



Desert Sky News

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



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December 2009

In this Christmas edition newsletter, there are amendments to some of the departure dates of our trips next year.

At this stage we have sufficient bookings on all trips to guarantee departure, and the Personalised 4wd trips to Birdsville/Innamincka and Coongie lakes/Cooper Creek each have 2 seats available.

The past year has been busy for us - partly due to the interest in Lake Eyre, which resulted in a couple of trips to Marree so people could see the rare spectacle of water in the Lake.

The increased interest may also be attributed to the fact that for several itineraries, (eg Birdsville, Arkaroola, and Gawler Ranges), it was the last opportunity to visit these destinations in our bus.

Our most recent trip was to Tumby Bay, and we certainly encountered a variety of weather! Leaving Adelaide on a day forecast to reach a temperature in the high 30's, we enjoyed pleasant cloud cover until lunch at Port Germein.

About 30kms south of Port Augusta, the temperature began to rise dramatically. While the bus was being refuelled, passengers made use of the cooler conditions inside the service station, where the attendant informed us it was 45°, with a strong northerly wind.

After a **short** stop, we made our way to Whyalla.

Travelling down the coast was certainly more comfortable and by the time we reached Cowell, it was considerably cooler and we enjoyed afternoon tea in very pleasant conditions.

The Tumby Bay area, incorporating, Port Neill, Arno Bay and Lipson townships is a picturesque part of the

eastern side of the Eyre Peninsula., Summed up in the local advertising slogan "Experience. ..the hills to the sea".

This was our base for 3 nights, with dinners at the Sea Breeze Hotel — definitely worth a visit!

Trinity Haven Scenic Drive passes a range of beaches and rock headlands before turning inland, and past one of only two known locations of Whibley Wattle (*Acacia Whibleyana*)



Since 2003, Tumby Bay school has grown Whibley's Wattle from seed and strategically planted (translocated) the seedlings on roadsides and private property.

We continued to Poonindie, and St Matthew's Anglican Church, which came perilously close to being destroyed in the 2005 bushfires. Thankfully the building was spared.

A drive up to Winters Hill lookout provided panoramic views over Port Lincoln and across to Boston Island. A Development Plan presently being considered, would see a range of activities on Boston Island including residential and tourism use.

After a town tour and visit to Sleaford Bay, we headed inland to the Tod Reservoir and Museum in the Koppio Hills. How things change! - the temperature began to rise as we headed away from the sea. Arriving at the Reservoir entrance gate, we found it closed due to strong winds and lightning strikes causing "catastrophic" bushfire conditions.

A short distance away is the Koppio Museum, and we decided to go there instead.

On arrival, the power was off, due to a lightning strike and David, who manages the museum was using a generator back-up.

We observed a number of CFS volunteers attending to "spot fires", but fortunately there was no major incident.

A cool change next day, and our friends Jenny and Cor who have been on several trips with us, invited us to their home in Cummins for morning tea. Their hospitality was much appreciated and an added "bonus" was a community trading table in the main street, so we were able to support the town.

We left Cummins for the west coast of the Peninsula - including Greenly, Coles Point and Dutton Bay.

A drive through Coffin Bay National Park to Point Avoid and Golden Island lookout, provided views of high windswept cliffs, massive dunes and sheltered bays.

Our final day began with a difference - we met up with Lowan Vale Ben, a three year old Clydesdale horse!. Ben and his owner Ross Story operate horse and trolley rides for tourists to hear about things of local interest in the Tumby Bay area..

Another attraction is the Excell blacksmith and engineering museum, home of the Brattenising plough which was made in the workshop in the 1930's. The plough helped pave the future of Eyre Peninsula, by its ability to dig up large limestone rocks and boulders during road construction in the region.

Our return home include a stop at Cowell—well known for it's oysters!!

US Schooner Independence American River—Kangaroo Island

I am indebted to Claire Dappert BA Hons (Illinois), MA (East Carolina) for providing information of the US Schooner Independence, which was built near American River, Kangaroo Island.

Claire was the principal investigator for the search for the US Schooner Independence **Construction Site** during 2006. Her research was conducted as part of the PhD research at Flinders University Adelaide.

The US Brig *Union* was outfitted by Fanning & Co. of New York in 1802 for a sealing expedition to the southeast coast of New Holland. Upon reaching the coast in 1803, *Union's* captain, Isaac Pendleton, attained information regarding excellent sealing grounds on Kangaroo Island from the French explorer Nicolas Baudin.

Union set sail for this destination, but arrived after sealing season.

The crew wintered in Union Harbor, known today as American River, where they constructed the 30-ton schooner *Independence*. Upon returning to Sydney for supplies, Pendleton sold a part share of *Independence* to Simeon Lord, a burgeoning Sydney trader. Lord continued the employment of this vessel in the sealskin trade.

The Articles of Agreement listed Isaiah Townsend as master of the vessel. Pendleton also sold his cargo of seal skins to Simeon Lord for which he was to procure payment from the sale of the sandalwood in China. He was to obtain the sandalwood at a secret location in Fiji.

The presence of American vessels in Port Jackson had the Governor of the Colony, Phillip King, worried. He wrote to the Secretary of the State for the Colonies, asking him how far he would be "justified in preventing the American intrusion and the resultant intercourse with them."

King issued a General Order on August 11, 1804 stating: ... no vessel under foreign colours, or belonging to any foreigner, be cleared from this port for any sealing voyage within the limits of this Territory or its dependencies, and for the purpose of returning hither, but that all such vessels after their necessities are relieved, be cleared out from this Port to any other Port of Discharge.

Pendleton, rather than reveal his true destination, cleared Port Jackson for China. John Boston, sailing as supercargo, was to take *Union* to Fiji to procure sandalwood for the China markets, which was to be the first attempt at trading sandalwood with China. While stopping at Tonga for supplies, Pendleton and six other crewmen were murdered by the natives. Daniel Wright, who became acting captain, returned to Sydney to report the news and to procure provisions.

Then he continued the expedition to Fiji. *Union* struck a reef along the coast of Fiji near Sandalwood Bay, and those that were not drowned were massacred by the natives.

Independence, on the other hand, did not have to clear Port Jackson for a foreign port because Simeon Lord owned a part share of the vessel, and on 15th June 1805, *Independence* departed Port Jackson for a sealing expedition to the Antipodes Islands, but the vessel was never heard of again. Although the wreck site will probably never be located, its construction site presented an opportunity for a study into US shipbuilding activities in the maritime cultural landscape of Australia

Methodology used in Claire's research consisted of both a pre-disturbance survey and a magnetometer survey. The pre-disturbance survey aimed at locating the site, assessing the environment, particularly local timber species and other economic resources, as well as mapping site limits and significant features. The magnetometer survey was carried out to detect ferrous remains such as remaining structures and blacksmithing debitage.

Although this survey did not find the exact location of the *Independence* construction site, it did establish a methodology for approaching ephemeral shipbuilding locations.

This project also refuted the claim that *Independence* was constructed at the area what is now known as *Independence Point*.



photo: American River

No cultural material was found that could have been directly associated with shipbuilding activities.

Mining at Arkaroola

Marg and Doug Sprigg are appealing to all Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary friends and supporters to please examine the initial report and proposals by the State Government very closely and to note that whilst some areas of the northern Flinders Ranges, in particular Mawson Plateau, are being afforded total protection, the majority of important Arkaroola sites are not.

The deadline to submit objections/suggestions to the proposal is 19 December 2009. This could be the last chance to save the Arkaroola Sanctuary from mining and Marg and Doug ask everyone to carefully consider the matter and to please make written submissions in accordance with page 18 of the report.

The report and proposals can be viewed on our website at www.desertskytours.com/general/arkaroola_mining.pdf

A day in the life of a Tour Director!

Travelling for a living can't be bad, can it? Well according to our hostess Jenny, the life involves a lot of early starts, fine lunches, and spectacular scenery!



6.00AM

Time to wake up. While the guests sleep in, I'm up early to ensure everything is ready for the day. Jobs include filling the thermos' and preparing morning/afternoon teas and Lunch. I organise my own bag and pack the bus before breakfast.

7.15 AM

Breakfast! - but first check everyone is "alive and well"! Breathe a sigh of relief everyone is ok and ready for the new day.

8.15 AM

Quick head count to check all are on board for departure. I learnt very quickly to expect the unexpected - no two trips are ever the same, although the itineraries may be. Provide commentary and point out places of interest.

10:15 AM

Morning tea - The weather plays a huge part in so many ways. If it rains I need shelter, and if it is warmer we are looking for shade. Oh yes— another key point is availability of toilets. Another head count before we continue on our way. This is particularly important at "bush stops"!! Continue with commentary and places of interest.

12:15 PM

Lunch -same weather considerations as above. Set up tables, unpack lunch, ensure any dietary requirements are met. Pack up lunch, find time to visit the "Ladies", then head count before the bus steps are raised. Continue with commentary and places of interest.

3:15 PM

Afternoon Tea - see "morning tea"

5:15 PM

Arrive at overnight accommodation. The road conditions vary all the time and so do the owners of the hotels. The pattern seems to be there is a change every 4 to 5 years, so there is a need to establish new working relationships. Obtain passenger rooming list and confirm everyone has a bed for the night. Unpack the bus. Repeat the time for dinner several times! Quick tidy up before dinner.

7:15 PM

Join guests for dinner. Help waiting staff remind guests what they ordered from menu. Enjoy a delicious meal—a true perk of the job. Sometimes go for an after dinner walk then hit the hay before an early start and another day of touring through Australia's vast and wonderful landscape. Continue with commentary and places of interest.

The Emu Bushes

Our September newsletter included part of an article by Bill Dowling in Friends of the Botanic Gardens Of Adelaide Gazette.

Bill has kindly sent me a "follow up" article about the *Eremophila*, and I thank him and The Friends of The Great Victorian Desert.

The Emu Bush is poorly named - It's not the emus' pick. The emus really can't be blamed - Some species make them sick.

What are these pretty plants that all look nothing like *Gypsophila*? Their blooms will hold you in their thrall, Their genus? *Eremophila*.

They're found all over mainland Oz, Especially in the desert. The flowers look so good because The anthers often exsert.

They're useful, these two hundred plants, For pests and medicine - There's one that kills marauding ants And one treats eyes and skin



At the last count, there were 218 *Eremophila* species, all endemic to mainland Australia and mostly from the arid areas. They are evergreen shrubs or sometimes small trees. The attractive tubular flowers are distinctive, having two asymmetrical lips which are often lobed. The anthers may protrude (exsert) beyond the lips.

The common name, Emu Bush, was applied when it was thought that emus ate many *Eremophila* species and that passage through the emu increased the chances of germination after excretion. It is now known that neither of these things is true. The less-frequently used common name, Poverty Bush, may be more appropriate as it derives from the ability to survive harsh environments. The much more apt scientific name means 'desert-loving'.

While many *Eremophila* species can be found in the Flinders Ranges and places further north, only a few are endemic to the Adelaide area

The Emu Bush is more than just a pretty face.

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The Emu Bushes(continued)

University researchers in Sydney have developed an extract from *Eremophila mitchellii* which shows great promise as a safe treatment for termites (white ants), replacing the toxic chemicals and expensive physical barriers of current treatments.

There is a certain irony in this as *E. mitchellii* is a pest plant in many areas including Western Australia where it is banned. There should be plenty of raw material if, as expected, a new treatment becomes generally available.

The Adnyamathanha people of the northern Flinders Ranges treated skin and eye complaints with *Varti-varka* (*E. longifolia*) bark. This species was also used in burial and initiation ceremonies.

For those wanting to know more, *EREMOPHILA and allied genera – A Monograph of the Myoporaceae* has just become available.

This magnificently produced book is by a world expert on the genus, South Australia's Bob Chinnock.

Friends of The Great Victorian Desert website is www.fgvd.org.au, and the site has a very interesting separate web page on the Oldea Mallee



- *There are seats available on all trips next year, with sufficient bookings at this stage to guarantee all departures.*
- *Wilson's Promontory is the first trip, touring the Grampians, Bass Coast and Gippsland area and returning along the Great Ocean Road. A very interesting 9 days, with a variety of scenery.*
- *Our last "outback" trip in the bus will be to Cooper Creek/Innamincka.*
- *Please note changes to "Personalised Tour" dates.*

**Season's Greetings
and best wishes
for the coming year!**



from Jenny and Howard

Itinerary for 2010



Back O'Bourke (9 days) - \$1875 pp	
Saturday	April 24
Kangaroo Island (4 days) - \$975 pp	
Thursday	March 18
Mungo/Hattah Kulkyn National Parks (5 days) - \$995 pp	
Saturday	April 10
Cooper Creek & Innamincka (7 days) - \$1675 pp	
Thursday	June 24
William Creek & The Painted Desert (9 days) - \$1895 pp	
Saturday	May 15
Wilson's Promontory & Great Ocean Rd (9 days) - \$1875 pp	
Monday	March 1

Personalised 4WD Tours

Birdsville/Innamincka (9 days) \$2925 pp	
Wednesday	August 11
Coongie Lakes & The Cooper Creek (7 days) - \$2045 pp	
Sunday	18th July
Flinders Ranges & "Skytrek" (4 days) - \$1150 pp	
Thursday	August 26
Flinders Ranges & Arkaroola (5 days) - \$1650 pp	
Monday	September 6
Yorke Peninsula & Southern Flinders (5 days) - \$995 pp	
Saturday	October 16

Other Personalised tours in a 4WD vehicle can be arranged on other dates by request!

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