

Easter 2005 Trip Report.

The trip was advertised as *"A leisurely high country sojourn taking in the scenery and atmosphere of the good old Aussie bush. A few tricky bits included for good measure."* and that is exactly what it was.

Paul and Maxine (Toyota 80 series), Colin and Narelle (Nissan GU 4.2) and myself Andy (Nissan GU 3 lt) all met at Pineapple Flat on Thursday evening. By the time I arrived, the others had already set up camp. I was a bit disappointed there was no fire.

On the way down the track I had stopped to gather some fire wood that must have fallen off someone's trailer, so there was no excuse to go without any longer. As I set up my swag, the others put my wood to good use and we were all warm for some drinks and conversation before bed.



Paul and Maxine climbing the Stairs.

After a good nights sleep we awoke to a near freezing morning. Some breakfast, a safety briefing and some discussion about directions and waypoints and we were off. Passing Kings Hut we proceeded up Speculation Road to the Staircase. We had to stop twice along the way. Once to allow a platypus to cross the road, and then to clear a fallen tree off the track. My new winch, Paul's Chainsaw and some careful planning saw the track cleared. We all climbed the Stairs then lunched at pretty Lake Cobbler. A short walk to the dry Dandongadale Falls then off to Abbeyard. There were lots of campers in that area as it's accessible by 2wd cars. While I practiced some radio communications techniques, Paul showed us the finer details of a three point turn in the middle of the Buffalo River. A pleasant campsite was found near the river and we all had an enjoyable dinner cooked on the open fire complimented with a few beverages and some interesting conversation.

After a goodnights sleep and a hearty breakfast, we headed back into the mountains travelling over the Barry Range down to Riley Creek Track. Clawing our way up the relatively steep Water Spur Track found us having lunch on Mount Sarah at Guys Hut. After some gathering of firewood for the evenings roast, we dropped down the steep Hart Spur Tk into Wonnangatta Valley.



After setting up the shower tent in front of the Nissan, we all took turns to rid ourselves of several kilos of dust.

After another sleep interrupted only by the changing of batteries in the swag's smoke detectors, we woke to a pleasant morning in the valley. After a short walk to the cemetery and homestead along with some discussion about modifying kitchen utensils to stop eggs leaking over the bbq plate, we were once again creating dust on the tracks. Zig Zagging our way up Zeka Spur track, we saw an unfortunate Range Rover which had recently rolled down the track. Roof very damaged but politely parked just off the side of the track. It would make for some interesting recovery work as it was on a steep



Paul lifting a wheel.

section. The drive up Zeka was quiet and peaceful and free of traffic until we pulled over to let some cars down the track. 3 groups about 15 minutes and 17 cars later we again headed uphill to Howitt Hut for Lunch. It was here that Paul and Maxine said their farewells and headed for home via Licola.

The remaining entourage including myself, descended and bounced the rough King Billy Road and proceeded to the Upper Jamieson Hut for our last night on the road. A quaint little camp site next to the Jamieson River was found to be most peaceful. A fifteen minute cloud breaking drizzling session just on dusk was not enough to deter the fire from providing warmth.



Easter Monday saw us having a quick breakfast of near stale hot cross buns. With the realization that there was not enough time to fully complete the proposed route, we decided to cut it short. After heading along a few kilometres of freshly graded Low Saddle Rd, it was disappointing to cross a small bridge and find the track very overgrown. Scratching our way up to Mt Sunday we then headed through a few bog holes down to Wrens Flat then into Jamieson for the run home via Mansfield. In Jamieson, we removed a tinny little stone from behind Colin's front disc which was making the biggest squealing noise I had heard all weekend.



Total trip was about 340 Kms round trip from Mansfield.

Tracks were of varying standards and conditions. Most were very good and freshly graded. Zeka was a bit chopped up, King Billy was rough and Low Saddle Rd and Mt Sunday Rd were both overgrown.

Participants were well prepared for all occasions and enjoyed the relatively short relaxing days of driving.

Campfire conversation confirmed the need for some to seek therapy and a few laughs were had along the way.

As usual, the sky provided a great show of stars and the full moon was a pleasant sight to see.

Only 2 unscheduled "U" turns were encountered. Many thanks to Narelle for displaying excellent navigation skills.

We were wrong in assuming the group behind us would help with this log near the Stairs. They happily stood by and watched

I would like to thank Colin, Narelle, Paul and Maxine for attending and making the weekend an enjoyable one.

Andy.

