

Bendethera - October long weekend

Participants: Brian, Sharryn and Matt Harris ~ silver Patrol
Di and Dave Powell ~ red Jeep

Before I start the trip report I would like to state that even though the rest of the state was cloudy and rainy all weekend, Bendethera was experiencing the best weather anywhere in NSW! It was hot and sunny all weekend! The road in was freshly graded and not at all steep and slippery as is often reported! Yea right!

Both families headed for Moruya on Friday night with the Harris' staying at a caravan park and the Powell's in the pub in town. Di and Dave got a few tips on the road conditions, there had been a 'slip' recently but as the National Parks officer said the road was good, we agreed to meet the next morning. After a very quick but unplanned tour of the town, we met Di and Dave and began our trek. The towns folk had said that if you go over the bridge then you have missed the turn for the road to Bendethera. Well we went over the bridge! A quick u-turn and call of "Don't follow us!" on the radio and we were on our way. The trip in was pretty good with the road being freshly graded in parts but very hilly... more like a roller coaster ride. The trip leader had great visibility, but poor Dave and Di behind us copped all the dust and had to keep dropping off the pace just so they could see the track! We stopped just before the Deaua National Park and collected firewood. There was a strong storm earlier this year and firewood was easy to collect due to lots of trees being blown down. Of course. the chainsaw made it easy too! Time for a quick joke....."What do you call Diana when she has the chainsaw? Yes Ma'am!"

We stopped at the rain gauge to cool the cars down just before crossing the Deaua River... not a millimetre had fallen in the last week, obviously saving up the rain for the weekend!. Bendethera is the prettiest camping area...lots of grassy sites along the river. Even though there were plenty of people already set up, the area was still not crowded. We found the perfect site...lots of grass, a proper fireplace and spit, not too far from the facilities as well. However, just as we were about to unpack a young lady asked if her group could set up camp there as they had ten horses being ridden in and needed to be near the horse yards. What could we do? So we found another site just over the creek and set up camp. By this time it was 12:30 and our teenager's thoughts were turning to food....again! Well we didn't exactly have lunch, more like



an extended nibbles session that went all afternoon. Too late to try out the new Harris camp oven so we cooked on the old gas stove and spent the evening around the best campfire that was still going the next morning.

Saturday had been a bit drizzly and we alternated between sitting around the fire and eating under the Powell's annex and staying dry. Sunday dawned clear and dry. Di made the most delicious chocolate cake in the camp oven, the smell of which finally got our teenager out of bed. As the weather



seemed to be closing in again, Brian decided to put up more tarps. I should explain at this point that we had packed a new fly with the tent. An unused and unchecked fly. Upon erecting the tent, we discovered that although the fly was the same brand and make as the tent, it did not in fact fit! It also did not have the ropes attached that the original one had. As a result, during the night, the front section had leaked and the main sleeping section was starting to look a bit damp. So Brian got out the extra tarps and gave them to Sharryn. By the time he finished getting everything organised it had started to rain, so Sharryn put the tarp over her head to keep dry and stood like a dork in the rain. She kept dry though! After lunch, we went to collect more firewood and took a look around the original Bendethera homestead site. The bread oven is almost still standing. A sign told how the water chase was dug by out of work gold miners. The homestead is no longer standing but the horse yards, now filled with the ten horses, are still there. We also drove out to the start of the walk to the Bendethera Caves. It was too late to do the walk that day but plans have been laid for next time. Sunday night was spent around the campfire again and we finally got to cook in our camp oven. Amazingly, it tasted pretty good. Di cooked two fantastic pizzas.

The next morning we packed and began the drive out. We had been warned it would be slippery and steep. Most of the other campers were packing up as well. After driving through the three river crossings, we began the steep climb. Coming around a sharp bend, we came to a quick halt. Half way up the hill was a Landcruiser Ute with a quad bike on the tray, towing a trailer loaded with trail bike and bbq. The wheels were spinning and there were his two mates trying to pull him out. We had seen them pack up earlier, so we gathered they had been bogged for quite a while. The boys went to investigate and see if they could lend a hand. The queue behind us was getting longer and longer and the radio conversations were getting more and more colourful! Brian and Dave asked what tyre pressure they had lowered the tyres to. The young 'p' plater replied why would you lower the tyres and what would that do to help. We knew then we would be there for a while! After letting the tyres down, the Ute was pulled free and began a slow climb up the mountain. After a few more boggings and slipping around in the mud, he very nicely pulled over to let us past, but not before his mates had left him behind.

We had planned to stop at the Hanging Mountain lookout to take the compulsory group photo and look at the view, which is supposedly spectacular. However not much was to be seen on Monday except fog and mist. We had no problems driving the steep and slippery track out with the trailer and camper, despite what many magazine articles had said.

Back in Moruya, we decided to follow the Powells and return home through Braidwood. Thanks to Dave and Di for the great company and we solemnly promise to make no mention of any wombats!



The Farmer

The Farmer A man owned a small farm. HMRC determined he was not paying proper wages to his staff and sent an investigator out to interview him. "I need a list of your employees and how much you pay them!", demanded the investigator. "Well," replied the farmer, "there's my farm hand who's been with me for three years. I pay him £200 a week plus free room and board. "The other farm hand has been here for 18 months, and I pay her £150 per week plus free room and board." "Then there's the halfwit. He works about 18 hours every day and does about 90% of all the work around here. He makes about £10 a week. He pays his own room and board, and I buy him a bottle of whisky every Saturday night. He also sleeps with my wife occasionally." "That's the one I want to talk to...the halfwit!" said the official. "That would be me," replied the farmer.