

Tasmania with City West 4x4 Club

After several years of not being able to take up the offer to join this trip, we were keen to make the 2010 Easter Tassie Trip. Our plan was to start a little earlier than the City West Crew, and have a look around the Eastern side of Tasmania, a state we had never visited before. Unfortunately last minute car problems saw us arriving at Devonport only a day early. This was just enough time to do a leisurely round trip through Launceston and back to Devonport.

Four vehicles were perched waiting for us on the side of the highway just out of Devonport – or was it a nature call? From here we commenced our drive to Rebecca Creek, picking up supplies and fuel along the way. We were bemused at the sign at the campsite ‘Camp Elsewhere’, and were glad that we had an invitation by the local Braddon Club to enter. We weren’t sure however that we were at the right spot as there were many well fitted caravans, lots of quad bikes and a several dogs roaming around amongst some happy holiday campers. A restful afternoon however found us meeting a great bunch of 4x4 enthusiasts, who made a real effort to welcome us to their home turf.



The first day of our 4x4 adventures was a drive along the beach of the West Coast to Sandy Cape. We learnt what the Quad bikes were for as we saw the children having as much fun as the adults driving along the beach and up and down the sand dunes. We stopped at the Enterprise River for lunch and then returned along the same route. The tide had begun to rise by this time, so the river crossings became far more interesting, and we were glad of the expertise of the locals.

A planned detour, following the tracks of those in front so as to miss the stretch of quick sand, took us along some interesting sand dunes to a spectacular lookout above a lake on the Wild Wave River, which was nestled in a hidden valley between the dunes. We never would have found it on our own. We were kept entertained on our trip home, as at other times throughout the trip, as the driver of a certain gold Patrol was clearly enjoying searching out challenges along the way –we were warned not to follow (not sure why?)



The 2nd day saw us enjoying spectacular views from the top of Mt Balfour. It was just as well the views were so good, as Irene wasn’t too happy about the black grimy water that seeped into her side of the vehicle whilst travelling along the worst of the ‘Bog Holes’ along the track. Shunt’s petrol vehicle didn’t like this section either, with water creating havoc with the distributor leads.

The steep descent down the other side of Balfour was enjoyed so much that several participants just HAD to turn around and climb back up. This proved quite entertaining for the spectators below as the ascent was not completely straight forward for at least one vehicle, and the ensuing descent saw another vehicle coming down side on for a brief moment.

A leisurely drive took us to the old mining town of Balfour. There was a new building in progress, but the only remains of the old township was the cemetery, which we *eventually* found. Thanks for the directions guys! After a little bit of searching the group also found the airstrip, which was in surprisingly good condition.



The 3rd day took us through some lovely countryside and over the Fatman Barge to cross Pieman River at Corinna. We arrived at Zeehan mid afternoon and whilst the crew set up camp we explored the excellent museum. This was followed by an expedition to the Spray Tunnel, where we dutifully travelled its length and then marvelled at its creation during the mining era. We then thoroughly enjoyed exploring around some tracks and mines in this area, before returning to camp for a nice hot shower.

Montezuma Falls was the destination of the 4th day. This was a fairytale type of drive through beautifully ferned rainforest country which formed a canopy over the vehicles for much of the drive. In some areas the bush was so thick that the lack of light saw very little undergrowth able to survive. As we were following the old railway line there were several narrow cuttings along the way. We even saw some of the old rail sleepers still embedded in the track.

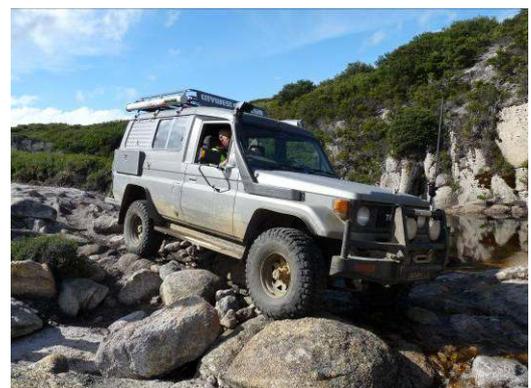


A short walk was followed by all intrepid participants taking the nerve wracking walk across the suspension bridge to view the spectacular falls. How a train track was created across this steep valley so long ago is hard to imagine. The disused beams with nails still intact can still be seen as proof of its existence.



A short detour ended up being a bit longer than expected. A very interesting track which ended in a bog hole that was gallantly attempted by Clint after Woody was pulled out, but even he had to admit defeat. We headed back to camp after this, but the boys played on!

Climies Track, led this time by Shunt, was the next challenge, and it was clear that the crew who had travelled here on past expeditions were really looking forward to this one. We were not disappointed by their expectations. The track itself gave us heaps of challenge, with plenty of eroded and rocky sections where good wheel placement was continually required to ensure a safe journey. The river crossing at Granite Creek was certainly one such spot. Vehicles were guided expertly to the other side by our trip leader, and everyone stopped for lunch happy travellers.



Exploration was the name of the game as Clint took some time out the front. His trip leading skills came to the fore as he guided us to a spectacular view of the ocean from a rock ledge perched on a cliff top. This was followed by the discovery of an interesting Tin mining site. Unfortunately the track was too deeply eroded to take us all the way, but it was worth the walk to explore.



The day was finished off with a leisurely drive down to the seaside village of Trial Harbour and then back once again to our campsite at Zeehan.

The following day is a story of its own, and I'm sure will be told expertly by the City West crew. Sufficient to say that, whilst we enjoyed a leisurely non-four wheel tourist drive to Strahan and Queenstown (due to Irene's back giving trouble), the boys drove up to Pieman Heads and back. We were greeted the next day with tales of a true Steve Irwin style expedition. We can all be proud of the boys for their Dolphin life saving capabilities. Well done!



Before meeting back up with the crew, we did manage to do a bit of sightseeing, taking in some lovely short walks and waterfalls on the way to Derwent Bridge. Here we stopped in briefly to view 'The Wall' – some exceptional wood carving expertise that is well worth seeing!!

We caught up again at the edge of the Great Lake and then travelled towards Deloraine, travelling through some thick fog which had formed suddenly in the valleys beyond. A very enjoyable meal at the local hotel finished off a very enjoyable Easter trip. Well nearly. The next day on Woody's advice we enjoyed a trip out to the King Solomon Caves – another feature really worth visiting. All that was left was the trip home on the Spirit of Tasmania and our desire to return in the near future.

Thanks Woody for introducing us to a 4x4 Mecca, and to all the crew for a wonderful trip – we will be back!

Noel and Irene Ham
Wangaratta 4x4 Club

