

Dunns Swamp

On Thursday morning Dave, myself and three kids met up at 12 o'clock to start our journey to Dunn's Swamp.

The kids were hyper excited and we were also looking forward to 5 days of winter camping with a great weather forecast.

On the way to Richmond I realised that one of the protective foam mats I placed on top of the camper trailer and below the kid's bikes had a slight upward drift so I decided to drop in to the next Bunnings and purchase another ratchet strap to tie down the matt whilst Dave still needed to refill his gas bottle. To our surprise his Toyota would not start anymore and we narrowed it down to his battery, we quickly jumpstarted his car and were on our way again however at Lithgow McDonald's where we had a quick coffee the same problem occurred so Dave decided to call the NRMA which arrived within a short time and replaced the battery.

By now we were around one hour late and realised we probably would just miss the last daylight when arriving at the campsite. This proved to be true but it gave me a good chance to test the LED light bars I recently put on the car and we were all set up in near daylight.

The first night was fairly mild around the 0° mark though being bugged after the drive and set up we did not even light a fire and where to bed early just get up again shortly afterwards to properly secure everything edible from the 10 possums raiding our camp.

The next morning it was fairly fresh and fire was quickly lit and brekkie for the hungry kids prepared.

As our better halves were left home it was up to the fathers to keep the kids fed and happy so after our breakfast we headed out to discover this beautiful place. The many rock pagodas where a delight for the kids and we spent the most of the day climbing in, of and around it with the kids. Unfortunately it was a bit cold for swimming but in summer the kid's and us would have had a blast in the water.

The evenings were spent around the campfire, which even though firewood was provided, was a pain to nurture and get going as the wood was pretty wet, however after we laid a good foundation all was good and warm.

The next morning we woke up to find one liter water bottles solidly frozen and according to the Ranger we had an -6° night. The first one or two hours in the morning were a challenge for the kids as it was very cold so Dave, being an avid runner and Tough Mudder campaigner, devised an obstacle course for the kids which warmed up the kids and provided great fun and was repeated every day.

The next day we did a 5K round walk to the Kandos Weire and long Cave and enjoyed the spectacular scenery and nature.

On Saturday we tried our luck with a bit of fishing without much success but again the kids and our self had fun. While Dave headed back to camp with Justin, I tackled the Pagoda lookout with Summer and Kaelan which for four and five year old kids was a bit of a climb but the view from the top is absolutely stunning. When we reached the top the kid's proclaimed to my enjoyment "Papa we are so happy that you take us to such awesome places".

On Sunday we were approached by a desperate mum and fellow camper looking for her 16-year-old son who wandered off at 12 noon without provision and just a cheap UHF and was heard over the radio to be lost at around 2 PM. The boy called Thomas was transmitting only hello, hello, hello? And apparently could not receive any responses. The family only had a cheap 0.5 watt- unit so I jumped in the car and climbed some of the rock formations trying to establish contact with him however without success. Fortunately Navshield took place nearby so quickly resources and teams where diverted to find the fellow as it was already 4 pm and daylight was fading quickly and without proper gear it would have been a very cold night indeed. Fortunately 45 minutes later he was picked up on a road and brought back to his family. The kids and we follow the search on the UHF and it was a good reminder to respect this great country and to not wander off unprepared into the wildness.

When we arrived and collected our payment envelopes we saw that the price for the camping seem to have changed and had doubled from five dollars per night to \$10 per night via a handmade sign.

As we had brought the correct change for the price advertised on the website we decided not to pay until we had chat with the Ranger who informed us that someone increased the prices and took off with all the “collected money”. She told us if we hadn't paid yet our holiday would be courtesy of National Parks, as they did not want to give the thieves they were trying to catch more income.

On Monday we slowly started packing while the kids enjoyed some backyard cricket and around 2 o'clock we left for home.

All of us including the kids concluded that it was great 5 days and definitely something we will repeat in the future. The wives where happy that the dads managed and the kids still appeared to be well fed if a bit dirty!!

