

Lorraine's January - February Blog

Christmas, New Year, School holidays are now all over, we have finished hiding in the centre of the state, and have now continued on our way.

Christmas and New Year was spent camping on private property just outside of Mt Field National Park. The owner, Adrian, is a bit quirky, and has opened up his property to campers. He is a



landscape gardener by trade, and has used his quirky sense of humour to landscape accordingly – upside down trees with wheel barrows growing on top, crazy golf – interesting place to camp.



From this base, we were able to explore Mt Field National Park and drove out to Strathgordon along the Gordon River Road (which has been closed due to fires almost ever since we were there).



At the Gordon Dam we walked down – and up – the steps to the dam wall, and picnicked 50 metres below the water level for lunch. Abseilers enjoy assailing over the dam wall, a 240 metre drop, and we have seen on TV, a couple of “dudes” who do long shots with a basket ball, in an effort to get the ball through the hoop from some ridiculous distance, well, this is one of the spots they used.



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Christmas Day was quiet, we had seafood pancakes for breakfast, prawns, ham, smoked chicken and salad for dinner, then later had our plum pudding.

Pretty nice camp food. New Year just as quiet, about 15 caravans on site, all grey nomads so fairly quiet.



(Footnote: 4/4/16 Made bread from the flour from the mill. Yummy bread)

We stayed in Hobart caching with our friends from Western Australia, and drove down the Channels and spent a few days on Bruny Island.

We met another grey nomad couple who put us up on their block at Huonville for a week or so, David and Jackie, they also own a sailing boat, and took us out one day along the Huon River. That was a lot of fun. I even got to take control of the tiller.



The school holidays were filled wandering around the centre of the island – the great lakes district, where we were given a brown trout - along the Heritage Highway visiting towns like Cambletown, Ross, Oatlands and Kempton.

Oatlands was interesting, there is an old convict built windmill there where they still grind flour. Oatlands is full of old heritage buildings, and a great pub and bakery full of retro stuff.

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Bruny Island is not very large, you can drive on every road in one day, if you want, but we stayed on The Neck, the narrow isthmus separating North Bruny from South Bruny. The camp site was central to drive down to the Bruny Lighthouse and Adventure Bay, both on South Bruny, and to Barnes Bay and Dennes Point in the north.

We had dinner at the Bruny Hotel (I had lobster mornay, John had a lamb curry), a tour of the lighthouse, and visited the old Quarantine Station at Barnes Bay, which was really interesting. I love it when you find these places totally out of the blue. This site, established as early as the 1900s has catered for typhoid outbreaks, Spanish influenza, a German internment camp during WWI, quarantine for Australian soldiers returning after WWI, and as recently as the 1970s, a plant quarantine station.

We really thought that Bruny was going to be a foodie's paradise, so were disappointed to find only a cheesery, an oyster bar, a winery and a whiskey tasting bar.



[Check out all the cheese](#)

Thought there would be a lot more. We did go to the Grand Vewe Sheep cheesery, and had a look at "Get Shucked Oyster Bar", but as I don't eat oysters, it was a bit lost on me.

The whiskey tasting bar was charging \$35.00 each for tastings, so let that go as well. Never mind, we enjoyed our dinner at the Bruny Hotel, and lunch at Dennes Point, where we had "locally sourced (???) Wallaby burgers.

Earlier in the months, we had camped at Penstock Lagoon, a popular spot for anglers. They came and went all day, it was interesting to

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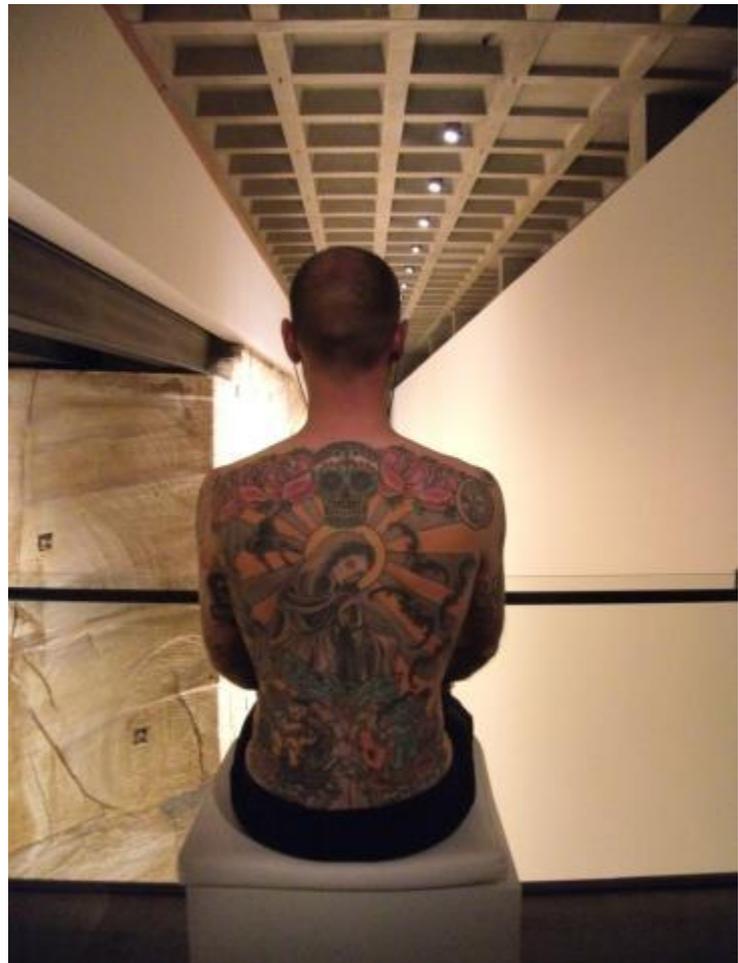
watch, then one offered us a cleaned brown trout. Guess what we had cooking in the Weber that night. The Tasmanian locals we have met so far have all been so friendly.



After Bruny, and back on the mainland, weather not too good, so we set ourselves up at Hobart Showgrounds for a week. We needed to get away from the east where it was flooding, and away from the west where there were bushfires. Even Hobart was affected by the smoke and haze.

Everyone told us we needed to visit MONA (Museum of Old and New Art) This place is bazaar! I really can't explain it, photos don't give it justice, some stuff was rude, some strange, imagine a man, wearing only a pair of shorts, his total body is covered in tattoos.

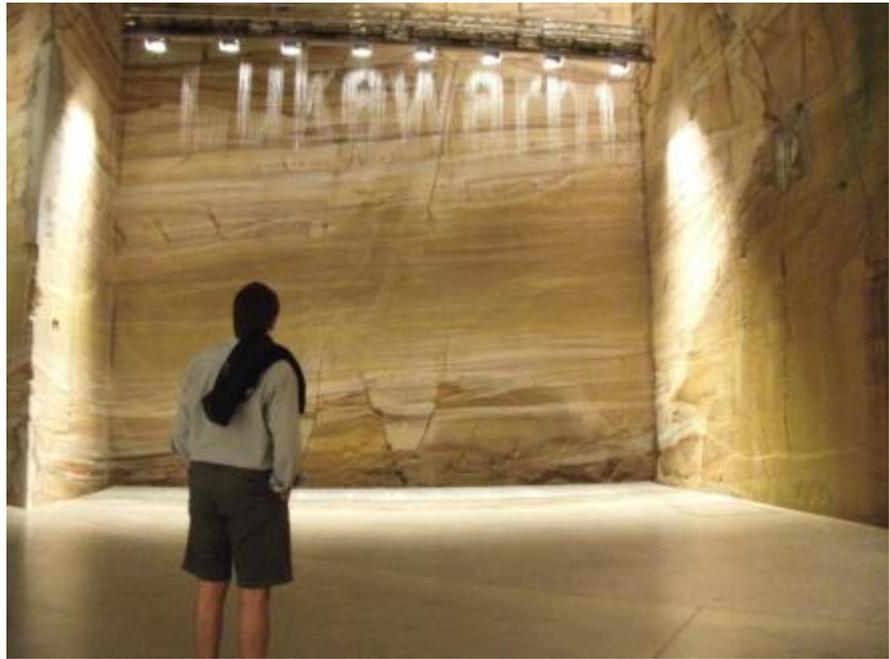
He sits listening to an iPod for hours at a time without moving, while people walk around him reading his "art".



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Then there was the waterfall, which drops “words of water” which have trended in Google over the past 24 hours.

When you are in the gallery, you are actually three stories below the original house; you look up and can see the original footings. Very strange place!



Following on from our visits to Port Arthur and the Coal Mines last month, we went with our friends David and Dea to the Cascades Female Factory, the convict gaol where the women were sent. Another tale of hardship, you should see the size of the solitary cells they had to endure. As you know, many of these convicts were sent to Van Diemen's Land for as little as stealing a handkerchief, for the duration of seven years. Pictures

do not do justice to this site, you need to be there, hear the history and share the feeling of the female convicts who lived there.

David and Dea are avid cachers, and David roped John into doing a 15k trek down Mt Wellington. They collected over 30 caches that day!

In John's Words...

We were camped at the showgrounds with our Caching friends Dave and Dea. And Dave decided that it would be a good idea to go to the cache get

together at the summit of Mount Wellington. So off the 4 of us went to say high to fellow cachers. And after the get together head out for a few Caches. Lorraine and Dea declined. So David and myself took off for a hike down Mount Wellington. It was 11 am and a group of 10 mad cachers looking for a box or 2 of treasures. It was a nice warm day dressed in shorts and mostly down hill. After 5 kilometres we found cache number 1 then 2 and so on. But soon the terrain got a little rugged and the best way to find anything is in a straight line, so we started tramping in the bush, we found 3 and 4. Still going mainly down hill in a straight line we continued for 6 hours 31 caches and very tired calf's, scratched legs and 14.9 kilometres we made it home.



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It is quite amazing the people you meet on the road. Not all are grey nomads, some are young families with children, then of course there are the backpackers.

Two standouts were The Lone Baker and a 75year old walker by the name of Mike Pauly.



A few years ago, when we were in Western Australia, we saw a guy pushing a pram up various out of the way places, pram full of what we thought was all his worldly goods, and a solar panel on the top of the pram. We thought he must have been a hobo. Imagine our surprise when in Oatlands, Tasmania, he arrived and we agreed he was, in fact the same person! He walks to raise awareness of men's mental health. At 75, he wakes each morning suffering from arthritis, walks with the aid of crutches until his limbs warm up, and hikes 40k each day! He was robbed in the Kimberleys, which put his trek back a while, but spent Christmas in Hobart with his wife. If anyone is interested in his blog, here are the details <https://ozsoulwalk.com> It is not entirely up to date, but an interesting read.

The Lone Baker (Ashier is his real name) we met whilst camped down at Gordon. He approached us as we had happy hour, we asked him to join us. Ashier is a baker from Washington DC, who is hitchhiking his way around the world. He has a mutual interest, we both do geocaching, and his target was to find the caches put down in year 2000 in as many states and countries as he can. He travels with no cash, goes dumpster diving for food (or bums meals off gullible/generous people like us), and his air fares have been paid by frequent flyers (or the US equivalent.) We gave him a wine.... or two, made a coffee for him for breakfast ... and breakfast, then to get rid of him, made tuna wraps for lunch. We last saw him hitching his way through The Channels. He has travelled through, I think, 37 different countries, had visited all capital cities in Australia, and currently is somewhere in USA. Here is his profile:

I'm currently hitchhiking my way around the world and geocaching everywhere I go. My first stop was in Ireland where I spent a couple weeks touring the country. I then flew to London and spent a couple weeks touring the United Kingdom, Scotland, and Wales. From there I made my way through the tunnel and up to Amsterdam and then back down to Belgium. After that I headed for France. Then from there I headed to Portugal for a mega event that was happening. After that I headed for Denmark to attend another Mega event. I then made my way North into Sweden and then even further North to Norway. After that I proceeded to work my way back down South through Finland and then ferry hopped my way through a few of the islands to arrive back in Sweden. Next I made my way to Germany for another Mega event and then back to the Netherlands for still another mega event before heading for Luxembourg. After that the next stop along my journey was Switzerland. I then made a quick detour up to Belgium to grab a July 2000 geocache I had overlooked before making my way to

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Croatia passing through Austria and Slovenia along the way. After that my route took me East to Serbia and then through Romania into Moldova. I then couldn't resist going North and crossing into the Ukraine. After that I began heading South passing through Romania once again. I then passed through Bulgaria as I raced for Turkey in order to catch a flight to Australia timing it so that I could attend a mega event happening there. After that I made an extensive 2 month tour through all 8 states of Australia and grabbed the 7 oldest geocaches before flying over to Auckland New Zealand. I then made a 1 month tour of the North and South Island and found the 6 oldest geocaches before flying from Christchurch to Honolulu. After that I flew to Washington State to begin my journey across the United States and tackle

some of the Cache Across America geocaches I still needed. My route took me through Washington and a visit to HQ before heading south to Oregon and the original stash. I then set out for the Texas Mega Event with my route taking me through Idaho, Utah, and New Mexico. I then headed back to New Mexico to go after the CAA geocache I still needed to claim. After that it was off I went to the CAA Oklahoma geocache followed by a couple of year 2000 geocaches I had missed in Texas that were sort of on my route to the CAA Louisiana geocache.

What a busy boy. I wonder if he has changed his clothes yet and did he enjoy his tuna wraps!

That is the end of January... and now on to February.....

Our next destination was down to Cockle Creek, which is the gateway to the most southerly accessible part of Australia. The drive takes you down through the Huon Valley – apples growing in orchards everywhere, blackberries growing wild beside the road. On our way down, we stayed at Geeveston – again, Franklin so we could go to the Wooden Boat Centre, which we missed on our previous visit to the area, then on to Cockle Creek. We had been waiting for school holidays to finish before heading down this way, unbeknown to us, that weekend was another public holiday. Luckily



we arrived on a Wednesday, so managed to get a great camp close to the bay, but by Friday night, it was like a tin of sardines, with motorhomes and other small caravan squeezing in everywhere. Even one of the elite girls schools from Hobart was there for 10 day – it was funny to hear them going into the drop toilet – “Ewe! No Mirror” “Ewe! That is gross” “I am so grossed out” “Ewe, shine your torch down there, it is soooo gross” They were good for a laugh, and

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were in all, happy campers, with plenty of activities to make them sleep well at night.



We walked the track across to South Cape, the most southerly point of Tasmania – it was about 3.5 hours each way, we stopped for lunch, found a cache, then returned, thoroughly exhausted, but happy that we did it. At the cape, the next stop is Antarctica – and you are actually closer to Antarctica than you are to Cairns.

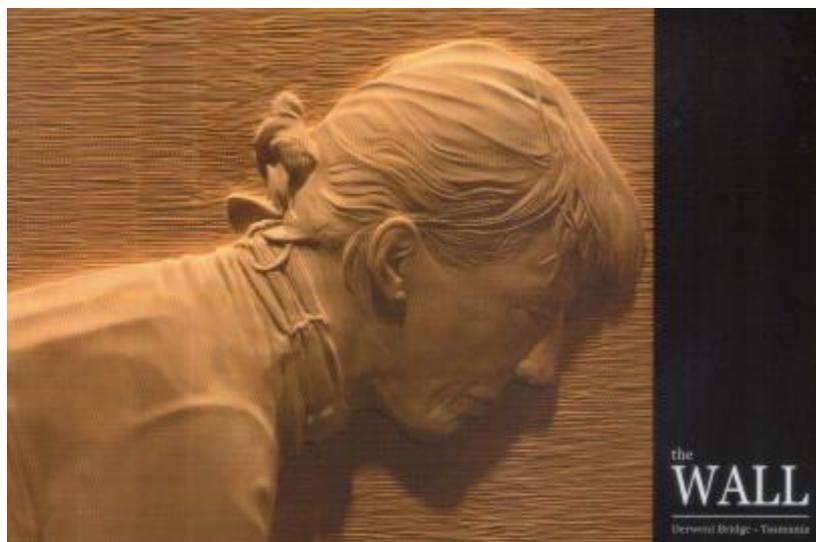
On our way back north, we called into the Hastings Caves, where we did a tour of the caves and had a swim in the thermal pool. We enjoyed the swim so much, that we went and got our bbq lunch

from the van, brought it back to the picnic area to cook, then back in the pool.

Afterwards, I enjoyed a beautiful long hot shower in the change rooms.

Our return back through Hobart was uneventful; we had a two night stopover in New Norfolk before heading onwards towards Derwent Bridge. A lady we met in New Norfolk (Mandy) told us how to make Blackberry Vodka, so as there is an abundance of ripe blackberries around, we made up a batch. John is enjoying it.

We wanted to call into The Wall in the Wilderness, which is a pretty amazing work of art. The Artist is a sculptor who is carving over 100 metres of Huon pine, mostly in a story line based on the workers of the hydro scheme, the forestry industry, and other environmental issues like the plight of the wedge-tail eagle and the extinction of the Thylacine. You are not allowed to take photos in the gallery, so had to buy this postcard. Beautiful work!



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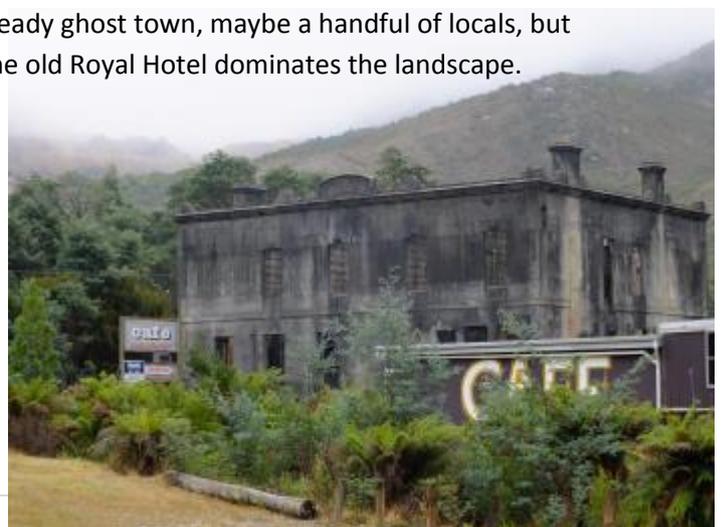
Once we arrived at Lake St Clair, we checked out the pub – as you do – did a ferry ride on the lake to Narcissus, and a hike beside the lake before heading on to the west coast, via the ghost towns of Gormanston and Linda, checking out a few hikes to lookouts (Donahy's, Iron Blow and 99 Bends) and waterfalls (Nelson Falls).



[John taking a breather on the hike beside Lake St Clair](#)

Arriving in Queenstown, we were spoilt for choices when it came to things to check out. There was Spion Kopf Lookout, the Henty Glacial Erratics – a conglomerate of rocks left in position after a glacier went through the area a few year ago (34,600 years ago in actual fact), a couple of ghost towns and some amazing hikes. Queenstown is a dying town, but if they continue to encourage grey nomads, the tourist dollar will certainly go a long way to help.

The nearby towns of Gormanton and Linda are already ghost town, maybe a handful of locals, but mostly deserted streets. In Linda, the remains of the old Royal Hotel dominates the landscape.



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Close by are some great drives to Lake Burbury, we found an old gold mine near a lookout (thanks to caching). We were able to walk in about 100 metres for a look. Right at the end, was a surprise, someone had painted gold on the walls, it looked real.



Nearby was a short but really steep walk to the junction of the King and Queen Rivers. The Queen River has been affected by the acid that the ore was being washed to expose the gold. The whole area has been affected by this, and the terrain is barren, however, appears to be finally regenerating. Where the two rivers meet, you can see the murky gold water of the Queen meeting the brown tannin stained water of the King. It was quite pretty, despite the steep walk down.



In Queenstown, we camped at The Gravel, an historic football oval, built in 1880 to withstand the heavy rainfall. No grass here, the players had to learn how to fall and roll without getting “gravel rash”. The town is a mix of heritage buildings and old deserted houses, in fact you can buy a house here for around \$60,000.

From Queenstown, we headed into Strahan. This is a small town, with big buck expenditure. On our last visit, we did all the big ticket items, river cruise, wilderness railway, flight up the Gordon

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Franklin, so this time, we had to work out which was the best \$ per hour spend. The Gordon River Cruise won, we enjoyed a beautiful 5 hours on the river, took part in the Sarah Island Convict Experience, and walked the Heritage Landing in the World Heritage Wilderness. Pretty spectacular!



That night, we saw “The Ship That Never Was”, a show that has been running since 1993, every evening! Audience participation here is imperative, John played the part of Benjamin Russen, a naughty convict/pirate who was part of the conspiracy to steal the “ship”. What a lot of fun.



From Strahan, we headed down to MacQuarie Heads, so we could see Hells Gate, the opening to the harbour. John wanted to see how wild it could get, but it was pretty calm the days we wandered along the beach.

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The dying mining town of Zeehan was just up the road, and our base for the next part of our adventure. We set up in the local caravan park, so we could explore the mining heritage centre, Trial Harbour, Montezuma Falls and the TME Mine and the Spray Tunnel. The heritage centre covers seven hectares of property – land and buildings, which are all part of the museum, with over 30 displays and exhibits covering minerals, a pictorial history of the west, an underground mine simulation, a blacksmith shop, and the Gaiety Theatre which was built in 1898. The theatre is one of the town's grandest buildings, along with the Zeehan School of Mines and Metallurgy building which has an interesting history and is now the doorway to this informative centre.



This streetscape in Zeehan is all of the museum

About 20km to the west of Zeehan, is the small fishing village of Trial Harbour. There are no facilities there, apart from a ruggedly beautiful coastline, and a pretty “shack-scape”; an eclectic mix of old and new. We checked out the Trial Harbour History Room and the nearby Goat Rock - ruggedly beautiful area where the waves crash over the rocks.



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Brother Geoff and S-I-L Anne told us about Montezuma Falls years ago, so we made the pilgrimage accordingly. The three hour return was flat enough for my legs to handle, mostly old tramway tracks, a little bit of boardwalk.

The falls are one of the highest in Tasmania, definitely worth the hike in. Lunch at the fall – hot pumpkin soup – was a treat.

On our way back from the falls, we checked out the TME mine ruins, quite an interesting hike down to the remains of an old mine – a mine with views to die for.

That is the end of the first two months of 2016, March will bring us more surprises, more free camps, and a little closer to our return to the big island.

Still more to see and do! Will be see it all before we move back to the mainland in May?