



I CROSSED THE NULLARBOR



Gday...

Heading out of Ceduna I eagerly looked forward to seeing places and countryside I had not experienced before. The plan was to take my time and visit every roadhouse between Ceduna and Norseman and to try and visit all the “side sights” the journey would offer.

The first stop was the small township of Penong, with little more than a General Store, Roadhouse and the typical country pub and the van park which was quite new and very good value.



Water has always been the most precious commodity needed for survival and to allow settlers to develop the land. Early settlers at Penong each drilled a bore on their land and installed a windmill. The town is peppered with these great Aussie icons which still provide water to today's residents.

20km south of Penong is Cactus Beach, apparently a world renowned surf beach so I took some tucker with me and headed off for the day.



Above – River heading into the sand dunes before reaching Cactus Beach.
Below – Cactus Beach



It seems everywhere I go, my Lizard Spirit attracts favourite critters. Each of these shinglebacks seemed to appear as soon as I walked along a bush track.



I moved on from Penong and after setting up camp at the Nundroo Roadhouse, I headed to Fowler's Bay and then drove around the coast to Mexican Hat Beach. The ocean here comes in with very big waves which crash onto the shore with such power.

It was an impressive beach and because of the big and very noisy waves I called it "Powerful Beach".

Some more views of Mexican Hat Beach



I spent a couple of nights at the Nullarbor Roadhouse as I was were keen to visit the Whale Watching Centre at the Head of Bight, even though I knew I was a bit too early for the whales.

It was worth it to see how they have the place laid out for viewing and to see the scenery of the Head and the Bunda Cliffs.

It would have been more enjoyable if the weather had been not so windy and chilly.



Road sign at the Nullarbor Roadhouse

Bunda Cliffs at Head of Great Australian Bight



Head of Great Australian Bight

The vegetation has been fascinating – particularly as it changes constantly. I had travelled through scrub trees, stunted bushes, spinifex grass, and what looked like “fields of broccoli”.

The bluish-green, round bushes, less than a metre high did look like broccoli heads.

It is very easy to feel isolated on the Nullarbor Plain with the endless sky and the road disappearing into the horizon through the broad, treeless plain.



Decided to spend a couple of nights at the Border Village van park so I could consume the remaining fruit and vegetables I was carrying – and to cook and freeze what I could not consume – rather than surrender them to the Border Quarantine Station.

Eucla is only 12km over the border into WA and is renowned for the ruins of the Old Telegraph Station which was opened in 1877 and helped to link WA with the rest of Australia and the world. So a visit was definitely on the agenda.





There was a smattering of colourful flora in the area providing a nice contrast to the sand and sparse coastal growth.

I have been surprised how little wildlife has been seen either when driving along the Nullarbor Highway or when off sightseeing. There was even very little 'road-kill' as well.

This feathered friend was wandering around the Old Telegraph Station with its mate and seemed quite oblivious to me.



With fresh enthusiasm, I left the Border Village behind, heading further westward. Having spent my nights camped at the various roadhouses on the way through the SA part of the Nullarbor and thought I should experience the WA "wilderness" on the way to Norseman.

The first night in WA was spent at a place called Jilah Rock, tucked way back in the bush. It was refreshing to be in a natural environment, with heaps of firewood handy for a good cooking fire and to warm the night. The weather was fantastic as well with warm sun and little wind. The night was very clear and I huddled around the inviting fire, studying the night sky for shooting stars, satellites and airplanes before tucking myself into bed.

The silence of this spot was so rejuvenating after sharing nights at the roadhouses with other travellers.



Eyre Telegraph Station - 1897



The Eyre Bird Observatory, south of Cocklebiddy WA, is housed in the old Telegraph Station. The track into the observatory is 30km of well formed hard, dirt, followed by 12km of a very sandy, corrugated track which is definitely 4X4 only. The Landy revelled in the drive – although I was a little cautious about taking it on. I am glad I did as it was a good, albeit challenging, drive.



Eyre Telegraph Station - 2012

Just past the Caiguna Roadhouse is the longest straight road in Australia. About a third of a way along this bit of road I stopped to spend the night at a bush camp at Moodini Bluff.

Once again, being tucked in the bush by myself I was able to absorb the atmosphere and relax.

While setting up, I was greeted by a bunch of little birds which were almost tame. They must be regularly fed by passing travellers like myself and they were keen to accept some crumbs.



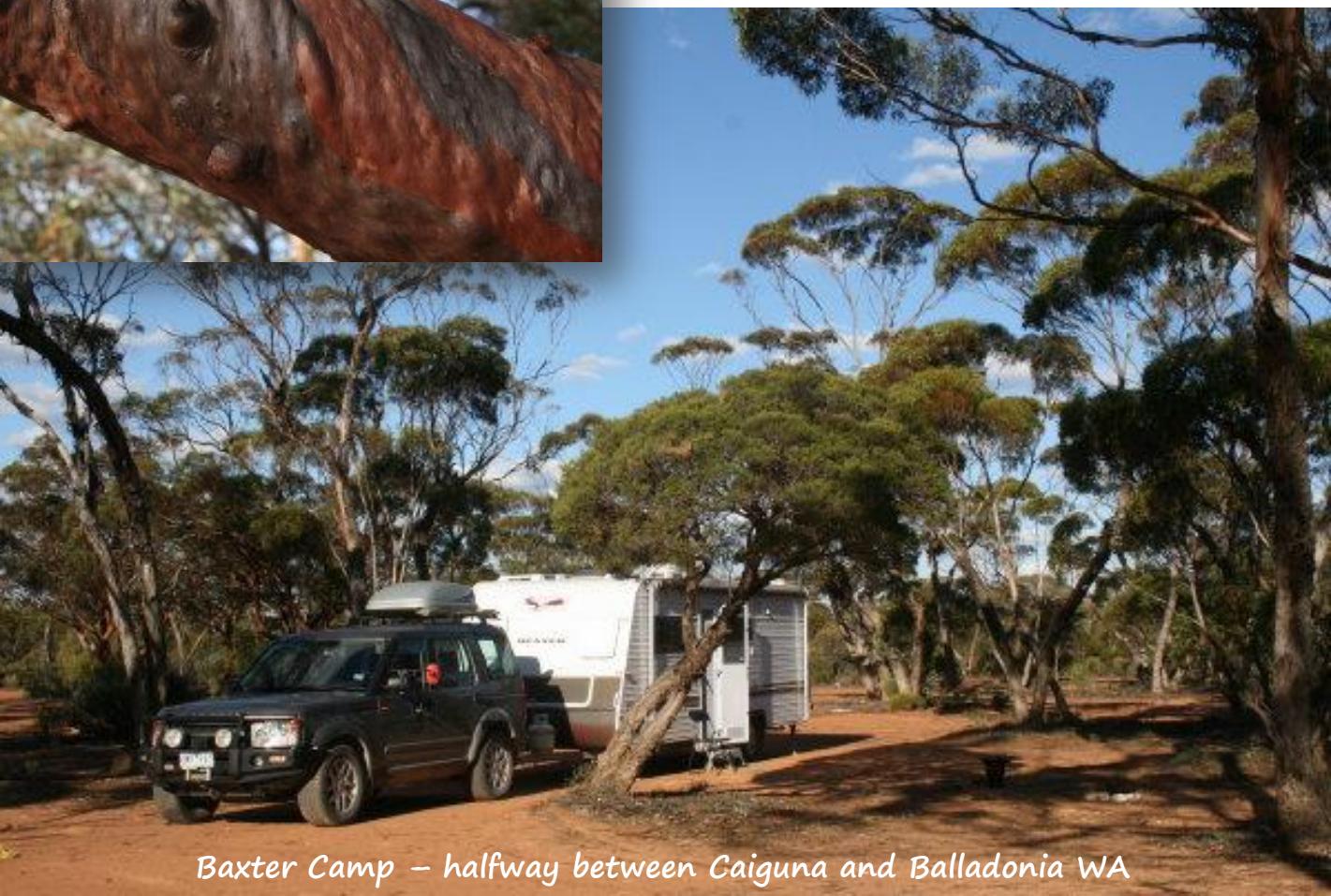
Sunset at Moodini Bluff WA



Beyond the Nullarbor Plain and closer to Balladonia and Norseman, I became intrigued in these red trees.

This example was at my bush camp at Baxter.

I now know they are called Gimlet trees – indigenous to the SW of WA.



Baxter Camp – halfway between Caiguna and Balladonia WA



This is called the “Shoe Tree” and is at the western end of the longest straight road in Australia.



Just after the end of the longest straight road and before reaching Balladonia is another old Telegraph Station built in the late 1800s.

Unfortunately, it is now closed to the public and I had to view it through a security fence. This was disappointing because as can be seen in the photo, it appeared to be in really good condition.

I was quite surprised that some of the 'tourist attractions' listed in the various brochures I had picked up were either not signposted and very hard to find or no longer available for the general public to view.

Their tourist mob need to do a complete review.

About 70km west of Balladonia Roadhouse is a feature called Newmans Rocks. It is a really large flat rock with sufficient elevation to provide a commanding view of the surrounding country side. The view below is of the adjacent salt lake near Newmans Rocks. It is another good bush camping spot.



Norseman lies at the western end of the Eyre Highway which is in essence the end of the “Nullarbor Crossing”.

I set the van up at the only van park in town and began the inevitable domestic duties that had so gladly been neglected on the crossing. Clothes needed washing, the van needed cleaning and mats and floors dusted. Oh, of course, I must admit I was also looking forward to luxuriating in having long HOT showers and washing hair properly.

It is always fantastic to live in bush camps but once we get to these luxuries they become much appreciated.

I visited the Information Centre to find out about the area and were told about an agate gem field about 10km out of town where people could camp with their van. It was suggested there was lots of agate there, although the “good stuff” may be hard to find. The weather was forecast to be fine and sunny in the mid 20s for the coming week so I re-stocked the larder and headed bush.



Camp in the Norseman Gem Fields

There was this fantastic web right next to my camp and the skilful worker who had created it is on the right.

I just love spiders.



There were heaps of agate examples, but despite my diligence, the elusive valuable stone kept itself hidden. I ended up with buckets full of rocks and then patiently spent time sorting, splitting, chipping, cleaning and sometimes discarding rocks.



The agate rock, when split or chipped, often has sharp edges. I ended up with fingers with small nicks in them. Band-aids became the solution. Next time I will have to get some sensible 'fossicking' gloves. Above are some examples of the discoveries, and although there were quite a lot displaying 'colour', none were just what I wanted.



These were probably the best examples of the variety of agate found. However, they have no actual 'value' other than looking very good.

I spent six days looking for agate and absolutely enjoyed myself. The camp spot was fantastic, completely alone and the weather was perfect. If only there had been a creek bubbling nearby it would have been perfect!

So, with the van now loaded down with heaps of rocks – either in bottles or boxes – I headed to Coolgardie to pick up some letters and then onto Kalgoorlie for a "big city" re-stocking the larder.



At left is a Google satellite view of Kalgoorlie showing what is known locally as the "SuperPit" – an open cut mine covering a square mile.

This is what has happened to the spot where Paddy Hannan found the first nugget. It is apparently still the richest gold mine in the world.

I must admit it was pretty impressive and almost impossible to capture with a still camera.

However, below is my effort.



I wonder what the next journey will provide.



*I don't know where I'm going....
But I know where I've been !*