

Australia 2008

Western Australia's South West

Leg details

Date February 20 - March 27, 2008

Leg Perth - South Dandalop Dam - Dwellingup - Lane Poole Reserve - Lake Baden-Powell - Lake Ballingall - Harris Dam - Collie - Stockton Lake - Glen Mervyn Dam - Wellington Dam - Wellington Weir - Collie River - Honey Moon Pool - Donnybrook - Busselton - Forest Beach - Dunsborough - Meelup Beach - Cape Naturaliste - Yallingup - Conto NP - Margaret River - Cowaramup - Giant Caves - Augusta - Blackwood River - Scott NP - Gingilup Swamps Nature Reserve - D'Entrecasteaux NP - Jasper Beach - Lake Wilson - Lake Smith - Beedelup Falls - Warren NP - Northcliffe - Shanon NP - Pt. D'Entrecasteaux - Gardner Beach - West Cliff Point - Walpole - Mandalay Beach - Long Point - Mt. Frankland NP - Valley of the Giants - Conspicuous Beach - Peaceful Bay - Parry Beach - William Bay NP - Denmark - West Cape Howe NP - Albany - Waychinicup NP - Porongurup Ranges - Mt. Barker - Rocky Gully - Manjimup - Nannup - Ballinup - Donnybrook - Bunbury - Leschenault Peninsula Cons. Park - Perth

Leg map (click to enlarge in separate window)



On Wednesday, February 20 2008, we prepare to hit the road again. Last thing before we leave is to organise some permits that we will require on our next trip (from the Nullarbor north on the Connie Sue to Warburton, then on the abandoned Gunbarrel Highway and the Great Central Road to Yulara). The Aboriginal Land Council web page is broken down and will not accept our data. A bit stressed we call the Land Council. A friendly lady helps us, enters all data for us and informs us that the permits can take up to 6 weeks. This doesn't bother us, as we only intend to do the trip end of April. Now we are really ready and can leave Perth.

In the magazine "4WD Days out of Perth" we have found some tracks that we would like to check out. As the first one on our plan starts in Dwellingup we travel south and try to find a camp for the night. But we don't have much success ... **Serpentine Head Reservoir** ... closed ... **Whittakers Mill** ... closed ... so we settle for an open area in the forest. Noisy Long-Billed Black -Cockatoos set the scene ... this is so much nicer than the traffic we have been hearing all day and night in Perth.



The cockatoos feed on pine cones and take them completely apart.



After a cool night with only 13.6°C Ruedi and Peter keep themselves warm with winding the cables onto the winch. Peter had exchanged his steel cable with a synthetic DynaRope and Ruedi's had not been re-wound since we had used it in the sand up north.

Travelling south we pass the **South Dandalop Dam**, a very pretty picnic area with all comfort. It is a shame that camping is also prohibited here.

We continue on towards **Dwellingup** and drive into **Lane Poole Reserve**.



Shortly after the gate we spot lots of blackberry plants full of ripe fruits. The fruits taste great! Quickly we pick enough for some marmalade.

Then we stop at the first camping site in the park, the **Baden-Powell Camp** and find the water so inviting that we decide to stay for the night.



The wildlife is great here with many birds (Black Cockatoos, Kookaburras, etc) and friendly kangaroos.

In the morning we continue on and check out every campsite on the way. We find **Charlies Flat** to be very pretty, **Tony's Bend** not very nice, **Yarragill** closed.



We also pass **Island Pool**, a very pretty picnic area.

A walk leads into the bush and up the hill and we decide to do something to improve our general fitness level.

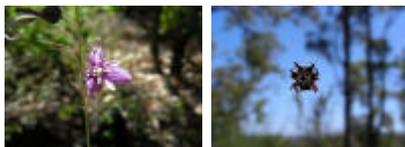




The walk is easy leading through some open forest and lots of pretty grass trees.



However to take a group picture is not that easy ... grass trees are not the most stable tripods and require some modification!



For Susi and Heidi there are even some flowers and beautiful spiders on the way.

Then it's time to leave the main track and turn into the **Murray River Fire Line**.

As described in the trip notes after a few kilometres a small track branches off leading uphill.

As there are fresh tire marks on it we follow it even though it is steep and badly washed out.

The track is adventurous and quite narrow.

At some stage Susi believes to have spotted tire marks as if vehicle had turned.

Shortly after that the track gets really narrow and tree-bashing starts again.

At one point we even have to remove a tree as we have placed ourselves in a position where we cannot go backwards anymore either.



Then at one spot a tree has fallen over the track and people have driven around it. We also have to and suddenly it is Ruedi's turn to squeak a bit as the OKA violently tips towards the driver's side. The OKA tilts so much that Ruedi holds on to the engine cover to stay in the seat.

What now?

Reverse or go forward?

He decides to continue and very slowly the OKA inches itself out of the awkward position.

Phew that was nasty.

We continue on and start checking out side tracks for camp spots but have no luck.

When reaching **Howse Brook** instead of following the trip notes we cross the Murray River.

We find a great little spot with a swimming pool right beside the river and decide to stay for the night.



Two local men stop for a chat before they go fishing in the pond. On their return after 10 minutes they present us four Redfin Perches they caught and ask us if we want them. We would love to but don't really know how to handle a whole fish ... we only know them as filets

No worries!

We get an introduction on how to clean and prepare redfin perch.

Thanks again guys for that great meal!

On Saturday, February 23, it is Susi's 50th birthday.



While Heidi prepares a cake in her frying pan Ruedi distracts Susi a bit as the cake takes a bit longer to bake than Heidi has anticipated. But then it is ready and the cake is presented with candles and all.

There are even presents!

Thanks to everybody for the nice surprises.



We continue on south following small tracks through the forest. Large trees grow in this area and every so often fall to the track too



It is amazing to see how nature recovers from last February's bushfire. Lush and green the trees and undergrowth grow back.



While driving through the forest we suddenly reach the **Mount Saddleback / Worsley Mine** and are fascinated by the Overland Bauxite Conveyer belt.

At the northern end of Lake Ballingall, an artificial lake, we see the turn-off into **Harris River Road** but after a short distance the road is covered by water and we have to turn around.



We continue on until we reach **Harris Dam** where we have a look from the Lookout and inspect the whole set-up.

There is also a nice little picnic area where we enjoy lunch.

Drinking water is also provided and we fill up our water tanks ... It's always good to fill up when good freshwater is available



The **Bibbulmun Track**, a 950 km long walk trail from Perth to Albany, also comes through here.

We take a mental note that this would be a very pretty area to walk through ... something for next time maybe?

We decide to check out some campsites mentioned in the "Priceless Campsites & Rest Areas" and head through **Collie** to the **Stockton Lake**, a former open cut coal mine that has been filled with water and now is a recreation area.



It's a nice area with very clean water and a sandy beach, so we decide to stay for the night.

As it is Saturday it is a bit loud but eventually even the toughest of the young visitors fall asleep ...



On Sunday morning we move on to **Glen Mervyn Dam**, another artificial lake.

There is a lot of activity on the lake with water skiers, board riders and all sorts of water sports.



We decide to stay for the day, relax a bit and watch the various levels of skills being displayed as they are pulled passed.



Peter also splices the eye of his new DynaRope winch rope.



On Monday morning we head back in direction of Collie then continue on to the **Wellington Dam**, where we have lunch.

Then we decide to drive some more parts of a trip described in "4WD days out of Perth".



We all agree that the well-travelled track heading up the hill is part of it so we start the ascent.

Peter and Heidi lead the way as they have prepared the waypoints and already read the trip notes.

It is steep, the road is built in typical Australian-way ... in fall line!
Ruedi mutters that he hopes that we don't have to come back this way.



Then we have to navigate a difficult tilting section, misjudge the track and find ourselves in a pretty precarious situation. It does not happen too often that Ruedi squeals but this is one of them. He sits on the side facing downwards which is always the uncomfortable side to be on.

What now?
 Forward it tilts even more so Ruedi tries driving backwards. But he is not able to find the ideal line and the OKA tilts more and more. Stop, we need Peter to help navigating and call him on the UHF. Susi has a hard time to get out of the OKA as the already heavy door is even heavier in this position.



Heidi and Peter arrive and we all start improving the track. Ruedi pumps airbags and tires on the down facing side of the OKA to level the truck a bit. In such situations the extreme wheel articulation of the OKA is a curse as it allows the chassis to tilt much more than it would on a vehicle with an anti sway bar. Then Ruedi slowly starts moving the OKA forward. The OKA slips off the rock and tilts even more. Again we start filling in rocks and dirt to level the track out a bit more. This time it works and the OKA slowly moves out of its miserable position. We continue on but not much further up the track we find the next nasty section. While Peter and Heidi head ahead to check out the track we decide to improve the track a bit before we drive the OKA over it ... to avoid a second adrenalin session ... Shortly after Heidi's voice sound on the UHF "... you can stop building, we have to turn around, there is no track up here anymore ...". Looks like Ruedi jinxed the track with his muttering on the way up ...

So we turn the OKA and head back. At the difficult section we get busy improving the track a bit more for the OKA. It is hot and the dirt is very dry. It does not take long and we are covered in sweat and dust. This time Ruedi deflates the tires and airbags on the hill -facing side and inflates the tires and airbags on the lower side as much as he possibly can. Then Peter navigates Ruedi over the critical section. It works pretty well and the rest of the descent goes well without any problems.

[Click here for a movie](#) of the nasty section (file type: .wmv, size: 3'381 KB).



We decide to stay at the lake for the night and cool us down with a lengthy bath in the pretty Wellington Dam.



As we explore the proposed site for the camp a large group of black cockatoos takes off from the trees in front of us. It is such an impressive sight ... this flock of big birds flying over us and all we can hear is the wings in the air ... We just stand and watch and once more are very impressed about nature.

On Tuesday, February 26. we look for a small track leading to **Falcon Road**. After a bit of searching amongst the many small tracks we find **Arcadia Road** and turn into it. It is narrow at times and has many deviations because of fallen trees.



In some areas we just manage to get through but in one instance, just a few meters before reaching Falcon Road, one tree has to give way as there is just no way to get through.

But we manage and continue on towards **Wellington Weir**. The road has just been graded and it feels great after all this bad corrugation we had on **Wright Road**.



When having a close look at the dam's overflow Ruedi gets in contact with a spider that suddenly hangs down from his hat ...



We also visit the lookout and find some interesting details on the construction of the dam. [Click here](#) for details.

We continue on and look for the **Lookout Track** but when Heidi & Peter check it out they find it to be blocked by a tree a bit further in the bush, so we head back and turn into **Lennard Road**.



This is a pretty one-way road following the Collie River with lots of great places for a swim, rapids, picnic areas ... One could stay for a while ... but it probably gets very crowded during the summer holidays ...

We reach **Honey Moon Pool** and find ourselves a nice site just beside the **Collie River** where we set up camp for the night. A group of young people drives past and loudly announces their presence. They set up camp further down the road and can be heard all over the place.

We decide to walk down to the other rapids and pass through the campsites. The youngsters sit at the table on their site and are already heavily into beer, coolers, vodka, etc.



Besides a few ducks that accompany us on our bush walk we cannot see many other animals. But the walk is very nice with all the reflection in the river.



Also some flowers and mushrooms can be found along the river.

When returning to the camp we can watch the ranger and some workers in the day-use area.



One man climbs around in the trees, always securing himself with ropes, then gets the chainsaw and cuts down branches. It is amazing to watch him.

Then we return to the camp for a swim in the river. The water is rather cold with only 18°C. This is due to the water being released from the lower part of the weir, where it never warms up.

We have dinner outside on the picnic tables and friendly ducks visit us and keep us entertained. Then we pack our torches and head towards the old Ferns Camp.

We want to have a look for possums and other night animals. But we search in vain; all we can spot are the eyes of spiders, lots of them! So we return to the camp and as it is still quite warm we have desert outside.

What was that? Quick, the lamps! There ...

Oh, it's only a mouse ...

Anyway, it was fun.

We leave bits of "Schmackos" (dog meaty -bites) on the tables and hope that we can watch the chuditch (a native kind of cat) come to get it.

We go to bed but the youngsters further down the road just won't shut up. Again and again one of them screams around, then he starts beeping the horn ... and as it is a warm night we cannot close the windows ... It must be after 3 AM when he finally falls asleep ... and we too.

Then we wake up to hear animals squeal and hissing each other but are too tired to go and have a look.

In the morning the Schmackos are all gone ...

On Wednesday, February 27, we all don't look too fresh.

As we have been standing in de shade most of yesterday's afternoon and the fridge has been running more frequently than other nights due to the warm night today we require sunshine and also a bit of driving to get the batteries filled up again.



We leave Honey Moon Pool and drive south where we have a look at the **King Jarrah Tree**. Well, it might be an old tree but somehow we think that we have seen larger ones in the Lane Poole Reserve ...

We continue on in direction of **Donnybrook**. Beside a roundabout we suddenly see lots of gnomes.



By coincidence we have taken the route past "**Gnome Ville**", a site where hundreds if not thousands of Gnomes have been placed underneath the trees. It all started with a few gnomes being placed in the roundabout by locals.



The gnomes were destroyed and this silly act of vandalism made the news.



The publicity generated by this public outcry resulted in gnomes from all over Australia being sent to Donnybrook



..... even representatives from other countries!



Clubs send their gnomes and many of the gnomes have some interesting texts with them e.g. Osama Gay Gnomes



On the side of the road also some other interesting things can be seen

After stocking up in Donnybrook we continue on towards **Campel** on small tracks. But we don't get far and have to turn around as the tracks have been closed by DEC (Department of Environment and Conservation) because of dieback infestation. Dieback is a fungus that attacks the root system of plants. It gets transmitted by traces of soil in shoes and tyres.

We decide to deviate to the **Ironstone Gully Falls**, but when we reach them the river is dry and the gate to the camp ground is closed.

So much for that camp site.

So we continue on to the **Ludlow Tuart Forest Drive** north of **Busselton** to check out some possible camps there.

The closer one gets to civilisation the more difficult it gets to find places where bush camping is allowed.

We find a spot at **Forest Beach**, but a passing ranger informs us that the responsible ranger for this stretch will most probably not tolerate it.

As it is very hot (37°C) we still go for a quick swim in the pretty ocean.

Nobody is swimming just a few fishermen are there.

Peter is the first one ready to hit the refreshing water.

When Susi finally makes it to the beach, Peter, Heidi and Ruedi are on the way back

What's up? Is the water too cold?

No, Peter has been stung by some jelly fish at least 4 times!

Only the water just very close to the shore is jelly fish free and one can only just have a dip there, further out it is infested.

What a shame!

We take showers, continue on to a small 4WD track and find a few spots where we will be able to stay for the night.

But first we want to do the **Possum Path Spotlight Walk**, a walk marked with reflector markers.

So we go back to the **Layman Picnic Area** in the **Tuart Forest** and after dinner start the walk.



Already at the first marker we spot a possum high up in the tree.

Soon after we are even luckier, the Ringtail Possum is so close that we can easily watch it jumping from one branch to the other one.

It does not seem to be too disturbed by humans pointing the beam of their torches at it.

We find a few more on the way and find that we have been very lucky today.

Back at the picnic area we notice that Peter's finding is correct, there is no "no camping" sign here so we stay for the night.

On Thursday, we wake up to an overcast sky.

After all this heat and sunshine we are a bit surprised.

Especially as the weather forecast had been for a sunny but muggy weekend.

We drive to **Busselton**, past all the nice (and for certain very expensive) villas.

Busselton is a very pretty and busy little town.

It is famous for its almost 2 km long wooden jetty, the longest wooden one in the southern hemisphere.

Then we continue on to **Dunsborough**, stop at the pretty **Meelup Beach** and then head out to **Cape Naturaliste**.



Peter's sister had given us the tip to stay at the end of **Bunker Bay Road**, on a pretty spot under some pine trees.

Well, the spot is pretty but the whole area has been developed and is now a fancy residential holiday house area of the rich and famous from Perth.

So we will have to drive over to Yallingup and stay on the local caravan park.

A 4WD track leads there and we hit it.

But shortly after entering it we encounter deep soft sand and would have to lower the pressure on our tyres.

It is also already 3:30 PM and driving 15 km on soft sand could take a while.

So we decide to turn around and take the bitumen road over to Yallingup and tackle the track tomorrow morning.

This would also give us the opportunity to also do some of the walks around the lighthouse.

When we reach the **Yallingup** caravan park we are informed that we can only stay for one night ... a long weekend is ahead and all sites are booked.

Hmmm ... now what?

We haven't got much choice than to change our plans, leave early and head south to Conto's Camping, a camp in the National Park.

As they usually go by the rule of "fist in best dressed" we should be able to get a site for the whole period.

But first we head down to the beach and enjoy the waves and the water and then a loooooooong shower.

Then we have dinner and go to bed.

On Friday, February 29, it is foggy and even some drizzle can be felt every so often.

We head south past all the vineyards and the fancy houses.

The area is really getting very crowded, not to our liking.

At **Conto Campground** we are lucky and can book for 3 nights.

We set up camp and work a bit on the pictures and diaries.
 But as there is no sunshine today and as it could be we do not get sunshine for the next 3 days, we only have limited power we can use.

During the day the drizzle increases.
 As the temperature stays high the humidity also rises. It gets really muggy - all gets a bit damp.

We watch the Kookaburras and other birds in the trees.
 In the evening we place some tomatoes that did not survive the corrugation, under the tree hoping that we will hear when the possums get them.
 Over night it even starts raining, not much but a constant light rain.
 Susi hears the animals fighting outside the OKA but somehow does not wake up enough to realise that it is the possums fighting for the tomatoes ... they are all gone in the morning.

On Saturday all batteries are pretty low and there is no sun to be expected for the day.
 So we decide to play tourists and dive into **Margaret River** and **Cowaramup** to visit some of the attractions.
 The fresh ice-cream at the Margaret River Nuts & Cereals is great, we buy some of the cheeses at the Margaret River Dairy Co. but the Chocolate Factory is a big disappointment, not much to taste and exorbitant prices (180 gr of chocolate AUS\$ 12 !!!).

Then we return to Conto and drive down to the beach on a badly corrugated road.



The beach is renowned for its waves and the surfing but not much is happening, the waves are too small and break too early.
 So we head back to the camping for a quiet evening.

On Sunday we decide to stay on site and have a day off.
 A neighbour, an ex-teacher from Melbourne, visits us and we have a vivid exchange of places that should be visited.
 We also enjoy the luxury of having Internet access with our external antenna.
 It's great to be out bush and to be able to receive ordinary emails.

On Monday, March 3, we leave Conto and head for the **Giant Caves**.



After receiving equipment and some instructions we head down into the darkness.



At the bottom of the escalator we find a large fungus (more than one m2).



Deeper and deeper we climb into the cave ...



Some interesting formations can be seen on the way.
 Then it gets serious, we have reached the "difficult" section.



We have to climb up ladders



... and crawl through crevice just wide enough for one person.
 The only light available comes from our own torches. It is definitively not for people with claustrophobia!



But we all manage and are rewarded with some kind of a cathedral room with large stalactites hanging from the ceiling.
 They are created when roots from the trees tunnelling through the ceiling of the cave.
 Water then runs down on the roots leaving traces of residue which after a loooooong time form the stalactites.



At one section we even have to sort of "abseil" a bit ...



One more pretty section and then it's already time to climb up towards the exit. That was a fun experience!



Then we head south on the **Boranup Drive** and drive through the Karri Forests. There are still a lot of people on the road and the **Boranup Lookout** is so crowded that we continue on to **Boranup Beach**.



It looks like the surf is not good, the surfers are all leaving. Still, it's a pretty place.

We head down to **Hamelin Bay Caravan Park**, where we check in and go down to beach to check the water. Some fishermen are bringing their boat out of the water. They unload their catch, some 200 - 250 sharks of all sizes; we watch in awe.

The water is pretty agitated and the view is lousy, but we still go for a swim. As we snorkel along the remains of the old jetty Peter spots a large stingray. Then excitement is noticeable at the beach; another large stingray pays a visit to the public! We also go and have a look.



The stingray seems to be used to humans and gets really close flapping his "wings" as if it is waving. The span of its body must be close to 1,4 m. It is so large and close to the shore that when the water of the waves retrieves the upper part of the body is exposed to the air! Once it gets so close that Peter and Susi jump back instinctively; the stingray would have passed straight over their feet ... and that is just that much too close for comfort. Even so stingrays are known to be friendly to human the famous "Crocodile Hunter" Steve Irwin has been killed by such an animal last year. But what an experience! On Tuesday we decide to stay an extra day.



We are busy with washing (yes, that has to be done too ...) and sorting through some leaflets and brochures. At 6 PM Heidi and Susi head down to the beach to have a look if the stingray comes for a visit again. Sure enough, there it is! But it is a smaller one and it swims so fast that it is almost impossible to get a proper photo of it. As it swims past it looks as if it is waving at us again.



On Wednesday, March 5, we head in direction of Augusta and deviate to **Cosy Corner**, **Knobby Head** and **Foul Bay**. They are all very pretty places.



After a bit of shopping in **Augusta** we drive out to the lighthouse. Once again we are frustrated by the money they want to just access the grounds. We don't mind paying for the guided tour, but just access to the ground ...? Sorry, we are not willing to pay that much so they will have to do without us.



We follow the signs to the old water wheel.
It was built in 1895 and was used during the building of the lighthouse.
For further details [please click here](#).

Then we turn into **Skippy Rock Road**, a scenic drive along the coast.



The views are great but the track is badly corrugated.

We continue on and go down to the mouth of the **Blackwood River** and have a look at the houses along that pretty stretch of water.
Then we leave Augusta towards Karridalle and turn east towards the Blackwood River area where we check for the campsites mentioned in the "Priceless campsites & Rest Areas" book.
We are not too lucky ... the first one is taken, the next one is too small, the track to the next one is so rough and narrow that we decide to turn around ...



But at the end we find ourselves a nice spot close to the **Hut Pool**.
In the evening Susi goes frog-spotting.

Hut Pool is a frog sanctuary and she wants to find the Orange Belly Frog but even with the help of Ruedi no frogs can be spotted.

On Thursday it looks like the stretch of nice weather is over.
On and off the sun breaks through the clouds but the longer the day goes the more it gets overcast.
So we leave the forests and head south to the coast.



As we drive down towards the **Scott National Park** we see these large areas of pretty orangey bottle brush flowers.



Also other interesting plants and animals can be found along the track.

We turn into **Milyeannup Coast Road** and head east.
This is supposed to be a 4WD track but it is nothing like that.
Only after reaching **Woodarburup Road** it becomes what we expected.



The track is sandy and goes over some dunes through some forest country.
We pass through the **Gingilup Swamps Nature Reserve**, then head down to the **Black Point** in the **D'Entrecasteaux National Park**.

We try to find the black cliffs described in the "Priceless campsites & Rest Areas" book and head down to the beach.



The waves are still quite high but the surfies are already packing up their gear.
The ranger is also there cleaning the toilets (the door knob of the toilet looks interesting ...).
When we ask them about the black cliffs they look a bit puzzled and then agree on a specific area further east.
But they also agree that the track is too rough for our campers.
The ranger takes Ruedi down in his ute to have a look and we then decide to go by foot.



We climb along the rocks passing some pretty water-gardens and colourful settings.



The rocks look like black "organ pipes", very impressive.



Ruedi can't get close enough to the waves and once even has to run away ...
Small salt pans left on the rocks give an indication how far up the surf gets.



The waves pound onto the black rocks.
We cannot get enough of the white foaming water washing over them.

[Click here for a short movie.](#) (file type: .wmv, size: 841 KB).



We even see some seals having a bit of a swim close to the cliffs.

Time flies and soon the afternoon is over so we decide to stay for the night.
During the night the weather deteriorates further and after a thunderstorm light rain sets in.

On Friday, March 7, we are woken up by rain squalls.
As the weather does not look like it will improve we decide to drive towards Pemberton to charge the batteries as we drive.

The track on **Woodarburup Road** gets sandier as we go.
The rain has made the surface firm but the OKA still breaks through into the soft sand with its weight.
After encountering problems in one section Ruedi lowers the tire pressure to the sand-settings and all goes well for the rest of the track.



At one stop Susi hears frogs croaking and by coincidence spots two of them.
They are about 4 - 5 cm long, black with orange coloured joints.
But they refuse to be turned onto their back for inspection of their belly colour so no more details can be given on them.



We take the turn-off to the coast just after **Jasper Beach**.
The weather is not really made for a stay at the beach so we head back and continue on the track.

We reach **Lake Jasper**, a pretty lake with white sandy beaches.
But the falling rain does not really raise appetite for a prolonged stay here maybe in a few days when the weather has improved or next time.

As we drive along **Lake Wilson** and **Lake Smith** we pass some large areas of very pretty orange flowers.
But in this miserable rain nobody really fancies getting out of the car to take pictures of them.
Sorry, no photos



We also pass this pretty tree, all covered in orange flowers.
Then we reach the **Vasse Highway** and head towards Pemberton.

At the **Old Vasse Road** we turn off towards the **Beedelup Falls**.
Even though it has been raining all day the falls only have a bit more than a trickle of water running over them and are not very impressive.



But we find the suspension bridge to be an interesting object.
Here also too we can hear the frogs croaking.
But it is difficult to get close to them.
They seem to detect us earlier than we can spot them.
If we follow the sound of their croaking, as soon as we get closer to their hiding place, they stop croaking.
And try to find a 2 - 3 cm large frog in dense undergrowth !

We stay on the Old Vasse Road and head into **Warren National Park**.



What a sight, the small dirt track winding through the tall Karri trees. It is such a peaceful and pretty place.

For some [Karri Fun Facts](#) please [click here](#).

The Aboriginal People have a special story about the Karri forests.

[Click here](#) to listen to it (file type: .wav, size: 2'093 KB).

We find ourselves a place at the **Warren Camping** and stay for the night.



It is a very pretty campsite, with easy access to the river.

Just the weather is not really inviting ... it is still raining and the temperature drops to 14°C over night!

On Saturday we continue on to the **Bicentennial Tree**.



Bicentennial Tree was not one of the original tree towers in the area but was built in 1988, as part of the celebrations to commemorate 200 years of European settlement in Australia.

The tower on top of Bicentennial Tree is around 78 metres above the ground; the first rest platform is 25 metres up.

There are 130 climbing pegs and the cabin at the top weighs two tonnes.

In high winds, the cabin sways up to 1.5 metres in either direction.

Ruedi and Peter give it a bit of a go and climb up the pegs.

But they get only about 20 m above the ground, then they turn around (Sissies!) none of us has the rights nerves for this.

We continue on to **Pemberton** and after finishing the weekend's shopping head out to **Northcliffe** and start looking for a place to stay.

We find a small track down to the creek where we stay for the night.

There frogs croak all night, but very different than normal [click here](#) to listen to them (file type: .wav, size: 905 KB).

On Sunday, March 9., we wake up to an overcast day.

After a long breakfast with fresh bread prepared by Heidi we look for the **Boorara Tree** and even though we have the correct GPS reading we just can't find it on the small track.

As we head back to the main road just maybe 100 m further down we find the official entry to the place.



The tree had been in use as fire tree until 1970 when it was shut down.

It is interesting to see how the tree has grown around the wooden "leader", much more than around the metallic ones we saw yesterday.

For some more details on the use of the Tree Towers and on the Boorara Fire Tree [click here](#).

As we continue on and drive into the **Shanon National Park** it starts raining.

Even in the light of the overcast sky the tall Karri trees look impressive.

Let's hope the weather improves for tomorrow so we still get to see them in full sun light.

We head to the camping site where we stay for the rest of the day.

It is a cold and miserable day and we are glad, that the OKA is so comfortable.



The only ones not feeling miserable seem to be the kangaroos that enjoy the fresh green grass

After a cold night with only 11.4°C we wake up to a sunny day.

We enjoy the drive on the **Great Forest Trees Drive**, stop at **Snake Gully Boardwalk** and **Big Tree Grove**.



Along the lake we get the chance to have a bit a closer look at nature ... these roots just grow over each other, each of them trying to get the best position.



Next stop is **Curtin Tank**, where water used to be stored to fight forest fires.

Funny enough the area where it is located has just been burned ...



We are fascinated on the speedy recovery of nature and read the information about fires and regrowth with interest.
[Click here for more details on Fire and Forest](#) .



At another location we find a large Karri that has "taken command".
 We are impressed by the girth of the large Karri tree.

The large space between these giant karri trees is generated by

- the large leafy canopy of the Karri that blocks sunlight
- the Karri tree roots, that extend for 20 to 30 metres, forming a network for hundreds of kilometres of root fibres thus removing nutrients.

Both of it suppresses new growth.

But when a giant karri tree dies it creates a gap in the forest and smaller trees will compete to join the grants and taking the section of the forest and the sky.

Then we had to **Northcliffe** for some shopping (excellent bakery ...) and some Internet-access.



Next stop is **Mount Chudalup** , a granite outcrop with some Karri growing at the bottom and then, with a rather abrupt change, some Peppermint Eucalyptus, Grass trees, etc. growing.



On top of the mountain a strong wind is blowing.
 We wonder how the wind will be at Windy Harbour?



We drive down to the coast and explore the **Tourist Loop** , stopping at **Salmon Beach**, **Tookalup** and **Pt. D'Entrecasteaux**.



Some of the granite outcrops are fascinating.
 As it is getting late we decide to stay at the **Windy Harbour Camping** for the night.
 We even find a spot where the wind is a bit less strong.

Being close to the ocean has the advantage that the temperature does not drop to far and we have a comfortable night with 18°C.

In the morning we get some advice on which track to take from the caretaker.

After emphasizing that

- yes, we have a 4WD,
 - no, we are not novices in the sand and
 - yes, we will lower the tire pressure,
- we receive the required input.



We hit the track and after only two tilting sections we reach **Gardner Beach**, a lovely spot at the mouth of the **Gardner River** .



Then we continue on to **Lower Gardner Road** where we are surprised to find so many flowers.
 But Heidi and Susi don't mind and soon they are busy taking pictures of them.

Then we reach **Chesapeake Road** and soon after encounter a "Road Closed" sign with a detour.



Being good citizens we follow the detour and pass a small interesting floodway, then continue on the detour until we reach the other side of the closed road.

As already many people have driven past the sign we follow our curiosity and also drive down to the Gardner River.



The bridge crossing the river is still there but they have ensured that nobody can drive over it anymore. It looks like the structural parts of the bridge have become eroded but we are not sure, why the bridge was closed.



Also interesting is the section, where the sand was bulldozed to a pile and the rain has washed away the surface sand.



The track continues on trough Karri Forest and very pretty landscapes along **Gardner Road**.

On the road we find a reminder why we should always wear good shoes in the bush the reptile, most likely a Tiger Snake, was dead, but it could have been alive too

From then **Moore's Track** we follow the road-book instructions given in the "Priceless campsites & Rest Areas" and take the turn-off towards the **Fish Creek Track** .



The track leads over the sand dunes - some passages are steep and will be interesting on the way back - until we reach **West Cliff Point** .

It looks like the track to Fish Creek Beach has been changed to this spot a while ago.

There are many camping spots and it looks to be pretty popular.

We decide to stay and enjoy the beach, the waves and the nice weather.



As we intend to stay for at least one extra day we set up our sun-room tent.

Even though it is already begin of autumn the sun is still pretty strong and hot.

We want to find out where the original Fish Creek camp was.



So we pack the small backpack and hike over the cliffs.



We find a nice little bay with both rocks and a sandy beach.

Judging from the tracks we find this place has a different entrance track and is pretty popular.



We continue on the track and pass a few parts that could have been a bit of a challenge for the OKA due to the tilting sections.



Then we reach the next bay and find the described **Tucketts Hut**, exactly as mentioned in the book.



It is equipped with beds, tables, cutlery, even the 12V system is set up, all you need is o plug into the car battery ... and all for free ...



But the access to the beach does not exist anymore, the limestone has eroded off.
This is a shame as we cannot access the deep channels between the reefs to watch the fishes.



We follow a track through the sand and find ourselves back in our camp in no time, just in time for a swim and some boogie boarding ...

On Wednesday morning it is overcast but it is not very windy so we sit outside and watch nature.



Besides some interesting plants we also observe some kind of wasp that is flying around holding on to a cricket.
Ruedi had previously played with the sand and filled in a hole that apparently was the entry to the wasp's borrow.
Now the poor thing was desperately looking for the entry ... always carrying that cricket around



Then we go for a walk along the beach where we find a message in a bottle.
We take it back to the camp and first Heidi and Peter think we are pulling their leg.
But then we all are very keen on opening the bottle to find out what's inside.
No, no, there was no genie in the bottle, just a note from Holland that threw the bottle over board on his voyage from Melbourne to Fremantle on January 26, 2008.
We will send the letter to him with the details, where and when it was found.

Then it is time for some work.

By noon the sun breaks through and the solar cells manage to fill up the batteries.

Good, this means we can stay an extra day and continue working on the PCs.



In the afternoon we head down to the cliffs and watch the waves.
Then it is time for another boogie boarding session!

After dinner we settle down in our tent and it is movie time.
We present Crocodile Dundee to Heidi and Peter ... nibbles and cold beer are provided too.

We decide to leave the tent put up over night.
Should the wind pick up Peter will roll the walls up so it does not get blown over.
As they only have canvas walls they will hear the flapping of the walls long before us.

During the night Susi wakes up because the wind has changed direction.
It is now blowing from where Peter and Heidi's Kokopelli stands and is picking up in force.
She wakes up Ruedi and we go outside to take the tent down.
The wind picks up considerably during this time.
The door of the camper gets smashed against the OKA twice.
Shortly after we are back in bed and all windows and shutters prepared for rain the storm sets in.
The OKA is rocked every so often by the gales.
Once again we are so glad to have a solid house and as the rain starts falling we fall asleep again.

In the morning when Peter and Heidi get up they get quite a fright; the tent has disappeared!
They had not heard a thing during the night, not even the smashing of the door against the OKA, so loud had the noise of the wind been in their camper.

The morning is very wet and windy.
We are glad that we don't have to leave our 4 walls.
Comfortable we sit at the table and happily hack away on our keyboards.
The storm is so strong that Heidi and Peter have to re-park their Kokopelli and even take the roof down.
When the rain stops a bit we head out to have a look at the ocean.
At some spots the waves are covered with yellow foam, it stinks like rotten eggs.



Ruedi gets the wind-speed meter and climbs on top of a dune. He measures 64 km average wind speed and gales up to 82 km. Not bad!

Then the sky clears up and the sun again manages to charge our batteries with the solar panels. Great!



In the afternoon we head back to the cliffs to have a look at the waves again. They are much higher than yesterday. They have actually flooded some areas.

Over night the wind quietened down so that Peter and Heidi can lift their roof again for the night.

On Friday, March 14, we leave this great spot and head back to Chesapeake Road.



The road is wet but easy to be driven. Even the steep section of the sand dune is business as usual, no worries.



On the way we find some more flowers and also birds, but they are rather shy and hard to take pictures off.

We deviate to have a look at **Camfield** but find our spot of the last few days much nicer. Then we return to the bitumen and civilisation and head into **Walpole** for some shopping and Internet-access.

We decide to drive out to Banksia Camp in the **D'Entrecasteaux National Park**. We stop at **Mandalay Beach**, a pretty beach with a bit of history.

In 1911 the schooner *Mandalay* ran aground here during rough weather.



Read the captains notes ...

We reach **Banksia Camp** and find ourselves a great spot for the night.



The views from the window of the camper are strait onto the waves.



Here the Bibbulmun Track comes through too and we have the chance to have a look at one of the shelters provided for the walkers. Not bad and again: All for free!



The area around Banksia Camp is very pretty and there are lots of large rocks to climb on.



But work calls ... Ruedi has to grease the OKA and Susi is busy acting as hairdresser



The sunset is very pretty too.
 Another very spot in the impressive D'Entrecasteaux National Park, where most of the nice spots are accessible by 4WD only.
 On Saturday morning, after a cold night with only 11.5°C, we are greeted by sunshine.
 After breakfast we head out to **Cliffy Head**.
 The road is well maintained.



In sections that could suffer from the traffic rubber mats of conveyor belts have been fixed to the track with large nails thus preventing the erosion of the track and also helping getting up the ridges.
 On the way back we almost run over two kangaroos.
 Sitting in the scrub right beside the track they have nothing better to do than to jump straight in front of the OKA less than 5 meters ahead of us. Luckily Ruedi has a good reaction and stops the OKA so quickly that the engine dies.
 The larger kangaroo is ok and stands just in front of the bumper bar, the little one appears from underneath the OKA.
 Then they both take off into the bushes ahead of us where they stop and watch us, only their little ears and part of the head is visible.
 Can you spot them?



No?
[Click here](#) to find them.
 Then, as we start driving again they dash onto the track and jump ahead of us for a short while before they disappear into the bush.
 Had we not known that they are there in the bush we could easily have run them over a second time.
 Why do they always have to jump in front of cars?????
 Silly things!

The drive back to the Banksia Camp is very pretty with nice views over the hills and the ocean.
 We drive to **Crystal Springs Camp** where the track down to **Long Point** starts.



The track is narrow at the beginning and later on changes to deep soft sand.
 We get through and enjoy the views.
 After a short stop at Walpole we drive to **Hilltop Road** and soon have to stop again to have a closer look at the Tingle Trees.
 Some of them are huge, much wider than the Karris and not as slim, but very impressive!



The lookout shows the **Nornalup Inlet**.
 Then we reach the **Giant Red Tingle Walk**.
 The walk is very nice and gives access to a few good examples of these great trees.



They are sturdy, some are gnarled, some have burls



... most of them are hollow and burned out, but still alive and are going strong.
 We are very impressed and the cameras are very busy.
 The system administrator worries about the disk space and the GB of data that he will have to save

We decide to drive up to **Mt. Frankland National Park** and stay at the camp there.
 When we reach the area there is no camping to be found ... they have just recently decided to convert this park into day-use-only area.
 We don't feel like driving another 30 km to the next camping so we decide to stay for the night, especially as the whole place is under construction and there is no "No Camping" sign to be seen.

On Sunday we wake up to a nice day and soon find the way uphill to the top of the 411 m high **Mt. Frankland**.



The trail is not well maintained, in some sections it is even a bit overgrown



The last section of the trail we have to climb a ladder and a flight of steps that lead to the top of the hill.



The 360° -view is great.



On top of the mountain we find a fire-lookout hut. It is manned but the person in it is not too keen on talking to tourist ... which is a bit of a shame as we would have liked to hear his stories. Then we head back to the cars and drive towards the **Valley of the Giants Road**. But then we find ourselves at a dead end, road is closed because of dieback So we head back the same way we came yesterday and then find our way to the **Tree Top Walk**. This is quite an experience.



A metal gangway leads up to a sort of suspension bridge that is built into the tree tops up to 40 m above ground!



The bridge hangs between high metal towers and is supported by massive metal constructions. Of course it vibrates and swings a bit when people walk over it but surprisingly for once Susi has no issue with neither height nor the grid on the floor, even at the highest point of the walk. The walk through the tree tops is interesting, the views down to the ground impressive.

Once back at the visitor centre we also visit the **Tingle Tree walk**.



One particular tree know as "The Grandmother" or "The Gatekeeper" has a girth of 12.5 meters and is estimated to be approx. 400 years old. All four of us fit easily into the opening at the bottom ...



Some more of those large specimens are on display and we are quite impressed. The trees are really interesting and we also learn a fair bit about Tingle Trees and other plants. Then we head to **Conspicuous Beach**, but swimming is not recommended because of the many rips. So we head towards Peaceful Bay and try to find a spot for the night.

We spot a track into a tree plantation. The gate is open. Just as we are ready to set up camp a truck drives in and we are informed that we should not stay. They will be kangaroo and fox hunting tonight and also some heavy machinery will come in during the night. Ah well, bad luck.



So we leave and shortly after find a small track heading into the woods right underneath some power lines.
There are also some Telstra signs.
As today is Sunday we don't expect Telstra to show up to perform work so we drive in, over the next ridge and set up camp.

Over night we receive a bit of rain.
But on Monday morning the sun quickly disperses the existing clouds making way for a beautiful day.

We continue on and visit **Peaceful Bay**.
As there is not much to be seen we continue on and visit **Parry Beach**.
It is warm and we feel like a bit of a swim, but this has to wait as we are here because of the Salmon.



We just missed the fishermen and their Salmon fishing.
They had been out in the morning and because their storage is full they will not go out again today.



So we just buy a Salmon off them (4 kg of fresh fish for 5 AUS) and start work on it to extract the filet.



Now we have to "translate" what we have learned from the last two fishermen it looks easier than it is but we manage and have fish for at least two meals.
But we all smell like fish and Peter is slightly upset because of the misuse of his loved bridge-element-come-table at the side of Kokopelli to filet the fish, all the yucky blood and scales flowing over it, all smelling like fish
But after a good wash it looks like new ... and only smells a bit

We continue on to **William Bay National Park**.



The rocks are great and the water looks inviting ... but it is a bit cooler than it looks like ... we postpone the snorkel for later on.
Some clouds and bad weather are looming but where we are the sun is still shining.

The walk over to **Elephant Rock** is definitely worth it.



From the top of the rocks we spot a large fish close to the beach.
Susi is the only one with tongs on so she tries to approach it.
It actually comes closer but the waves increase in size, Susi has to move away quickly and the fish is scared away.
Then the weather gets worse, clouds roll in and one can see the rain approaching.

We decide to get into **Denmark** and do a bit of internetting and have lunch.
It does not take long and the rain reaches us.
Good for the solar panels, they need a good wash after all this salt and sand.
We have time to check out some of the local stores ... especially the bakery has some excellent stuff, luckily it is lunchtime!

Next we head out to **West Cape Howe National Park** where there are supposed to be many campsites.
But the info at the entry only mentions the **Shelly Beach Camp** ... and supposedly it is only for tents.
We decide to head down and have a look.
We find one tent and the rest are campers and even two caravans, even though there is a sign saying that caravans are not allowed
So we decide to stay for the night too.

We find out that most people come here either for the Salmon fishing (professional only) or for hang-gliding.
Apparently the hills provide excellent upwind and some launching ramps are provided too.
It is also a favourite spot for the enthusiastic hang-glider community to get together over Easter and they expect it to be packed.

Later on the wind picks up a fair bit and we re-park the vehicles so they face into the wind.
The wind gets too strong and unpleasant for some travellers and some of them decide to leave.
We don't worry too much about the wind; we have had stronger wind at Fish Creek a few days ago.

During the night the wind quiets down and it stays rather warm with close to 18°C.
But in the morning the wind picks up again.
Clouds hang around and it is not the pretty weather the weather forecast had announced.

As they have announced some good wind-conditions for hang-gliding this camp will be really packed over the coming long weekend.
As we are not into hang-gliding and don't really fancy being part of a packed camp we decide to leave and find another place to stay.



On the way back to the main road we stop at the lookout, which is also the launching ramp for hang-gliders.

We head towards Albany and turn off to "**The Gap**" and "**The Natural Bridge**".



The weather has improved and the sun shines through every so often, just enough for the photos.

If one considers that the granite which forms the Gap and the Natural Bridge hardened 20 kilometres below what was then the surface and that water and wind eroded away the softer layers of rock to expose the current surface not bad

Then we continue on to "The Blowholes".



Susi goes ahead and almost falls over them but they breathe out at that very moment and scare her. But they are not really active and we soon head back to the road.



Besides some "normal" flowers and animals to be seen on the way ...



... there are also some strange looking plants no, they are not dead, they are Dryandras ...

Then it's shopping time in **Albany** before we head out to the **Waychinicup National Park** where we stay at the camp at the river's mouth. What a great place.



The rocks are very special and the river is almost serene. We find ourselves some good spots for the next few days and set up camp.

On Wednesday the weather is not too good in the morning so we have a bit of a sleep-in. Then the sun breaks through and we head out to explore the little river.



The bay is tidal and where the river flows into the saltwater one can actually see how the bio-environment changes. Different animals live in different sections, fishes, small crustaceans, birds etc. etc.



We explore the river and find some very pretty spots.



Then we reach a small lagoon, blocked by some rocks. Ruedi gets busy with damming up the river to see by how much he can increase the water level. Soon we are all busily helping by sweeping dry leaves into the river, so they get washed down to the "construction site", collecting twigs and other wooden pieces that could be used to build a retainer wall or used to plug leaks.



Slowly the water starts rising. Some animals like this little frog decide to "shift house" before they get inundated.



Then we head back to the camp as in the afternoon Susi and Peter plan to go snorkelling in the bay. Wind and water are rather cold and Susi has to get all her courage together to actually follow Peter into the cold and wet environment. They are rewarded with the sight of a few large schools of pretty fish. If only the sun would shine a bit warmer ...

In the evening the loud song of the noisy scrub-bird can be heard through the park.

On Thursday, March 20, the weather has not improved. This does not deter Ruedi of going back to his river to have a look at his work and to check on the water level.

Susi (finally) finishes her work on the diaries from the first trip. Heidi and Peter explore the track to the river mouth and are excited. We will go and have a look tomorrow when hopefully the weather is better.



On Friday Ruedi wants to go back and have a look at his construction site again. We all go along.



Soon Ruedi and Peter are busy again, Peter even organises a large stone plate ...



Heidi and Susi leave Ruedi and Peter alone and head up the river to explore a bit.



It is a very idyllic little river with lots of nice sections.



Of course there are flowers blooming too ...

On the way back to the camp Heidi and Susi have a hard time getting the "boys" away from their "water works" ... but lunch is always a good argument!



A Rosenberg Varan takes its time to cross the track and a King's Skink enjoys the sunshine.

Also some large spiders have their hunting grounds.

We even spot birds like the Silvereye.



In the afternoon we head out to the river's mouth.

In some section it's more like rock-climbing ...



We pass some huge rocks and reach the ocean. There the wind blows quite strongly and we are careful not to be blown down into the water.



The waves are quite nice and we wonder, how it must look during a strong wind.



We also get a chance to observe crabs, how they duck when a wave washes over them and then immediately get up again and continue eating. [Click here for a short movie](#). (file type: .wmv, size: 1'138 KB).

Then its time for Susi and Peter to go snorkelling again.

The water has not really gotten any warmer but again large schools of fish are present and it is worth going.

On Saturday it is sunny and a bit warmer.

This will charge our batteries meaning that we can work on the PCs all day.

But the first thing for Ruedi and Peter is to have a look at yesterday's work in the river and by how much the water has risen over night.

They take along the ladder to have a closer look from below the waterfall and find the spot where the main water leak is.

As the water level is not as good as expected they decide to rip all apart and rebuild their dam.

Late in the afternoon two pleased construction builders come back to the camp proudly explaining to the waiting audience that the water level is now at least 20 cm higher than yesterday.

A strong wind warning has been issued for the coast.



In the afternoon some ships come into the bay and seek shelter.

In the evening the announced change in weather comes and rain and strong winds set in.

Easter Sunday starts with all the goodies of Easter Breakfast.

As the weather is still overcast and windy Susi decides to have a quiet day.

Heidi, Peter and Ruedi to have a look at the river and the water level.

It has not risen much more and filling the new holes would require too much effort so this project is declared as finished.

In total the water has risen 70 - 80 cm and the size of the lagoon increased a fair bit.

Then they go out to the river mouth where the waves are just phenomenal.



At times the waves come in so high that they wash over the large rocks by almost twice their height.

In the evening Susi goes animal spotting with the flashlight.

She is lucky and finds a Quenda at the river and a Pigmy Possum in the trees right behind the camper.

During the night we are woken up by a scratching noise on the shutter at the dining table side.

We see a large animal in the bushes but it is too dark for proper recognition.

We get the torch and find it to be a large Brushtail Possum.

It is very patient and we have all the time in the world to have a closer look at it.

What an experience.

On Easter Monday, March 24, we decide to leave the Waychinicup NP and drive to the Porongurup Ranges, one of the World's oldest mountain ranges (The granite from which they are made formed more than 1'000 million years ago!).



On the way we find some flowers along the road

At the **Porongurup National Park** we decide to hike the **Nancy Peaks Walk** even though the weather is overcast and it looks like there will be a shower later on.



After passing the "Tree in a Rock" the amount of people on the track decreases quickly and we find ourselves in a very pretty forest.



A bushfire almost destroyed the forest in February 2007.

In just two days 90% of the forest in the National Park was burned and many trees badly damaged or even lost.



But now the trees are recovering well.
 Due to the gaps in the canopy and the light getting through to the ground there are plenty of flowers and plants to look at.
 The birds are very shy and make it a challenge for the photographers to get a picture of them.



Karri Trees really do the right thing with their skinning of their outer bark.
 This way all the marks left on them by silly tourists just drop off with the old bark and a "maiden" trunk appears from under it.
 What a great set-up: this should be possible with all trees and concrete walls!



We reach **Hayward Peak**.
 On a sunny day the views of the Stirling Ranges must be phenomenall!



Many flowers bloom and there is plenty to be seen on the way.



At **Nancy Peak** we have a well deserved lunch amongst these large boulders.



The way down leads through a badly burned section; not too many large trees have survived.
 The undergrowth is quite high.

Then we reach the turn off to the "Devil's Slide".



The fire has melted the surface of an information board leaving it as if it was the relief of the surrounding hill.
 A person has even left a funny mark on it



We make our way up the sometimes rather steep rocky section.
 Here we find a different fauna than on the way up to the previous peaks.



As we reach the top, some sunshine breaks through the clouds for a short time and we enjoy the views.



Then we head down again and continue our hike. We are waiting for the famous section that is displayed in the brochures of Porongorup NP to appear, the one with the large boulders and the gangways, but all we find is an easy walk through the Karri forest.

A bit tired from the walk we decide to stay at the local Caravan Park for the night and enjoy a long hot shower

Bliss!

At the Caravan Park we find out that it would have been the "Castle Rock Walk" we should have done!

Maybe tomorrow

At dusk the Kookaburras entertain us: there must be lots of them in this area.

Just before dawn the Kookaburras get active again and wakes us with their chatting and pleasant "laughter".

Lucky us it is just about the end of summer time and almost 7 AM, time to get up anyway.

We decide to do the "Castle Rock & Balancing Rock" walk.



Along the walk we find some Southern Cross flowers. They usually have 4 flowers but we find some with 5, 6, seven and even one with seven open ones and one still to be opened. Fascinating!



We also find some kind of a Jasmine flower and pretty coloured undergrowth.



"Balancing Rock" is fascinating.

Of course we have to get the "tourist" picture too



After passing between some rocks we find ourselves in front of a warning sign ...



With a bit of climbing, crawling on all fours and squeezing through we manage the next section and have lots of fun. It feels like being kids again!



Then we have reached the famous climb and reach the top.



It is great to be up there and enjoy the views.

Another group-picture is taken to prove that we all managed to get onto the top



After a bit more climbing and squashing we are back at the car park and head into Mt. Barker for a bit of shopping and to fetch drinking water.

Here our ways separate.

Susi's relatives are coming to the Gold Coast and she will be spending some time in Queensland with them.

Ruedi will stay in Perth getting the last few things done at the OKA as on Susi's return we will leave Western Australia and travel other parts of Australia for the next 1 - 1/2 years. This gives Heidi and Peter at least 2 weeks of time which they want to spend in this area.

We head west on the **Muir Highway**, pass **Rocky Gully** and then deviate into the **Muir State Forest**.

The roads have been freshly graded in preparation of the planned burnings.

It's a shame that the warning signs put up by the different councils don't show a date or at least a week, when the burnings will take place. But as it is already after 5 PM we decide that they will not start burning during the night and we are safe to stay for one night.

We find a spot right beside the **Frankland River**, where the grader has prepared an area to fetch water from the river.

We decide to stay here for the night.



Some pretty banksias bloom and we can watch plenty of birds coming for a drink.

Also lots of caterpillars are having a feast on the Eucalypt leaves.

During dinner Susi voices her concerns of camping in an area that has been marked for controlled burnings.

Ruedi agrees that it is not the smartest thing on earth to do especially as we don't know when and where they will start the fires.

So we pack up (takes exactly 5 minutes) and drive a bit further down the road.

We have to watch out for the kangaroos as they react quite frantically in the light beams of the OKA and jump in front of the car.

But Ruedi spots both in time and we have no casualties.

Already after a few km we have reached the end of the prepared area and shortly after find an excellent spot for the night.

Now we can sleep in peace.

The night is cloudless but this also means cooler temperatures ... they drop to 9.6°C ... autumn is here!

On Wednesday, March 26, we wake up to beautiful sunshine.



We spot some caterpillars that follow each other head-to-bum.

If the leader stops all other ones stop too.

They are grouping to leave the trees and start travelling.

[Click here for a movie](#), of the caterpillars (file type: .wmv, size: 6'389 KB).

Then we continue on towards Lake Muir, find a small track that should lead through the swamps to the Highway.

We find fresh tire marks on the track and wonder if the ranger is around.

The track suddenly ends at the **Tordit-Gurru Lagoon** and there we find a car with two bird watchers.

As there is no way around the lake we have no other choice than to turn around and head back to the main track on **Myalgelup Road**.

We pass a dry **Lake Muir** and reach the **Muir Highway** again.

We continue to **Manjimup** where we turn into **Graphite Road** to visit the "**One Tree Bridge**".

It's a shame the bridge is not presented better.

It's just placed on an open space in the forest, no explanation or history on it, just lots about the surrounding Karris, which is interesting too but not what we expected.

We continue on to **Nannup** where we turn into the Scenic Drive following the **Blackwood River** to **Ballinup**.

On the way we see lots of cows with very young calves.

Then we reach **Donnybrook**, continue on to **Bunbury** and then to **Australind** where we head out to the **Leschenault Peninsula Conservation Park**.

We spot many different water birds but also see the warning signs regarding the mosquitoes carrying the Ross River Fever in spring and early summer.

It's the wrong time of the year for the fever but boy, are those mosquitoes hungry!!!

We decide to have a look at the birds in the morning.



On Thursday morning we equip ourselves with the binoculars, the Slater Bird Guide, the cameras and go bird -watching.

But somehow we must have picked the wrong time of the day, the wrong water level or what ever.

Not too many birds can be seen except a lot of cormorants, each of them sitting on its pole ... looks really funny.



So we head down to the beach and find a warning sign about Hot Ash.

Strange thought that a bush fire can ignite some coal in the ground and that this continues on burning even if it is covered with soil and no oxygen gets to it ...

We learn that there are large such "coal mine fires" around the globe which can't get extinguished and which may burn for decades.



Susi tries her luck a bit further down towards the crossing and actually spots a few birds.

But the birds head off as soon as they spot Susi.

Well, she is wearing a bright yellow T-Shirt, which probably does not really help if one wants to watch birds

So we leave the estuary and drive north to Perth where we will prepare for the next trip.

No liability for timeliness, integrity and correctness of this document is taken.

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