

Australia Day Long Weekend – Mannering Park



Attendees:

Craig, Fran, Josh, Casey, Shane & Laura (200 Series Cruiser)

Ben, Gis, Connor & Zoe (Patrol)

Terese, Josh and Chris (Prado & Hilux)

Taps, Naiyan & Ariyan (100 series Cruiser)

The call went out a couple of months before the Australia day weekend, for a trip up to Mannering Park, where Craig has an on-site van. Being ever organised, the Sweetnams booked in early and secured a spot, followed shortly after by Terese. Scott Lucas tried to book a site for his family, but like most of us, they didn't want him around (only jokes Scott). I rang a week out, after convincing Venita (aka Potty Mouth) that I should take the kids away while she worked the weekend, and managed to snag a site, seconds after someone else cancelled their booking.

Sites secured, we all met up at the Park on Friday. The Upton clan made it up there around midday and set up camp.....which basically was just unpacking the car. Terese joined them shortly after, but not before returning home to pick up their pillows which they had forgotten. It wouldn't be a club trip if Terese didn't forget something (she forgot most of Chris's clothes on last year's Moreton Trip).

I was planning to meet up with Ben and drive up with him, but as usual, I was running a few minutes late, and decided to hook up with him on the expressway instead. Didn't quite work out that way, and he beat me to the park by a matter of minutes.

We set up the campers, and sat back with a beverage, trying to cool down a little. The weather was quite warm even into the evening, so we had a couple more drinks "to keep ourselves hydrated".

At 5 ish, Chris drove back to Sydney. He didn't want to spend his weekend with us "old" people, so he made alternate plans.

The night spent sitting around and talking set the mood for the entire weekend, which was pretty much what the plan was anyway, and before we knew it, it was 10 or 11 o'clock, so we called it a night.

A lazy 7.00 start (for me), and an even lazier 9.00 start for Craig, we met outside his van. We tried to coax Craig out earlier, but Casey was too scared to rouse him from his beauty sleep. God knows he didn't (doesn't) get enough as it is. Ben and I needed to get groceries, and the Upton's needed coffee, so we set out for the local shops.

Shortly after our return, we were greeted by Jack and Pam Simpson, who came for a visit and lunch. Sitting around under Craig's awning for a few more hours yet again, we talked more BS and kept ourselves hydrated. At about 3 pm, the weather was starting to turn, and the wind was picking up. Jack and Pam came to see us by boat, so they farewelled us and set off for home, bouncing their way over and through the chop of Lake Macquarie. Despite the wind, the temperature was still quite high, so we decided to crash the kid's party in the pool.

After a quick splash, we headed back for happy hour, and found the Lucas' driving through the park. Once again, we sat around hydrating, eating and talking, until the kids wanted to go back in the pool. It was still hot, so we all went for another swim.

It was getting late, and we had to start thinking about dinner, so back to Craig's van, for a cook up. Once everyone was fed, we lazed about some more. Ben pulled out sparklers and glow sticks for the kids to play with and to keep them entertained. Craig, somewhat curious about the glow sticks, asked Ben to pass a pack.....SMASH !!!!! Not sure if it was a bad throw or lack of ability on Craig's part to catch, but the pack of glow sticks found Craig's wine glass, and sent shards of glass everywhere. The mess cleaned up, with those two commenting on who was bigger clown, the Lucas' called stumps. Scott returned from his car saying he could smell gas. Alarmed, we all jumped up trying to sniff out where the leak was coming from. It turned out to be Scott's car. One of the gas lines had perished and a quick repair job had their car started and they were on their way. Shortly after, we all called it a night once again.

I woke up the wee hours of the morning to sound of rain on the roof of the van. Bugger, the weather had changed.....for the worse. When we woke up a couple of hours later, the rain had well and truly set in. I guess it wouldn't be a trip to Mannering Park if it didn't rain (same thing happened last Queen's birthday long weekend). With the kids running from one van to another, the Upton's, Ben and I set off for the shops (coffee) again.

The rain hadn't eased any during our time away. Odd jobs we had lined up to do on the car and vans were set aside, and we once again sat around under Craig's awning. Some kids were in Ben's van playing with the tech, others were watching a DVD in ours and the remaining kids were riding their scooters around the park.

We decided to take the kids down the pool again. They were getting wet anyway, and it was still warm despite the rain, so we made use of the camp kitchen and had ourselves a BBQ, and went swimming.

The rest of the day was once again spent under the awning, where we had happy hour and watched the procession of people packing up camp in the wet, and heading out. With the weather the way it was, there wasn't much more we could, so we took advantage of our plight, and just sat there, only getting up for re-stocking stubby holders and/or wine glasses.....oh, and dinner. Seeing that we're up, may as well get another drink. The time somehow disappeared, and it was now 10.30 or thereabouts, so we called it a night.

The rain continued through the night, coming down in torrents at times. This wasn't going to be fun. Today is departure day. Our hopes for a break in the weather had dwindled. Not wanting to start, we had a few coffees under Ben's awning, and psyched ourselves for the wet pack up. Terese was a bit stressed, because she hadn't packed up the trailer by herself, and Chris hadn't returned yet, but she was relieved a short time later when he returned. They started immediately, and got everything squared away. "Chris, where're the

keys?", Terese asks..... "Dunno", replies Chris. Lucky he's wet already, because he spends the next twenty minutes going through everything he's touched, except the packed up trailer. Fortunately, he finds them.....in Terese's handbag!!!! She put them away and totally forgot!

The Upton's, Sweetnam's, and I were also packed a short time later, so we left Mannering Park and headed off in search of more coffee and a bite to eat before the drive home. The local Donut King was our saviour, where we caused mad panic for the two ladies behind the counter. One came out from behind the kitchen area and froze when her gaze fell upon 16 people in front her.

Once again, charged up with coffee and sugar, we set off for home. We didn't get too far before we hit the first bit of holiday traffic, but fortunately, it was moving ok, and we made reasonable time home.

All in all, it was a good relaxing break. Thanks Craig for organising it, but next time, please ...no rain!!

Cheers,

Taps.

