



Newsletter August 2009

What have we been up to?

Alright, I know, its been 3 months since the last Newsletter, but I've been a wee bit busy. There has been so much going on I'm not even sure where to start. Of course the Winter months are our big travel months and we've all been 'out there' doing our tag-along bit. See the separate reports under here.

Project Pajero

On my Greening of the Outback holiday, yes I actually took a holiday and went on a 4WD trip, the seed was sown for Project Pajero. Now, this is a huge story and I'm not going to be able to repeat here. At least not when you can read all about it (I sound like a newspaper seller) on my website www.4wd.net.au. Go on, have a look and read this amazing story and adventure that my good friends Tony and Carol just departed on (they left home on 26 August). Can you buy a 4WD for \$10,000 and set off around Australia? Time will tell. As you will see we have received amazing support from the after market industry in setting up the Pajero and we will be testing all of these products over the next 3 months.



Yep, we paid \$10,500 for this Pajero!

Project Pajero really is something different, we have put a SPOT tracker in the cabin and you can log onto www.4wd.net.au and follow their progress with real time updates.

I'm going to try to provide daily updates with reports back from the happy Nomads as well, so this can become a truly interactive website story. Go on, take a look at the menu item "Project Pajero" on my website!

Outback Vic

Here he is, Outback Vic, my alter ego. This little bloke is going to be cropping up in all sorts of places. For a start he will have his own Blog section on my website, you can look at www.4wd.net.au and see what he has to say and what he's been up to (hopefully within the week). Eventually Outback Vic wants to have his own range of 4WD recovery gear and camping gear, so that is my challenge, make Outback Vic grow in presence until he is a common household name!! Let me know what you think of OV.



Is he cute or what?

Recent trips

Greening the Outback.

This trip was conducted at the end of May early June and was designed to capture the outback as it greened up after the floods that came down from Queensland. It also allowed us to see Eyre Creek in the Simpson Desert in flood and Lake Eyre partially full of water. I was so excited about the format of this trip that I took 10 days off and did it as well. Although I travelled in the opposite direction to our tour group, we had slightly less time to cover 5000k's than they did.

All I can say is that it was the most amazing journey, I have never seen so much water in the outback, never seen it so green and certainly had never seen so many birds. Watching close to 500 birds come down to feed on a shoal of fish in Eyre Creek and then disperse as quickly as they had arrived was one of nature's little treasures. Camped beside the flooded Eyre Creek in the Simpson Desert and watching mirror perfect reflections at both sunset and sunrise and taking a helicopter out of Birdsville into the flooded Simpson Desert are images that will stay with me for a long long time. Hopefully you will get to read the story I wrote for Overlander Magazine which should appear in the next month or so. In the meantime you can see a selection of the 1500+ photos I took in the Galley section of my website www.4wd.net.au



Try to count them, there were lots!

The Canning Stock Route.

Ever faithful Wayne D or WD40 as we like to call him, because he can fix anything, led another highly successful trip up the Canning straight after his Greening of the Outback trip. The CSR trip is actually the epitome of all outback trips and often quoted as the most arduous of any 4WD trip that you can undertake. Under the careful leadership of WD40 he managed to get another 7 vehicles safely up the track. But not without some drama, as is usually the case on such a long and tough trip. One of the Landcruiser's on the trip had a front shock fail and for some reason was not carrying any spares. Normally this would spell absolute disaster for the vehicle; you cannot drive a 4WD without shock

absorbers without it destroying the whole suspension and drive train of the vehicle.

Our bestest outback mechanic acka WD40 pondered the predicament for a while and then decided with some modification he could make one of his extra spare shocks for his Troopie fit the 100 series Landcruiser. So with welding rods and grinders and all sorts of bush mechanical experience, he set to manufacturing a mounting bracket that would allow the Troopie shock to fit the front end of a 100 series Cruiser.



WD40 doing what he does best, making things that were crook, better again, using a welder!

The remainder of the trip went off without a hitch, but spare a thought for Keith & Heather who had spent 11 months preparing their Prado for this adventure of a lifetime. Just 3 kilometres from the start of the trip outside Ayres Rock their Prado's alternator spat the dummy. This was not something even our bestest outback mechanic was going to be able to fix with a piece of fencing wire, so they took a quick run back into Yulara. The diagnosis was that the Prado needed a new alternator and it would be some days before one would arrive from the big smoke. Their trip ended there and then, but they will be back next year to complete his CSR adventure.

The Simpson Desert Safari.

No sooner had WD40 finished the CSR tour and he raced off down to Broken Hill to lead our annual Simpson Desert trip. You might recall that in early May it looked like we weren't going to have sufficient numbers to run this trip, but then we were inundated with bookings and Wayne set off with 7

vehicles tagging along. Once again another great trip by all accounts although for some inexplicable reason everyone seemed to use excessive amounts of fuel in the Desert. Even the diesels had very high fuel figures and there was a lot of concern that some may actually run short before reaching Birdsville. All I can say is that in 17 years of running trips across the Desert we have never experienced such poor fuel economy. Wayne did say the sand was particularly soft. We may have to revise our fuel figures for future trips.

Corner Country Tour.

Whilst WD40 was off in the desert we let Alex out of his cage once more and he set off on the 8 day Corner Country trip with 6 vehicles behind him. As usual Alex knocked them for a six (sorry, his words) and in the process gave everyone a lesson in history and the outback. What I really liked was Alex's story about the free time he had in Broken Hill. Now Alex is fantastic at researching trips before he sets off and part of his research material is his collection of all those old adventure video's like the Leyland Bros, the Bush Tucker Man and even Jack Absalom. Now many of you may not remember old Jack but he was pretty much the forerunner to even the Leyland Bros in the 1970's on outback travel and survival skills. Jack preaches that if you breakdown in the outback, then you should set fire to one of your tyres as the black smoke will be seen for miles and someone should come and rescue you. At \$350 each I'm not lighting up one of my Cooper's for anyone!



The Happy Taggers at Cameron Corner

Anyway, Jack lives in Broken Hill and Alex dropped in to say Hi! and purchase the remaining CD's/Videos that he was missing from his collection. Old Jack must have thought all of his Christmas's had come at once when he discovered he still had an admirer out there in the form of Alex. Anyway, next time you are out with Alex, ask him about his encounter with Jack Absalom, it is hilarious!

The Simpson Desert/Hay River tour

This still ranks as one of my favourite trips and this year we had 5 customers sharing this amazing experience with WD40. I have to say that the Northern Simpson Desert is one of those amazing 4WDrive journeys. But I'll also say that Lindsay Bookie, the community leader who has opened up his country for access in the Northern Simpson is fighting a hard battle with his own people in trying to run a tourism enterprise. Our group was a little let down by the fact that the aboriginal guide who was supposed to meet us and deliver the bush tucker and sunset tours only seemed half interested in doing so this year. It must be heart breaking for Lindsay when he finds his own people let him down in this way.



The Northern Simpson desert is magnificent

Hopefully the failings of this one person at Batton Hill did not spoil the tour too much and as I understand it this was approx half a day of poor delivery out of the 12 day trip. If you were on this trip please provide me with some feed back on the trip overall as I want to ensure that it is as good as it was when I first went up the Hay River in 2005. As a matter of interest in 2010 we will have

Wayne and Jenny leading this trip and we have changed its ending somewhat with a return trip through outback Queensland. This should enhance the trip and brings you back towards the eastern states under our guidance through some great remote country.

The Kimberley Explorer.

Wayne is off on this trip as I type this and by all accounts it is as good as ever. The fantastic technology behind the SPOT Tracker is helping us to keep tabs on our adventurous travellers, check out www.4wd.net.au and click on “Where is Wayne” on the Kimberley Tour on the home page. You will see exactly where he is right now. As I type this he is heading into the wonderful Mornington Wilderness Camp and will be exploring Dimond Gorge on the Fitzroy River over the next couple of days. Using SPOT and its link to Google Earth you can zoom in and see the amazing land formations surrounding them. Having been up here before let me assure you that they are surrounded by some of the most spectacular country found in Australia, oooohhh I’m so jealous!



Bell Gorge in the Kimberley, one of our favourite spots

Cape York.

I first went up Cape York in 1981, yes I know, some of you weren’t even born then (well almost). This echoed in Anne and Eric’s ears as they led our 2009 tour to the lofty heights of the top of Australia. This was their first time up the Cape too, but armed with detailed notes from Greg and Helen they felt quite confident in delivering another knock out trip (Alex’s words not mine, remember that). And if the following

email from one of their customers is anything to go by, then I believe they did just that.

Hello Vic, wow what a blast!! Sue & I have had a particularly good time, yes Bloody Good comes to mind!
Eric and Anne have done a magnificent job.

So elated, I say thank you for organizing this magnificent trip and I repeat Eric and Anne have made our trip the best we have ever done.

Our Cape York trips seem to carry a stigma with them. This trip was fully booked with 8 customers, but by the time we left Cairns on 1 August, 3 had dropped out due to various problems with their work/4WD/life/whatever. Then on day 9 we lost another one when their Jeep became bogged in soft sand during one of the many river crossings on the Cape. The big problem was that water flooded the floor of the Jeep and the main computer controlling the engine management system. Without it functioning correctly the Jeep wasn’t going further than Bamaga. So the owners flew home to Cairns and their Jeep joined them a few days later courtesy of the Barge from Bamaga. We all know the issues of computers and outback travel, I worry about the move to electric vehicles and wonder what it means for the type of travel we all like to undertake. Anyway, as evidenced by the email above, the remainder of the trip was a real knock out and it looks like some of our Caper’s (people who do Cape York) might be joining us next year on the Kimberley Tour.

What about the shorter trips?

Well, we’ve had quite a few but one that was truly memorable for me was my 2 day Mystery trip. Now, being a Mystery trip, I can’t really tell you where it was. But let’s just say we were way up north inland of Port Macquarie. We had already ventured down a very steep and slippery hill which I knew would present a considerable obstacle if we had to back track, not to mention the bonnet deep river crossing we had just negotiated. It was about then that we came across a rather

large tree across the track. So it was either turn around and risk trying to climb back up that slope and through THAT river or spend an hour or so with the chainsaw clearing the track.

The greatest fear about deciding to clear the track is that there might be another even larger tree down further on, we had already cleared a number of trees so we knew no-one else had been on this great 4WD track for some time, so the chances of another forest giant blocking our way was pretty good.



See, I do work hard on my trips.

Anyway, lady luck was with us, and with all lending a hand, we cleared the track and moved on eventually emerging from the dark forest around 7pm on Sunday night. It's these little adventures that make a trip sometimes and although it meant arriving home late I'm pretty certain everyone enjoyed the challenge, I know I did!



This is a deep crossing, up to my knees!

4WD Shows

Our next 4WD show will be the Penrith Caravan and Camping Show at Penrith Panthers on 11-13 September. This is a FREE show so drop out and have a look at the great collection of 4WD gear, camper trailers and caravans, not a bad way to spend a sunny Saturday or Sunday. We will have our stand located inside the pavilion this year, make sure you find us for your free mouse mat and Outback Vic sticker.

Exciting trips coming up

This year we have 5 customers joining WD40 for his Best of the West Trip which starts in Broome at the end of his current Kimberley Tour. If you can't join him, then follow him via SPOT on my website www.4wd.net.au

This weekend on 30 August I'm leading another of my now famous 1 Day Mystery Trips. No, I can't tell you where we are going, it's a Mystery. I've got a few spots left so how about a \$20 discount if you join me on Sunday call now 9913 1395.

The following weekend, 5-6 September we have the Barrington Tops Trip taking place and Eric will be leading it, so you can hear first hand about his Cape York adventures. Although this trip is currently fully booked, but I am taking reserves for it just in case.

Also on the weekend of 12-13 Sept we have one of our ever popular 4WD training courses and Dave and Wayne & Jenny will be looking after that one whilst I attend the Penrith Show.

On 27 September Greg will be leading the Turon River one day trip, always a fun trip with lots of 4WD action.

This brings us to October and over the long weekend of 3-5 October we have our Ridges and Rivers trip down south. This is one of the best 4WD trips you can do over 3 days and the use of the same campsite for both nights makes it really popular. So its time to think about your next long weekend trip,

drop me an email to book your spot info@greatdividetours.com.au

October also means school holiday time again and this year we are offering our 12 day Flinders Ranges tour to help you do what you enjoy the most, see outback Australia, do some top 4WD driving and camp in some amazing locations. At present I have just two bookings and we really need at least 3 to make this one happen. Honestly, this is one of the best 4WD trips you can do in Australia, so if you are looking for something different to do in the next school holidays, give me a call. This trip is even camper trailer friendly thanks to the use of numerous base camps in between the really good 4wdrive tracks.

In case you were thinking of joining us on the High Country trip in January, please note you have left it too late already. I am now fully booked on the trip from 3-9 January 2010. But we still have plenty of spots on the 4 Day New Year's Eve trip to the Snowy River Region. Next January we are also offering our camper trailer friendly 7 day High Country trip from 10-16 January 2010, allowing you to bring the kids down to see the High Country, we have a few vacancies on this trip.

Of course if you are desperate to do the High Country tour, we do have one scheduled for 22-28 November 2009 and I have three spots left on it at this stage.

Announcing next years Big Trips

I have already planned all the big trips for next year and you will find their new dates on the website www.4wd.net.au

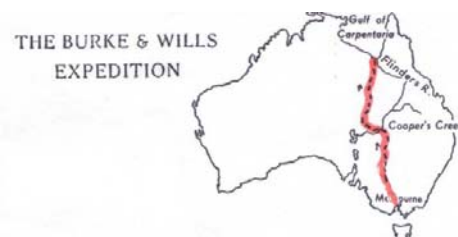
The big news is of course that next year marks **20 years** of operation for **Great Divide Tours** and to mark this momentous occasion I have planned a couple of very special outback adventures in addition to our usual array of amazing trips.

To recap, as usual we will be have our Canning Stock Route trip led by WD40 in June. Then in the July school holidays we

have a huge range of trips for you to choose from including the Corner Country Trip, the Simpson Desert Safari and the new Simpson Desert/Hay River tour being led by Wayne and Jenny in "door bell" Troopie.

Something different in 2010 will be the Kimberley Tour also kicking off in the July school holidays led by Greg and Helen and family this time. This great family affair will also be leading the Best of the West tour though August.

This allows for my two new trips planned for our big **20 year** celebration. Firstly to coincide with the **150 year** anniversary of the ill fated **Burke & Wills Expedition**, we will be tracing their footsteps from the very Park in Melbourne on the day they left 150 years earlier. Over the next 18 days we will follow their route through Mungo, Kinchega, Mutawintji, Innamincka, Birdsville, Bedourie, Cloncurry all the way to Camp 119 near Normanton. This is shaping up to be a fantastic trip and I fully expect to have one or two fully booked trips. I will be leading with Alex doing back up and I have WD40 ready to lead a second group if we need to.



Then immediately following the **Burke & Wills Trip** WD40 will lead our usual **Cape York** tour in September whilst Eric and

Anne join me as I venture **Across the Top**, exploring some of the amazing locations across the Gulf of Carpentaria and then heading back home via the Davenport Ranges, Sandover and Plenty Highways. I have detailed itineraries on both of these new trips so drop me an email at info@greatdividetours.com.au and I'll send you a copy. **What a fantastic way to celebrate 20 years of outback travel.**

Another Poll

I'm not talking politics, gosh why would anyone waste their time. I'm talking about Alex again, on a recent trip it became obvious to me that quite a few people might share my view that Alex, despite his own preaching, doesn't really make a good Damper. Now, I know this comes as a great shock to Alex who believes that his chocolate chip damper is the best thing since sliced bread, BUT, really, a damper is supposed to rise, or at least that was what I understood. To say that Alex's dampers at times resemble the look of a dried out cow pat is actually being kind (to the Cow Pad) but when you are forced to eat it by Alex around the campsite, it is then that you realize that looks are everything!



Alex, it is supposed to rise!

Does anyone else share my view that Alex really does need to take a few cooking lessons to achieve a good damper, or is it just me being unkind to the poor fellow?

Drop me an email and tell me what you think of Alex's Dampers, I have a bush cook book for the best response. (I might give one to Alex too!).

4WD Tip

Moore of a 4WD equip tip. Recently, during the fitout of Project Pajero (Don't forget to read all about it on my website) I travelled out to Narellan to Off Road Systems to have them fit one of their excellent storage systems to the Pajero. During this visit I realized that the drawer system in the rear of my Landcruiser was actually an ORS unit. So after 8 years of hard four wheel driving all over Australia carrying the enormous weight of all my recovery gear, I think I am in a pretty good position to fully endorse the ruggedness and build quality of the ORS storage systems. So if you are looking for a quality storage system for the rear of your 4WD give Graham Jones a call at ORS on 02 4647 6322 and tell him **Outback Vic** sent you.



Off Road Systems build the best Storage units!

That's all for now from the crew at Great Divide Tours:-

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

www.4wd.net.au
02 9913 1395
info@greatdividetours.com.au