

Gday...

After checking out a campsite in the Warby Range State Park, and confirming I should be able to get the caravan safely into it, I picked up the van and left the civilisation of Wangaratta and headed off to the isolation at Wenham Camp for a few days of rejuvenation and bushwalking. It was at the end of 5km of fairly good bush dirt road, with a narrow, rough track about 500metres off into the camp. Known locally as the Warbys, the area is a steep scarped range with a combination of excellent viewing points along the ridges and an outstanding variety of birdlife and wildflowers.

"Yer a bit brave bringin' that big van in 'ere, ain't ya?" The voice came from behind me as I was setting the awning up on the caravan. I had heard a vehicle arrive and I turned to see a Ranger approaching with a big grin on his face. After chatting about the state of the track into the camp he volunteered that he had just bought a van about the same size preparing for his pending retirement later in the year. He had not thought of bringing it into Wenham Camp for a test run and now thinks he just may bring it in next weekend.

After the team of rangers finished their cleanup work, I was left as the only inhabitant with only the chortling magpies as company.



I was looking forward to experiencing the walking tracks from Wenham Camp – each about 9km in length. Of course the walks would not have been any fun without some photos. All the walks were rated as medium. However, my fitness levels were occasionally tested with the climbs back up from the gullies and up to Salisbury Falls.

O'Brien's Falls



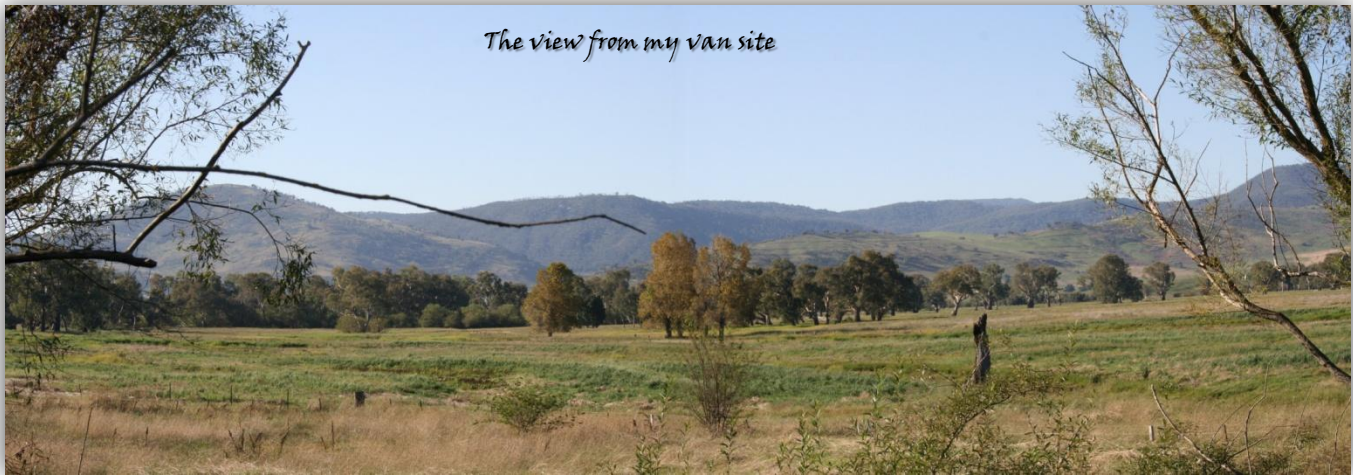
The view from Kwat Kwat Lookout



Except for my last night when three separate campers arrived and set up, I had the bush camp to myself. I really enjoyed the quiet isolation.

I left Wangaratta and headed through Beechworth (a lovely quaint country town proudly displaying its heritage with lovely old buildings in the main street), Yackandandah (smaller than Beechworth but equally quaint and giving a feeling for the 'old days'), Tallangatta to Tintildra.

The Murray Valley Highway from Tallangatta to Cudgewa along Lake Hume was so enjoyable – so much water and the mountains hovering over the highway so lush and green. I stayed in the Tintildra Caravan Park on the Murray River. It was a really nice park, set in a bush-like setting with grass and many trees. I was surprised that I was the only camper there for my week-long stay – tranquillity in a van park ... unusual.



Tintildra is a tiny village situated beneath the Snowy Mountains on the southern banks of the Murray River. Tintildra experienced a boom period in its early days as a hand-hauled punt, established across the river in 1864, was the only one on the Upper Murray and thus drew much traffic to the new town. As it was on the main north-south route and being at the border it had a customs house to collect duties on interstate goods. It also had the only supply store in the district; the post office, which opened within the store in 1867, a doctor, blacksmith and wheelwright, and the local Road Board met there as well. Today it has a population of 200 and only supports a pub and a general store.

Tintildra General Store in Main St, built in 1864, was the first substantial dwelling at Tintildra. The store is constructed from columns of red gum which support red-gum beams, red-gum rafters and wooden shingles. The walls are vertical slats of red Stringybark. All the wood was cut locally. The store remains in its original condition and has been given heritage listing. The store is still operating as the General Store and the local museum as well. I enjoyed absorbing the history of the place.

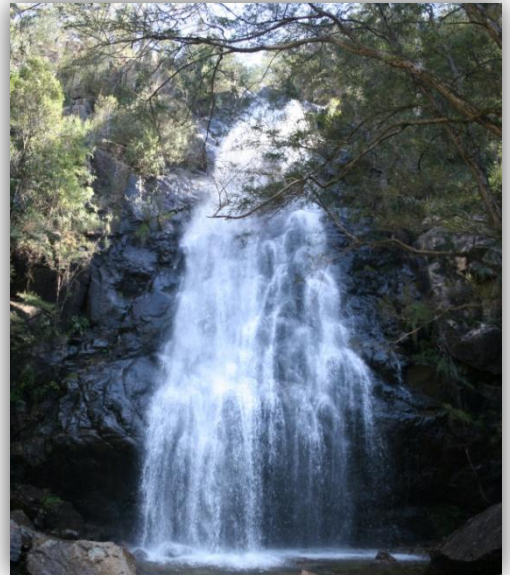


Nearby is the Burrowa-Pine Mountain National Park, a steep, rocky remote and highly scenic area consisting of two rugged and contrasting mountains linked by a narrow ridge. With a number of lookouts and waterfalls it sounded like the sort of place I should experience.

I set my agenda to visit the Bluff Falls where water cascades over Cudgewa Bluff into a tranquil grotto below. The walk was not rated and was very good following Bluff Creek. However, the last Km was the climb to the Cudgewa Bluff and was very steep, rocky and slippery. My knees really knew they had a day out. The amount of water coming over the falls was unusual for this time of year due to the very wet summer the area has experienced. At least I got some good photos (well, I think I did).



I also did some driving on the 4X4 tracks through the park to Pine Mountain. They were mostly in very good condition except where badly eroded from the running water from the recent floods and summer rains.



On the drive from Wangaratta to Tintildra, I had stopped for morning tea near Yackandandah and discovered the fridge in the van was making a very loud whirring noise. To cut a long boring story short, the problem turned out to be caused by low current to the fridge due to a faulty plug connection between the Landy and the van. While at Tintildra, I booked into an auto electrician at Corryong for later in the week to have it remedied.

So I moved camp down to Corryong to have the plug fixed and while at the Corryong Van Park I took the opportunity to take a drive, without the van, up to Cabramurra, in the Kosciuszko National Park. Cabramurra is the highest settlement in Australia and is mainly a maintenance centre for the contractors on the Snowy Hydro Electric Scheme. Not much there but the drive through the National Park was well worth it.



Very cold and rainy for this time of year and the unseasonal weather made me relent and book into the Batlow Caravan Park and base myself there to have a look around the area.

Batlow from Weemala Lookout



I spent a day in the Bago State Forest which has a plantation of Sugar Pines which are native to America, particularly the Yosemite National Park. These trees were planted here in 1929 and they are huge – and they grow for more than 400 years so I can only wonder how big they must be when ‘mature’. The floor of the forest was spattered with shafts of broken, soft light and densely covered with pine needles ... and mushrooms – some of the mushrooms were exquisite.

Sugar pine (*Pinus lambertiana*) is native to the west coast of the USA, including the famed Yosemite National Park.

Called “the most princely of the genus” by its discoverer, David Douglas, sugar pine is the tallest and largest of all pines. In October 1826 he wrote “I shall here state the dimensions of the largest I could find among several that had been blown down by the wind. At 3 feet from the ground its circumference is 57 feet 9 inches (560cm diameter) ... the extreme length 245 feet (75m).”

It has been suggested that in a natural forest some specimens may grow as old as 800 years of age.



I hope that has been at least a bit interesting and perhaps informative.

