off the accelerator (it was daunting approaching the top of a rise you cannot see down the other side) but once you power down, the sand will pretty much stop you instantly and the other is check tyre pressures each day and don't be afraid to air down to 15psi or lower, this is beneficial when sand driving.

We finished driving around 12:30ish, had some lunch then we all packed up and headed home. I left there with some valuable experiences, more confidence knowing what my car can do with me behind the wheel and a big smile having done a ripper weekends driving.

A few things I picked up from the weekend.

- Tyre pressures matter; a few psi can make a difference, and check regularly, they will change!!!
- When attempting a sand hill, keep momentum steady and do not get off the power until you hit the top or you will stop suddenly and find yourself needing to reverse down and try again.
- Reversing down, keep your tyres as straight as possible, any sudden turns could find you in a nasty position.
- Carry the right recovery gear, and know how to use it correctly and safely.
- Communication is invaluable in convoys.
- Stock standard 4WD's are capable of doing some fun stuff with the right instruction.
- 4WDing is good fun.

I am looking forward to the next trip with the club I can make.

Cheers. Justin