

Victorian High Country - January 2014

Brian and Sharryn Harris
Bianca and Jarred Madden
Tammy, Duane and Aiden Reiser
Karen and Rod Cumming
Mary and Chris Keys (trip Leader)

Day 1 Moyhu Camping area

We met at the little town of Moyhu out of Wangarratta at a quite quaint camping area. A peaceful night after a long drive ready for the start the next day

Next day we started off on country roads to Lake Buffalo before heading along Abbeyard Road heading to Lake Cobbler. This is quite a lovely drive as we started to climb arriving at Lake Cobbler at about 3 O'clock to set up with a lovely view of Lake Cobbler. Arrive early as we saw plenty of people looking for camping.

Day 2 Lake Cobbler

Departing Lake Cobbler heading to Craig's Hut we had a lovely drive along a track called the Monument lined with beautiful wildflowers.

The view from Craig's Hut was unexpectedly quite spectacular and well worth visit though the temperature had really dropped significantly.

Departing Craig's Hut to King Billy track along Bindaree Rd passing Bluff Hut and Lovicks Hut. Beautiful high country driving on a pretty bumpy sort of track which required a good bit of concentration. A good drive through classic high country snow gum country.

We started to descend along the Caledonia River track along a quite lovely drive with some mild challenges, but the travel time was slow. Fortunately we came across a great camping spot beside the Caledonia/Macilster River. Some map disputes on the name for a great nights camping.

Reporter Chris Keys

Day 3 King Billy Track

Trip Report Sunday 5th January 2014

We woke early to another beautiful day along the King Billy Track beside the Macalister River. Everyone was packed up and ready to go by 8.30am. So we continued along the King Billy Track after crossing the Macalister River. We were last to leave as we were tail end Charlie for the day. As we continued along the track we were surrounded by a sheer cliff faces covered with fern trees and wild flowers on one side and the river on the other. We soon came across a large fallen tree across the track which had been cut for access but was a very tight squeeze which everyone negated with inches to spare.

The King Billy Track soon became the Howitt Road which led us through the Howitt plains with great views at the top. A short drive later we made it to Howitt's Hut, everybody agreed to a toilet break. After a short stop we continued along until we reached the Caledonia River Track which was recommended by a local back at Lake Cobbler camp the night before.

Once on the Caledonia River Track we all agreed that we owed the local a beer as the Caledonia River Track soon became one of the highlights of the trip. With its steep inclines, declines, rock steps, ruts and many river crossings not to forget the scenery's and views along the way.

After about 2 hours we crossed the Caledonia River the



track then became the Dingo Hill Track which was very steep with loose rocks and many switch backs requiring reversing and second attempts to get around, Dingo Hill Track seem to go on and on..... At about 1pm we were almost nearing the top of the climb when we heard on the UHF Jared contacting Chris to let him know that the Hilux (Turtle) had locked up and was unable to move. So Brian and myself who were behind Jared and Bianca's Hilux secured our vehicles on conservation mounds and made our way up the hill on foot. Upon arrival it was soon discovered that the transfer case was broken and the Hilux was not going anywhere, Chris was notified but was already reversing down the hill for the recovery.

After several attempts Chris's Patrol finally snatched and dugged the Hilux to the top. Once we were at the top we stopped for lunch and access what we were going to do. A bloke waiting to go down Dingo Hill suggested that the best option would be to tow the Hilux to the town of Licola, which was an easy drive. As it was getting late we were asked by Chris to go ahead to Licola to book our camp sites for the night at the caravan park. After securing our camp sites the rest of the group arrived about 1 ½ hours later lead by Chris towing Jared and Bianca's Hilux the (Turtle). We all set up camp, met for happy hour and everyone was pleased to have showers and a early night. This was where we would leave Jared and Bianca as the Hilux was getting picked up by NRMA at 10.00am in the morning.

Written by Duane, Tammy and Aidan

Day 4. Licola

After the dramas yesterday, we all slept in and then packed and refuelled before bidding a sad goodbye to Bianca and Jarred.

Today's destination was Billy Goat Bluff. Brian and I put our hand up to lead as navigation wise, it looked fairly straight forward. All was going well until about an hour down the road we reached a sign ~ "Detour. Bridge out" A quick call over the radios and a study of the maps and GPS and we had all agreed on an alternative route. This proved to be very pretty with lots of wildflowers in full bloom. The new route also went through rainforests as well as the eucalypt forests. Towards the end of the detour we encountered a fork. Both ways seemed to go to the Pinnacles Lookout. Brian and I drove ahead to check out the shorter way only to discover it became narrower and steeper in a very short distance. Turning around was a challenge but eventually we joined the others and proceeded on a much more used track to the Lookout. The vista from the lookout was spectacular, with views in every direction as far as the eye could see.

Continuing just around the bend we came to Billy Goat Bluff. You will have to let the photos do the talking here as my eyes were closed for most of the descent! The guide book describes Billy Goat Bluff as one of the steepest tracks in Victoria and they are not wrong! The statistics are we



descended over 1000 metres in little more than an hour. The average speed for the whole day was 7km/h. At the top the track winds along the ridge with no room for error and steep drops on both sides. So I'm told ~ I still had my eyes closed!

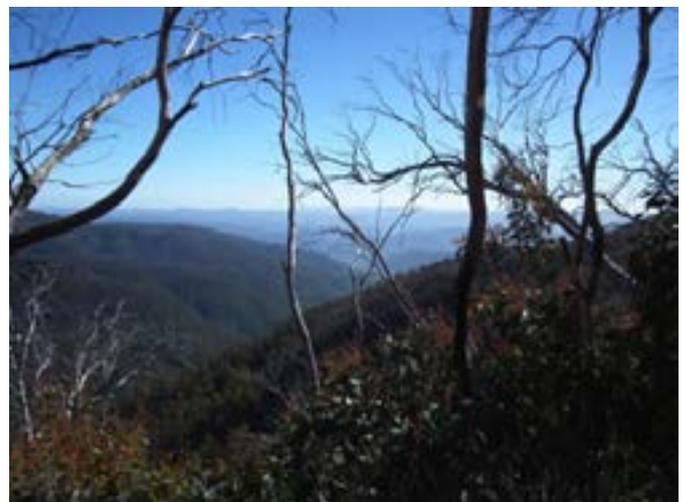
Once down the bottom and composure back in place, we turned left up the road and bush camped on the banks of the Wonnangatta River. Brian went for a dip and the rest of us enjoyed the peace and serenity that only happens when you are far from the city and all its pressures and deadlines.

We finished the evening with a meal around yet another great campfire.

Day 5 Wonongatta River

After spending the night at an excellent camp site on the banks of the Wonongatta river we had a lazy start to the day. Thanks to the Harris's for the pancakes and maple syrup, to Chris for the excitement of finding his mangled spectacles and most of all to Rod Cumming for the mirth derived from having to extract his keys from the already packed up rooftop tent.

Once on our way looking back towards Dargo the view of Billy Goat's Bluff and the Pinnacles presented an impressive sight. Now we meandered our way along the Wonongatta



Trip report



and took a look at Black Snake camping area (a highly recommended old favourite of ours) before taking a short cut along the blacktop to the Dargo pub where we consumed an excellent lunch. Our group was the first in for lunch and the pub filled fast.

After lunch we commenced a rather circuitous journey to Omeo. The Hema maps proved to be somewhat lacking in detail of the current accessibility of some tracks. Eventually we made it onto the Berrigun Track and took a break at the Dog's grave at about 3:15. Here we were greeted by flies and a picturesque meadow of daisies The dog's grave has a plaque with a wonderful tribute to the relationship between man and dog.

At about 4:30 pm we crested the hill that drops down into the Omeo camp ground where we could see that the group led by Ben Sweetnam had just arrived. It was then time to catch up with old friends, set up camp and to have some refreshments. It was our first very cold that evening and it was rather good to snuggle up in the warmth of bed.



6 Along the Track

Author Mary Keys

PS. Once again the Victorian High Country delivered a spectacular trip but as often is the case, heading in to the Victorian High country anything can happen. Heat, wind, rain, snow, car problems, difficult tracks, etc, the unexpected. It's great to travel with a bunch of people who pull together as a team.

Chris Keys

Day 6 Omeo

The group had settled in with some heading off to see the Blue Rag track while Mary and I decided to take it stay back at the Omeo caravan park.

Day 7 Omeo

Easy day and local trips

Day 8 Return and separate ways

Most of the group planned to explore the numerous water crossings of the Haunted Stream track but as we had tradies beginning renovations on Monday, we said our goodbyes to everyone and set out for Tom Groggin on the Victorian/ NSW border with the Cummings leading the way.

We followed the Mt Misery track for most of the way, with only one minor wrong turn which was definitely not our fault! 3 GPS and 2 maps all said turn left however the track petered out to nothing so we backtracked and found that turning right put us back on the track.

There were numerous campsites along the way, many with High Country huts as well. The wild flowers continued to delight as well as many great view points. We crossed the Murray River and said goodbye to Rod and Sharon who were setting up camp by the river at Tom Groggin, continuing through Thredbo which still had snow on the peaks.

Sharryn

