



Desert Sky News

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



Volume 10 Issue 1

Telephone : 08 8356 1874

JANUARY 2008

A very successful Christmas trip "Rumba in Tumba" completed a busy year for us !

Based at the Marina Motel in Tumbay, the 5 day trip explored much of the lower Eyre Peninsula including Port Lincoln, Sleaford and Coffin Bay.

A reasonably smooth Gulf crossing from Wallaroo to Lucky Bay on the SeaSA ferry provided variety—the 2 hour voyage getting us to Cowell for lunch.

Development of the Tumbay Marina has certainly transformed the town, with some impressive recreational water craft moored outside many quality homes, and there are plans to dredge the channel on the western side of the causeway to extend the Marina.

Our meals were well taken care of!

The Boatshed café made us very

welcome, reserving the dining area for

our exclusive use, and the new Port Lincoln Hotel was an ideal venue for Christmas Lunch—the 4 hour sitting included a

diverse menu with two entrees, buffet style main course and desserts !!

Another highlight was the opportunity to have morning tea in Cummins with Jenny and Cor who came on our August 1999 trip to Birdsville. They moved to Cummins some years ago, and it was great to be able to catch up with them again on our way to the western side of the Peninsula to explore Greenly Beach, Coles Point, Dutton Bay and Coffin Bay.

Unfortunately our expectation of sampling the local oysters fell a little short, despite enquiries at the Coffin Bay

General Store. This was Boxing Day, and by now the "tourists" had cleaned the store out, and there were no oysters to be found anywhere. We settled for a plate of the Cowell variety at the Tumbay Bay hotel that night.

Christmas Eve began with a local holding up a green and red aluminium baton to stop traffic. (He must have travelled the Peninsula a bit because the baton had a Venus Bay District logo on it !).



Scene from rear of the pageant

Concerned for our safety, he ushered part of our group across the road to front row seating in the main street for the Christmas pageant.

Satisfied with his efforts, he remarked "You've got to have respect for the elderly"!!

The pageant, in which many local businesses were represented, was a credit to Tumbay Bay, and demonstrated great community spirit.

Acacia Whibleyana - (Whibley's Wattle) is found nowhere else in the world but a couple of isolated populations near Tumbay Bay.

With the help of District Council, we located the stand near a salt pan south of the township and a stop was made to

consider the consequence of taking a walk through the Whibleyana.

A rendition of the "Wibbly Wobbly Walk" - (Jack Charman), was played and sung, with all agreeing it was easier to talk the walk than walk the talk.

The Supper Room of the Tumbay Bay Council proved a convenient venue for the "Rumba" Christmas night and in addition to several people demonstrating their skill at Latin dancing, there was a guest appearance by singer Ricky Valentino and his backing group, a visit by the "Antique Roadshow" and a smorgasboard tea for those who had not succumbed to the rigours of lunch.

The Outback is increasingly emerging as a popular holiday destination, particularly with Queensland Tourism Minister Desley Boyle said the latest National Visitor Survey results for the year to September 2007 showed the Outback attracted an 8 per cent increase in Queensland leisure visitors compared with the previous year.

"Queensland's Outback continues to evolve and mature as a destination. Whether you are in the south west, central west or north west, there's an experience and adventure for everyone".

How to contact us:

✉ **PO Box 683
GLENELG SA 5045**

☎ **08 8356 1874**

📧 **enquiries@desertskytours.com**

🌐 **www.desertskytours.com**

Innamincka's pastoral history

The Cooper Creek, first discovered by Charles Sturt on 13 October 1845, has been a life giver and taker depending on the amount of water, if any, has come down it to reach South Australia's Outback.

It can be dry or a hundred kilometres wide.

Its first white settlers were Customs Officers at Oontoo to collect taxes from drovers who crossed the Queensland border travelling down the Strzelecki Creek. Naturally the drovers who had to wait for stock to be counted developed a thirst for something stronger than the water from the Cooper. In 1871 M.F. Lennon provided that when he opened the Bushman Hotel at Innamincka.

In 1872 the Innamincka cattle station was established which grew until it covered more than 16,000 square kilometres. It was managed for Robert Bostock by Frank Doveton in 1873 and by Henry Colless, JP., from 1874 until 1881, during which time it carried 8,000 head of cattle.

With the increase of stationhands, shearers and other pastoral workers a Store and Post Office was opened in 1877 and in December 1878 Scotty Napier set out from Farina with the first bullock wagon loaded with stores for Innamincka, arriving in April 1879.

In 1879 Thomas Neaylon's line of coaches started a fortnightly service mail run from Beltana to Innamincka, via Leigh's Creek, Mount Lyndhurst, Yeralina, Mount Freeling and Blanchewater. Transport and communication between Innamincka and Farina greatly improved when Afghan cameleers took over and government wells were sunk along the track.

With sly grog sellers, cattle rustlers and other dishonest elements and the occasional friction between Aborigines and station people it was decided that a police camp would be established in the area. Operating from a tent, with horses and camels, the first constables certainly had a difficult and uncomfortable time.

In 1881 Innamincka station and all its cattle were bought by William Campbell, MLC from Melbourne, who paid \$120,000 cash for it all.

Born in Scotland in 1810 he migrated to Australia in 1838 and worked for the McArthur family. In 1882 he returned to England and appointed Alfred Walker as manager who stayed until 1908.

Today Innamincka Station is part of the S. Kidman & Company

Taken from: www.heritage.sa.gov.au

Birdsville snippets

- Some Queensland Towns have recorded above- average rain during 2007, however Birdsville has reported just 65 per cent of its annual average with 107 millimetres.
- The mayor of Diamantina says he is glad the council will no longer have to finance its own medical clinics in Bedourie and Birdsville. The service, which includes two nurses in each town , costs \$800,000 a year, of which the council pays \$120,000. The Queensland State Government has now agreed to cover the council contribution.
- Diamantina Shire Council will provide funding of \$8,7708 to the Betoota Social Club for an Ablution block at the Betoota Racecourse.
- John Menzies (Birdsville Working Museum) commences his 15th year as a Birdsville local. Born in Sydney, he made his way "as a kid" to Bourke and worked for drovers on stations, then travelled up through the Channel Country, The Territory and the Kimberley. As John says....."spent all my life in the outback"

The frogs of Innamincka!

As a generality it is correct to say that frogs are mainly confined to moist areas, and that the more reliable the moisture the more diverse the frog fauna. On that basis Innamincka is predictably an area with few if any frogs.

Surprise! Surprise! There are many different kinds of frogs at Innamincka. By far the best known and most conspicuous is the



Green Tree Frog, *Litoria caerulea*, which often enters houses and lives in shoes, hats or toilets: anywhere they can

hide and find moisture nearby.

The Green Tree Frog is very special. Researchers at the University of Adelaide have developed a means of painlessly stimulating the skins to release the secretions within its skin glands. It has been found that these secretions include antibiotics able to control bacteria, fungi and viruses.

To avoid exposure to the extreme heat many central Australian frogs spend the dry season deep below the surface of the soil.

The Flat Headed Frog *Cyclorana platycephala* is a classic example; they dig down to a depth of as much as 0.5 – 1.0 metre and there form a cocoon around themselves.



North of Innamincka lives a small (20 – 25 mm) rough-skinned frog not found anywhere else in SA.

Identified as *Uperoleia capitulata* it has a short squelch for a call and has been found only on one occasion.

If anyone finds one I would like to be contacted promptly.



Also just north of Innamincka has been found a ground-dwelling frog which is officially known as *Litoria latopalmata*. It lives

amongst dead leaves on the floor of open forests. It is an elongate species with a dull patterned brown appearance.

*Extract from an article by Dr Mike Tyler
In the Innamincka Bush Telegraph*

Simpson dwellers

A traditional owner of the Simpson Desert in central Australia says he has made a significant archaeological discovery that proves the extent of Aboriginal occupation of the region.



Birdsville-based National Parks ranger and Wonkangurru elder Don Rowlands (who some of us have met on our Birdsville trips),

has spent much of his life exploring the sand hills of the Simpson Desert.

Now he says he has found around 17 traditional timber humpies that could be at least 100 years old.

Mr Rowlands says the discovery would predate the 1930s, when the Wonkangurru people left the area for settlements.

"Last time the people occupied the desert was around the turn of the century - early 1900s," he said.

"It looked as if the people had only left yesterday in terms of the stuff that's on the ground."

Archaeologist Gile Hamm can't wait to survey the site.

"We have found one or two intact but we've never found a cluster of that many in one location," he said.

"They're an indication of a rarer type of occupation that you don't see regularly because these sites disappear very quickly."

Mr Hamm says the site could provide valuable information about the way the Wonkangurru people lived.



Sign in front bar Birdsville Hotel

Itinerary Comments

In addition to ten "regular" bus trips last year, there was increased interest in our personalised 4WD tours. These included 2 Coongie Lakes, 2 Mungo NP, 2 Kangaroo Island and one to Yorke Peninsula and the Southern Flinders Ranges.

Three of the "favourite" 4WD trips are included in our 2008 itinerary. Use of a smaller vehicle provides an opportunity to visit destinations (such as Coongie Lakes), which are not part of our coach itinerary. The 4WD trips are very competitive when compared to market pricing.

Wilson's Promontory is always a popular trip and we have **2** seats available on the 4th March departure. The trip covers some of the most spectacular scenery in Australia, including :

- The Grampians National Park
- Corangamite area of Victoria's south west.
- Wilson's Promontory and scenic south Gippsland .
- Full length of The Great Ocean Road (Torquay to Mt Gambier)

The Painted Desert departure on April 27th has just **3** seats available. Many people are unaware of exactly where the "Painted Desert" is. We travel the legendary Oodnadatta Track to William Creek, then enjoy a 2 night stay underground at Coober Pedy in the Lookout Cave Motel before heading about 40kms south of Oodnadatta. The colourful Arkaringa Hills are to the west, and the area we drive through is known as The Painted Desert. The return home is through Cadney Park , and 2 nights at Woomera to explore Roxby Downs, Olympic Dam and Andamooka.

Following the Easter Holidays we have a 5 day trip to the World Heritage listed **Mungo National Park**, with accommodation at the Two Rivers Motel Wentworth for four consecutive nights!!

Itinerary for 2008



Back O'Bourke
(9 days) ~ \$1950 pp
Saturday April 12

Birdsville/Innamincka
(9 days) ~ \$1950 pp
Tuesday July 15
Wednesday August 13

Cooper Creek/Innamincka
(7 days) ~ \$1525 pp
Thursday July 3

Explore Mungo National Pk
(5days) ~ \$895 pp
Wednesday April 2

Flinders Ranges/Arkaroola
(5 days) ~ \$995 pp
Including "Ridgetop Tour"
Tuesday September 9
Tuesday September 23
Sunday October 12

Gawler Ranges
(5 days) ~ \$830 pp
Saturday August 30

Kangaroo Island
(4 days) ~ \$875 pp
Tuesday February 23
Thursday November 13

Skenes Creek/Great Ocean Rd
(5 days) ~ \$925 pp
Sunday May 11

William Creek & The Painted Desert
(9 days) ~ \$1745 pp
Sunday April 27

Wilson's Promontory
(9 days) ~ \$1725 pp
Tuesday March 4

Yorke Peninsula & Innes National Park
(4 days) - \$620 pp
Saturday October 25

Personalised 4WD Tours

Coongie Lakes & The Cooper Creek
(7 days) - \$1925 pp
Sunday June 1

Sky-trek & The Flinders
(5 days) - \$975 pp
Saturday June 14

Yorke Peninsula & Southern Flinders
(5 days) - \$975 pp
Thursday October 2

Other personalised tours in 4WD vehicle can be arranged by request

Australian Journey

Steve Waterson

Nobody knows when the first human foot marked the soil of Australia.

We can be confident that nomads arrived at least 50,000 years ago, crossing the shallow seas between the islands of Indonesia and the fledging continent.

All of recorded human history would fit comfortably into that margin of error, but assigning a more precise date exercises only the minds of archaeologists. For Australia's Aborigines, the country was born in the sacred Dreamtime, which exists beyond modern concepts of time.

An intricate web of trails, left by ancestral creation beings and recorded only in song, art and ceremony, were sufficient to guide the planet's oldest continuous culture through some of the least hospitable terrain.

The first European settlers two centuries ago found no roads, no maps, and knew no way to read the ancient Aboriginal compass, so set about inscribing their own paths.

The middle of the 19th century saw astonishing feats by explorers, among them Edward Eyre, who made a gruelling journey across southern Australia, Augustus Gregory, who made the first west to east continental crossing; Ludwig Leichardt, who opened up the north; and John McDouall Stuart, Charles Sturt, and Robert O'Hara Burke, who ventured into the interior, terrifying in its emptiness even today.

Where they went, many followed. Rural Australia is used, above all, to graze cattle and sheep, and some of the earliest European tracks, dating from the 1830s, are the pastoralists' near – desert trails that led cattle fattened in the interior to sale in the coastal cities.

Railways which began in the 1850s, peaking at some 44,000 km of track a century later; in turn gave way when cars and trucks became affordable in the mid 20th century.

And the country's prosperity attracted different pioneers, as migrants carved new routes from the old world.

The passage of humans across Australia tells tales of myth, of adventure, of progress, and we celebrate them on our travel; but we should reflect too, that tracks that lie on the surface, are of their essence superficial. Stand at night in the silent outback as stars crowd the darkness, and the scale of human achievement can seem suddenly tiny, our impact on the land as slight as that first bare footprint on the northern sand.

Introducing NOVA !!

Nova is 9 years old and has been working as my Guide Dog since she was 16 months old.

She was bred in the Adelaide Hills and "puppy raised" in Adelaide so she is a true South Australian!

She is a really enthusiastic Guide Dog, loves working and does her work really well—quite brilliantly in fact.

She is really clever at finding easy ways through thick pedestrian traffic and areas littered with objects.

She loves challenges too. I will never forget our last walk at the end of training together in Adelaide.

We went through the food area of Myer Centre basement at about 4pm on a Friday afternoon. The area was packed with school students, school bags, chairs, and food scraps on the floor. And I did not encounter one obstacle.

And she was so proud she had done so well.

She loves people, food, playing, food, travelling, food, pats, food, cuddles. Food. Even after all this time together, she is still not sure if I will feed her each night when we get home and this is a big worry and responsibility for a little black girl each day (especially when her owner is getting just that bit older).

When she is not working she relaxes just like any other working girl. She almost always has a toy in her mouth and we have toys all around the house. She has quite a wicked sense of humour and thinks it is really funny when I step on a squeaky toy she has left in a doorway or especially when I sit on one that she has put in my chair.

She loves travel with its new experiences and the chance to explore new places..

She does not like walking behind people— she will weave and try to pass anyone who is blocking her path. This is very noticeable when we are with a group of other Guide Dogs. Even if we start at the back, by the time we arrive at our destination, Nova and I are almost always in the lead.

She loves travelling with Desert Sky Tours : she stands up at the back of the bus waiting for Howard to open the door . She has not quite got in the driver's seat yet—but give her time. I am sure she is working on that one.

Love and Wags.....Joan and Nova

