



Newsletter May 2009

What have we been up to?

Before you pass out with shock over my issuing two newsletters in two months, please let me explain that we have a bit of news that I wanted to share with you before Wayne headed out west, read about SPOT further down.

So what have we been up to over the past 6 weeks?

Well, Easter and school holidays came and went and so did our usual Snowy Mtns trip and High Country tours. We didn't have big numbers on either trip but they still went ahead as planned and the ideal weather over Easter meant that Anne & Eric had a great time in the Davies High Plains precinct whilst Wayne was leading a group of four vehicles through the High Country.



Davies Hut

We don't normally run these two trips in competition with each other but due to the fact that a 4WD rally was going to see over 100 4WD drives in the High Country during the second week of the school holidays we thought we would miss the crowds and run the High Country tour over Easter and into the following week.

All was going real good until Wednesday morning and with gale force wind warnings out for the whole of Victoria, the high

country was wearing the worst of it. In fact, wind gusts in excess of 125 kph were recorded at Hotham Heights just up the mountain from where our group had camped at Talbotville. So Wednesday was spent holding down tents and chasing various items around the campsite as they tried to blow away, such are the vagaries of the High Country. I believe everyone agreed that Wayne made the right decision to stay in camp that day, the tour continued after that with a few trees down but nothing that Wayne and his trusty nail file could not remove.

On this trip we were joined by one of our customers who had recently attended our Driver Training course in an X trail. Now he knew that the High Country trip was beyond the ability of the X Trail so he arranged to hire a Britz Landcruiser through me for the trip. From all accounts it went really well and it now looks like the X Trail might be traded on a new 4WD. Sorry mate, I didn't mean for this trip to cost you so much. But in reality it's not a bad way to see if you really need a big 4WD or can get away with just hiring one on the occasional time that you want to head outback or up to the High Country.

What has Alex been up to?

After the pitiful attempt to keep his swag dry at Barrington Tops (refer to the April newsletter) Alex had to redeem himself. Now Alex is one of those people who really throws himself into a task and when I gave him lead role for our new Darling River Run he tackled it head on. He read up on all the various explorers that traipsed across outback NSW, tried some bush tucker, and nearly died (just kidding, he tried it on his kids first) and even learnt a bit about the outback flora more so than Wayne D's scratchadoorus plants sidearoder plants.

So when we only had one booking for his Darling River Run he was a little disappointed. Well, I thought, nothing ventured, nothing gained, so I sent Alex with the luckless customers, fortunately they have done many trips with us before so they were slightly prepared for what lay in store.

I can't begin to tell you what an amazing journey this turned out to be, in fact I won't even try, but instead I refer you to the diary kept by Anna Rose who is 9 years old and the daughter of Catherine and Norm, our only customer on what is an amazing trip. The diary is found attached to this email, I'm sure you will find it fantastic reading, thanks Anna Rose for sharing your trip with us.

Now, Alex is leading this trip again in the July school holidays straight after his Corner Country trip and he is so excited about both of these trips that he insisted I do this Newsletter to spruce up some more participants, (Like I said, I wanted to tell you about SPOT, but I'll take the opportunity to spruce as well).



The Darling river

Look at what Alex just emailed to me about the Corner Country trip and asked me to pass onto you

“we are going to provide the following on this tour so its going to be a real corker of a trip:-

Camp at one of Charles Sturts camp sites along Flood Creek.

Travel through and explore sections of the very track Capt Charles Sturt took. Be provided historical information on his travels based on my recent research and listen to excerpts of his diary whilst camped at Depot Glen (true I have them) It will be real spooky.

Noodle for Opals at White Cliffs where there is a real chance of finding opals. (a German tourist recently found a \$40,000.00 pineapple noodling)

Discover and identify bush tucker from native species of flora along the way. (I know what I am on about - for real!)

Learn some tips on navigating with the stars and sun! We might discover ancient aboriginal interpretations of the stars which I will explain if I see it, based on the info my new mate, Smacker, from Mootiwintjie fed me....

Notwithstanding all the other fantastic things we are doing like getting ranger guided tours, staying in the underground motel and of course spending the week with me which might attract perhaps one customer- so come and join Alex on the Corner Country Trip and the Darling River Run in July”

Now if that wasn't a free advertisement I don't know what is – Vic .

Floods in the Outback and a A trip to see the Greening of Australia

You know I only mentioned this new trip last Newsletter, well it must have struck a chord with a few of you because as of tonight we have 7 booked on it with one more about to make his booking. This is a one off trip and its going to be fantastic. In fact, I ended up being so excited about it that I just could not resist getting out and doing it myself, sadly I only have a few days compared to the 10 days of this trip. So I'm doing something I have not done for, well to be honest, over twenty years! I'm doing a 4WD outback trip without customers just me and a mate and Wayne and Jenny as back up. Selfish I know, but the reality is we have to cover a lot kilometres in a few days to get out Birdsville and back and I wouldn't ask you to drive the distances we have to cover in such a short time. But it will give me some good material for more stories in Overlander Magazine so you will get to read about the adventures of Outback Vic!



I'm really excited to be going outback!

4WD Show

Did you manage to find us at the Rosehill show? We were in the bowels of the building and fortunately quite a few did find us. We were kept busy for most of the time and those lucky enough to locate us were rewarded with one of our fantastic new mouse pads, we will be handing these out on most of our trips, so if you missed out at the show, fear not, just join us on a trip and its yours free!



Wayne scared off most of the customers.

So what is SPOT

Alright here is the real reason for this Newsletter. At the Rosehill show I was talking to Brian Somerville from GPSOZ (99999 2313 www.gpsoz.com.au) about EPIRBS, and he actually told me that EPIRBS are used by boats and PLB's are used by 4WD drivers, PLB = Personal Locating Beacon. So there you go, you learn something new every day. PLB's have undergone a change in frequency over the past few months and old units need to be replaced with new units, they cost between \$400 and \$600 roughly depending on their accuracy (20 square kilometres compared to 100 square metres). But whilst discussing this I also asked about SPOT.



Follow us with SPOT look at www.4wd.net.au

SPOT is an American invention and it is just like a PLB but you can do quite a bit more with it. Suffice to say, we now have one in the GDT ranks. For a fee of approx \$200 per annum SPOT will track our every movement, send "I'm OK" messages to

those that I designate, send HELP messages to those that I designate or send distress messages to the Emergency authorities.

We are using it primarily for the tracking feature. To see how it works go to my website www.4wd.net.au and go to the Home page and look for where it says "Where is Vic" click on this and wait about 20 seconds whilst it downloads a Google map which has a bread crumb trail of a trip I did from Tumut back home on 3 May. Go one, have a look.

Its amazing, it sends a message roughly every ten minutes, and marks my location on the map. By zooming in you can see where I've been, where I stopped for lunch (Cabramurra)and roughly what time I arrived home. You can change the view on Google maps from street view to topographical view or Satellite view, very entertaining.

So, what we are going to do with SPOT is place it in Wayne Desmond's Troopie when he leaves Sydney on 25 May for his 6 months of leading trips all over Australia, this way, you and I and all your friends can keep track of where he is. Now, if you are going on one of our outback trips, let your friends and family know to look up our website www.4wd.net.au and they can watch your progress across the outback.

I'm pretty excited about this new feature that we can bring to you, of course this equipment is available to anyone, the SPOT units costs around \$300 and for the full tracking service there is a \$200 annual fee, so you can also have your friends and family track your adventures.

Exciting trips coming up

I've already mentioned the fantastic Corner Country and Darling River Run that Alex is leading so if you are looking for a short break in the July school holidays get on board one of these trips.



The Escarpment Escape trip is pretty and good and its pretty good.

Next week on 24 May we have our one day Escarpment Escape Trip, Wayne & Jenny is leading this one, It's a great trip on the Sth Coast of NSW out of Nowra, we have a few spots left, so if you are looking for something to do on Sunday week, drop me an email at info@greatdividetours.com.au

Due to my instant outback trip to Birdsville I moved my 2 day Mystery trip to 27-28 June, I've already got a few people lining up for the Mystery drive, so if you would like to join me for some great scenery and great 4WDiving you know what to do, call 9913 1395.

Alex's Yerranderie Ghost Town tour scheduled for 25-26 April was postponed due to the road into Yerranderie being closed for road works, so we have this trip rescheduled for the weekend of 20-21 June. On that same weekend on Sunday 21 June we've got our fantastic Stockton Beach trip, we only have a couple of spots left so if you intend to join us please do so soon.



Stockton is full of thrills for young and old.

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The long weekend in June from 6-8 June will see us head south to the beautiful Deua National Park probably the best 4wdrive and camping spot in NSW, we've got 3 vehicles booked on it thus far so there is room for a few more.

You will recall that I mentioned in the last Newsletter that I was concerned that our Simpson Desert Safari Tour looked like being canned for the first time in 19 years. Well, scrap that suggestion, as it now has 7 bookings with just one spot left! True! The bookings went crazy shortly after I issued the Newsletter.



The Simpson will host us again in July.

20 years in the Business

Next year marks 20 years since I established Great Divide Tours so it is only fitting that we celebrate this momentous milestone. We are working on some grand outback trips to do this. First up I will unleash Alex on his quest to trace the footsteps of our early explorers, so we will have a "In the Footsteps of Burke and Wills" tour taking place. Of course, I will have to get outback as well, and I'm currently working on my much anticipated "Across the Top" trip with visits (hopefully) to Gove and Arnhem Land. I'll let you know as soon as we have these trips finalized, but watch the website (or SPOT at least) and you see details posted up there as soon as I have finalized them.



We will follow the Explorers in 2010

Finally

Over Easter Julie forced me to do a bit of a clean up around home I found two aluminium side steps off my 100 series Landcruiser and one brand new still in the box original front bumper off the 100 series. These items are now for sale at just \$20 each for the side steps and \$30 for front bumper (worth over \$1000 if you had to purchase it off Mr Toyota) I also have a set of Tough Dog shocks for the Cruiser, only did about 3000k's, I didn't like their stiff ride, cost me in excess of \$600 but will sell for \$100 for all 4, they suit an IFS model Cruiser. If you need any of my junk, just call me on 9913 1395.

Until next time stay safe and happy travels.

From the crew at
Great Divide Tours:-

Vic, Julie, Wayne D, Wayne B & Jenny,
Peter & Ngaire, Alex, John, Eric & Anne,
Brian, Dave & Irene, Richard, Greg, Ian B
& Skippy/Yarn/Ian.