



Desert Sky News

"It's All About The Experience – Yours and Ours "



Volume 8 Issue 4

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In this Christmas edition newsletter, we have amended some of the departure dates of our 2007 itinerary.



The changes have been necessary due to an overwhelming interest in our new **Wilson's Promontory** trip—in fact the March 23rd trip is fully booked. A second departure date—March 4th has been arranged, with a number of seats already booked. This 9 day trip has the variety of The Grampians, 4 nights at the Promontory Gate Motel in Fish Creek, and a return home along the Great Ocean Road. It will be a busy start to our 2007 Program, and we are really looking forward to it!

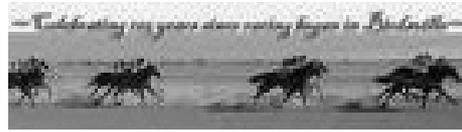
Rat -a -tat , Rat -a -Tat
We're off to Ballarat
With mistletoe and Christmas hat,
Now, what do you think of that?



Yes! - we have our Christmas trip again, and this year we are visiting Ballarat. The trip is fully booked, with many "regulars" joining us again, for 5 days of fun and a great Christmas dinner at the Blackwood Hotel.

We have sent an email to the man in the red suit and, (fingers crossed!), he will find us at Lake Wendouree.

Something a little different for Christmas - The town of Tarlee is a short drive from Adelaide, and on Saturday 2nd and Sunday 3rd December they are holding the second annual Christmas Tree Festival. Entry is \$5, and it is a great opportunity to see the beautiful Tarlee Catholic Church and its magnificent stained glass windows, filled to the brim with Christmas trees that will delight everyone. All proceeds go to the Tarlee/Stockport branch of the Women's & Children's Auxiliary.



A crowd of around 8,000 people helped to celebrate the historic 125 year anniversary of the **Birdsville** races. Some travelled by aircraft and camped under the wing of their planes; others camped in what could only be described as "tent city". Trainers arrived in convoys from Queensland towns such as Oakley and Mount Isa, there were those who travelled from Nyngan and Armidale in New South Wales, and even Gawler and Port Lincoln in South Australia. Visitors, including trainers, set up camps on the river banks—some in luxury and some simply sleeping under the stars.

Father Geoff Scully from St Finbarr's Parish in Quilpie has been making the journey for about 23 years. Twenty of those have been swinging the bookies bag. "One year somebody said David Power needed someone to swing his bag". Father Scully has never looked back and has continued working for bookmakers Chif Kinivan, John Scotton and this year Terry Piccone.

"The marvellous thing about the Birdsville races is when you get 5,000 people moving from every state in Australia, the service stations, the restaurants, motels or caravan parks every one of them, like Quilpie, benefit," Father Scully said. "It's a long way to go for a drink but if you have good company and know what it is like to drive out there, many people enjoy it. I've seen 80 year old women say they are having the time of their lives".

Weaving through the nine horse field, *Silent Encounter* scored a half head victory over rival *Storm Seeker* in the Black Toyota Open Handicap Birdsville Cup. The seven year old had won at Camooweal a week earlier.

Just for the record, *Storm Seeker* ran second and *Silent Encounter* sixth in race 2 at Betoota, while *Smoother* won the Betoota Cup in race 5.

The Tarlee Open Garden Show was well attended this year, with over 200 people visiting the 5 featured home gardens. The Show which was held on Sunday 29th October, coincided with a visit of 6 ladies from Melbourne, who have been on various trips with us, and we visited the Show as part of a day excursion with them.



Part of the group is pictured (left) in the ground of Elizabeth Henry House, a magnificent 140 year old home which was formerly

a Bed and Breakfast, and is now privately owned.

A short drive out of town brought us to another well manicured garden at the farm property Gilbertside. Here, Pam and Mark Hill—(5th Generation owners), even have a "secret garden" surrounded by well trimmed hedges.



Our group in the "Secret Garden" at Gilbertside



(Pictured Left): Barbara on front steps at Gilbertside

It was a most enjoyable day, with proceeds supporting the Red Cross.

Merry Christmas

Jenny and Howard wish all our valued customers a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.



We thank you for your continued interest, support and encouragement, and look forward to travelling with you in 2007!



We have just completed organising the printing of a new range of postcards and table placemats!

Samples of these souvenirs can be found on our website in the photo album section under "merchandise".

The postcards sell for \$1 each and include the bus in the following scenes:

- Sunset at Birdsville
- Merty Merty
- Flinders Ranges
- Wallaroo
- Front of vehicle

A set of 6 placemats is \$20, and includes the scenes:

- Sunset at Birdsville
- Wildflowers at Birdsville
- Moralana—Flinders Ranges
- Mound Springs
- Coongie Lakes Innamincka
- Breakaways Coober Pedy

Other souvenirs include:

- The famous Desert Sky Tawny Port - (\$8 bottle)
- engraved pens (\$5),
- 10th Year DVD (\$10).

Just for interest



It was lovely to have 6 ladies from Melbourne visit us in November for the important "Betoota Progress Association" AGM at the Arkaba Hotel.

During their 3 day stay in Adelaide, we enjoyed a great day out visiting the Open Garden Show at Tarlee, lunch at Kapunda and touring the Barossa Valley. Valma has sent a short summary of the AGM:

They gathered in from far and wide, The founders of the town, To hold the A.G. Meeting here, And plan the next time down.

In dear old 'Toota'; with new loo, Development's begun - "We'll need the water on at first, Wind power, and the Sun .

For solar energy," said Brian. We'll call the experts in, And soon the town'll be booming, With houses built of tin.

An airport, school and Cop Shop, To make our haven safe, Also a bank, and church to pray; To educate, a TAFE.

We have the staff and populace Among our group so true With Jen and Howard at the helm, Our Paradise's "True blue".

© Valma Royle

Iconic outback pub, the Birdsville Hotel, is poised to change hands for the first time in more than 25 years.

The pub, built in 1884, is for sale in an expressions-of-interest campaign closing next month.

Publican Jo Fort says she, husband Kym and co-owners David and Nell Brook have decided the time is right. The four were part of a group of buyers who stepped in to resurrect the pub, in the small township about 12km inside the western Queensland border, after it was gutted by fire in 1979.

Entrepreneur Dick Smith had owned it only a day when the disaster hit. He sold it immediately.

Itinerary for 2007



Back O'Bourke (9 days) - \$1770 pp	Saturday	April 14
Birdsville/Innamincka (9 days) - \$1875 pp	Sunday Tuesday	July 15 August 14
Coonawarra—A Brilliant Blend! (5 days) - \$650 pp	Saturday	November 3
Clare Valley & Dares Hill Circuit (2 days) - \$295	Tuesday	June 19
Cooper Creek/Innamincka (7 days) - \$1450 pp	Tuesday	July 3
Echuca/Moama & The Barmah Wetlands (5 days) - \$820 pp	Thursday	May 31
Explore Mungo National Pk (5 days) - \$820pp	Saturday	May 19
Flinders Ranges/Arkaroola (5 days) - \$925 pp Including "Ridgetop Tour"	Thursday Thursday	September 20 October 18
Gawler Ranges (5 days) - \$785 pp	Tuesday	September 4
Kangaroo Island (4 days) - \$825 pp	Thursday Tuesday	February 22 November 13
Skenes Creek/Great Ocean Rd (5 days) - \$865 pp	Thursday	February 15
William Creek & The Painted Desert (9 days) - \$1670 pp	Saturday	April 28
Wilson's Promontory (9 days) - \$1680 pp	Sunday Friday	March 4 March 23
Yorke Peninsula & Innes National Park (4 days) - \$590 pp	Saturday	November 24
Personalised 4WD Tours		
Coongie Lakes & Cooper Creek	7 days	Tuesday July 31
Sky Trek & Flinders Ranges	5 days	Wednesday May 9

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