



Desert Sky News

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



Volume 18 Issue 2

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November 2016

Another interesting year, and especially good to have a number of overseas visitors from New Zealand, England, Italy and Sweden join us! It is always a pleasure to hear they appreciate how wonderful this Country is.

I mention the record rainfall across the State later in this newsletter, however it is interesting that for the period 1st January 2016 to 30th September 2016 the Eyre Development Road (Birdsville to Bedourie) has been:

- closed to all traffic for 55 days (20%)
- restricted to high clearance (4x4) vehicles for 92 days (34%)
- open to all traffic for 127 days (46%)

Other roads including the Birdsville Track, Strzelecki Track have been similarly impacted. The Cordillo Downs Road (Innamincka to Arrabury turn off) remains closed at the time of writing. This has obviously had a negative impact on businesses and the tourist season generally.

Our 2017 departure dates have been set and are listed on pages 3 and 4.

We appreciate your continued interest in Desert Sky tours! I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter !

It is now only a few weeks to Christmas, and as this will be our final newsletter for the year, we would like to wish you all the best for Christmas and the New Year.



No rest for Burke & Wills

It seems there is no rest for Burke and Wills, with the statue of the ill-fated explorers likely to be moved again due to the construction of Melbourne Metro Rail.



After many moves around Melbourne, the Burke and Wills monument was placed in its current location on the corner of Swanston and Collins streets in 1994.

With the acquisition of the City Square as a works site for the duration of the metro construction, the statue is likely to be moved again.

Designed by Charles Summers and costing £14,000, the monument was unveiled on April 21, 1865.

Originally on the corner of Collins and Russell streets, the growth of traffic and the laying of tram tracks led to the removal of the monument in 1886.

It was placed in a reserve in Spring St, opposite Parliament House on the corners of Spring, Lonsdale and Nicholson streets.

It was moved to Carlton Gardens in 1973 when Parliament Station was constructed, and then moved again to the corner of Swanston and Collins in the City Square in 1979 and a fountain was added.

The statue was restored and moved to its present location at the corner of Swanston and Collins Streets in 1994.

The Burke & Wills Historical Society has made a submission to have the statue permanently relocated to the grounds of the Royal Society of Victoria.

Far north success stories



Bowmans Rail has been awarded a \$200,000 Upper Spencer Gulf

and Outback Futures Program grant to establish an intermodal container terminal, just outside of the Leigh Creek township.

The terminal will provide an integrated road and rail service from Adelaide to the Cooper Basin, reducing inbound freight costs and creating transport efficiencies.

It will use the existing rail infrastructure between Port Augusta and Leigh Creek to transfer imported and domestic freight from Adelaide to Leigh Creek.

It will then transfer the inbound freight by road to the Cooper Basin.

The intermodal will also provide an option for back-loading minerals for the emerging mining industry in Leigh Creek.

Atomato farm that relies on the sun and seawater to produce more than 15,000 tonnes of fruit a year has been officially launched in Port Augusta.

Sundrop Farms' sustainable facility in Port Augusta includes four five-hectare climate controlled greenhouses, a desalination plant and concentrated solar power system comprised of a 127-metre high tower and more than 23,000 mirrors to reflect the sun's energy.



Sundrop Farms has secured a 10-year deal to supply

Coles supermarkets with truss tomatoes nationally.

How weather can change things!

Above average rainfall in many parts of the Outback this year resulted in a number of road closures - some for a Considerable time.

A couple of our itineraries required adjustment, however no departure was cancelled!

It was amazing to see how the State's Outback and Flinders Ranges responded, with the wet winter setting creeks and waterfalls running, and the landscape springing to life with flowers and greenery.

A couple of months ago we travelled from Arkaroola to Copley and through an area known for its rugged red ranges, gnarled gum trees and stony creek beds. It was at the time a severe storm had cut power to the State, and we called into Iga Warta, the Adnyamathanha -owned Cultural Centre in the northern Flinders region.

The Centre was without electricity, and a large billy was boiling away with hot water for our coffee. One of the men asked me which way we were travelling, and when I replied "Copley", he said he doubted I would get through as the Frome River and a couple of creeks had come up.

He gave rough directions for a detour on Angepena Station and a possible shallower crossing. With darkening skies in the west (the direction we were travelling), a decision was made to get moving quickly.

The Frome River did not cause a problem and (thankfully) we did not need to find the detour, but it was amazing to see water flowing in most of the many creeks as we headed to Copley. In the 20 years or more we have been along that road the creeks have been bone dry.

There was another experience when we arrived in Copley. The power black-out meant the bakery was unable to provide it's well renowned pasties, but a more important consequence was uncertainty of fuel. David had heard Lyndhurst was without power and unable to supply fuel, and suggested I fill up at the local Service Station as it had a back-up generator for the pumps.

Finally, in realisation of how we often take things for granted, I went to settle our accommodation account at Marree -a town which has it's own power generation plant. The EFTPOS machine was down because the storm had knocked out the telephone lines a couple of days before and Lyall was waiting on re-connection.

It is wonderful when nature breathes new life into one of the most ancient landscapes on earth!

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Eyre/Kati Thanda

This information is a result of a flyover by National Parks staff on Monday 25 October (Natural Resources SA Arid Lands)

Kati Thanda continues to dry up with the increasing evaporation rate. In the last month, water coverage on the north lake has decreased from around 30% to about 15%, and the south lake from 15% to completely dry.

On the north lake, Belt Bay is drying up but having the lowest point of the lake, it will hold water for some time to come. There is shallow water drying quickly in Jackboot Bay, and this water is no longer connected to Belt Bay.

Madigan Gulf is almost dry, except a small shallow patch of water to the southwest of Brooks Island but this should disappear soon.

There are still minor flows in the Warburton and Kalaweerina Creeks, but water in the Warburton Groove is not making it to Dulhunty or Hughes Islands any more. Neales River and Umbum Creek have stopped flowing. The Diamantina River at Birdsville is rising again but is still below a minor flood level.

This will have little influence on Kati Thanda if no further rains occur due to the increasing temperature and evaporation.

Visitors on the ground may not see water anymore at Halligan Bay Point, and won't see water at Lake Eyre South lookout or Level Post Bay.

Water coverage changes with each new local rain event and is dependent on the monsoon in Queensland bringing floodwaters down through the Lake Eyre Basin's inland river system.

National Parks staff regularly monitor the water levels in Kati-Thanda-Lake Eyre and provide a report to tourism outlets (and others).

The Dig Tree

In March 2016 a new Dig Tree Ranger was appointed.

Col from Townsville replaced Duck Robertson, who resigned last October. The Royal Historical Society of Queensland have been preparing a new Dig Tree Conservation Management Plan. The Burke and Wills Historical Society made a detailed submission to the consultants in January and the Plan was due for release around Easter 2016.

As yet, nothing has been heard from the RHSQ about the CMP, although the \$20,000 grant has been acquitted.

Legendary Longreach & Winton



The population of Australia's smallest town increased this month from zero to 200 for the fifth annual Channel Country Ladies day.

The event brought women from remote properties together to concentrate on their health and well-being, under the guise of cocktails and pampering.

The Betoota race track, in Queensland's south-west, was transformed into a hub for guest speakers, shopping stalls, beauty treatments and health providers.

Katie Brown, originally from the channel country, travelled from a remote station near Onslow in Western Australia, said it is "really important for station women to get away and to come to things like this, When you do get to go to town, you never get a chance to do an art class or do something that's really for you [so] I've just really enjoyed catching up with everyone."

Amid the glitz and glamour, some women were reflecting on issues faced by remote women, including access to health services.

2017 Itineraries



The Painted Desert
(9 days)
\$3850pp

Friday 19th May

Clare Valley, Leigh Creek, Marree, William Creek, Coober Pedy, The Breakaways, Painted Desert, Woomera, Roxby Downs, Andamooka, Port Augusta, Arid Lands Botanical Gardens, Horrock's Pass to the Flinders Ranges, Orroroo and Burra.

2017 Itineraries



Yorke Peninsula & The Southern Flinders Ranges
(5 days)
\$1650pp

Saturday 11th February

Ardrossan, Port Julia, Port Vincent, Edithburgh, and Wool Bay. Scenic drive to Troubridge Point and Marion Bay. Innes National Park includes Cable Bay, Cape Spencer and Pandalowie Bay. Corny Point, Warooka and Yorketown. Moonta, Kadina and Wallaroo. Southern Flinders Ranges, Alligator Gorge, Melrose. Scenic Bridle Track to Port Germein



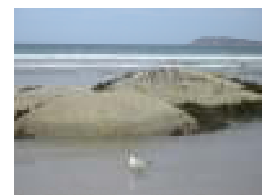
Kangaroo Island
(4 days)
\$2200pp

(Includes Sealink ferry!)

Monday 27th February

Saturday 4th November

Penneshaw, Antechamber Bay, Cape Willoughby, American River, Kingscote, Flinders Chase National Park, Cape Borda, Admirals Arch, Cape De Coudic, Seal Bay, Emu Bay, Stokes Bay, Snelling Beach, Western River Cove



Wilson's Promontory
(9 days)
\$3850pp

Wednesday 8th March

Grampians NP, Halls Gap, Peshurst, Mortlake, Colac, Queensciffe Ferry, Sorrento, Meenyan, Tidal River, Waratah Bay, Walkerville, Agnes Falls, Strzelecki Ranges, Tara Bulga NP, Grand Ridge Road, Skenes Creek, The Great Ocean Road, Mt Gambier, The Coorong.

2017 Itineraries



Mungo and The Hattah Kulkyn National Parks
(5 days)
\$1950pp

Saturday 25th March

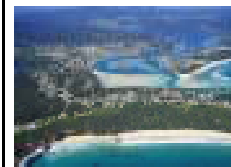
Pinnaroo, Kow Plains Homestead and Cowangie, Murrayville, Pink Lakes, Underbool, Mildura, Wentworth, Old Zanci Station, Mungo Woolshed, Walls of China, Grand Canyon, Vigar's Well, Perry Sand hills, Paddle Steamer through Lock 11 Mildura, Red Cliffs, Lake Hattah, Lake Victoria, Rufus River, The Riverland



The Back O'Bourke
(9 days)
\$3850pp

Wednesday 3rd May

Broken Hill, Mutawintji NP, White Cliffs, Wilcannia, Tilpa, Louth, Bourke(accommodation Bourke Riverside Motel), Lightning Ridge, Gilgandra, Cobar, Balranald, Murrayville, Pinnaroo



The Sapphire Coast
(8 days)
\$3600pp

Wednesday 5th April

Portland, Great Ocean Road, Otway Tree Top Walk, Apollo Bay, Metung, Lakes Entrance, Eden, Twofold Bay, Pambula, Merimbula, Bega, Victorian coastal towns, Meenyan, Camperdown, Dunkeld, The Coorong.



Coongie Lakes
(7 days)
\$2995pp

Friday 2nd June

Old Strzelecki Track, Innamincka, Coongie Lakes, Camp LXV, Cameron Corner, Sturt NP, Tibooburra, Broken Hill, Loch Lilly and Quandong Stations, Burra.

2017 Itineraries



Legendary Longreach & Winton
(12 days)
\$4595pp

Saturday 8th July

Strzelecki Track, Innamincka, Windorah, Lark Quarry Dinosaur Trackway, Winton, Waltzing Matilda Centre, Longreach. Visit The Stockman's Hall of Fame, Qantas Founders Museum, Sunset Cruise on the Thomson River.

Barcardine, The Tree Of Knowledge, Blackall Wool scour, Tambo, Charleville. Cunnamulla, Currawinya National Park, Hungerford, The Darling Track to Yantabulla, Fords Bridge and Bourke.

A day exploring Bourke visiting Mt Oxley and local attractions and a cruise aboard the Jandra paddle-steamer on the Darling River.

Wilcannia via The Darling River Run through Louth, Tilpa and on to Broken Hill. Old Pastoral route to Burra, Adelaide



Birdsville & Innamincka
(9 days)
\$3850 pp

Friday 16th June

Clare Valley, Leigh Creek, Marree, Mungerannie, Birdsville, Innamincka, Camp LXV (the Dig Tree), Cameron Corner, Sturt National Park, Tibooburra, Broken Hill, Old Pastoral Route via Loch Lilly Station to Burra, Adelaide



Birdsville & Windorah
(9days)
\$3850 pp

Saturday 8th July

Clare Valley, Leigh Creek, Marree, Mungerannie, Birdsville, Betoota, Windorah, Quilpie, Toompine, Thargomindah, Cunnamulla, Bourke, The Darling River Run, Louth, Tilpa, Wilcannia, Broken Hill. Old Pastoral Route via Loch Lilly Station to Burra, Adelaide.

2017 Itineraries



Head of Bight & The Eyre Peninsula
(9 days)
\$3700pp

Wednesday 16th August

Cowell, Tumb Bay, Pt Lincoln, and Whalers Way. Coffin Bay, Talia and Woolshed Caves, Streaky Bay, Murphy's Haystacks. Ceduna, Yalata, Head Of Bight (whale watching) and Bunda Cliffs. Return via Minnipa, Gawler Ranges, Kimba, Pt Augusta and Flinders Ranges to Adelaide.



Flinders Ranges & Skytrek
(4 days)
\$1800 pp

Friday 1st September

Rawnsley Park, Wilpena Pound, Willow Springs Station, "Skytrek", Bunyeroo Valley, Brachina Gorge, Blinman, Parachilna Gorge, Moralana Scenic Drive, Melrose, The Bridle Track, Port Germein, Laura, Orroroo, Burra, Eudunda and Kapunda.



Flinders Ranges & Arkaroola
(5 days)
\$2375 pp

Saturday 9th September

Rawnsley Park, Wilpena Pound, Bunyeroo Valley, Brachina Gorge, Blinman, **Arkaroola, Ridgetop Tour**, Bolla Bollana, Arkaroola Waterhole, Gammon Ranges, Moralana Scenic Drive.



The Gawler Ranges
(5 days)
\$1995 pp

Saturday 23rd September

Port Wakefield, Port Germein, Port Augusta, Iron Knob, Corunna, Siam, Nonning, Mt Ive, Lake Gairdner, Yardea, Hiltaba, Paney Station, The Organ Pipes, Pildappa Rock, Tcharkuldu Hill, Minnipa, Wudinna, Kimba, Wilmington, Melrose, Gladstone, The Clare Valley.

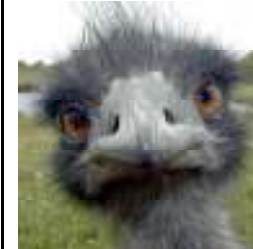
2017 Itineraries



Tumby Bay & Eyre Peninsula
(5 days)
\$1800 pp

Saturday 21st October

Port Germein, Arno Bay, Port Neill, Trinity Haven Scenic Drive, Poonindie, Port Lincoln, Sleaford Bay, Tod Reservoir, Cummins, Mt Hope, Point Drummond, Greenly Beach, Dutton Bay, Coffin Bay National Park to Golden Island and Price Island. Explore Whalers Way and visit the Koppio Museum. Return is via Kimba, Iron Knob, Port Augusta and Horrocks Pass to the Flinders Ranges, Orroroo and Burra.



Dares Hill Circuit
(2 days)
\$700 pp

Departure by demand

Gilbert Valley, Terowie, Peterborough (overnight and we visit **Steamtown's Laser Light Show**), Franklyn, Ketchowla, Dares Hill, Mt Bryan.



Lake Eyre
(3 days)
\$1625 pp
Includes Plane flight

Departure by demand

Clare Valley, Leigh Creek, Marree, One and a half hour plane flight over Lake Eyre, Farina Ruins, Ochre Cliffs, Hawker, Orroroo, Terowie, Bun, Clare Valley.



Flinders Ranges & Outback
(8 days)
\$3995pp

Departure by demand

Rawnsley Park, Wilpena Pound, Bunyeroo Valley, Brachina Gorge, Blinman, Arkaroola, Ridgetop Tour, Arkaroola Waterhole, Gammon Ranges, Moralana Scenic Drive. Marree, The Oodnadatta Track, William Creek, Coober Pedy, The Painted Desert, Woomera, Roxby Downs