



## Newsletter No. 50 February 2019

### *G'Day, Outback Vic*

*here.* Here it is my 50<sup>th</sup> Newsletter. I started these newsletters way back in 2004, they were just one page long in those days, can't believe I only had one page worth of stuff to talk about! Anyway, they have grown a little since then and judging by the feedback I get via email and when I get to meet you at the various 4wd shows and the few trips I have time to do now, it seems you enjoy them. The general comment is "when is the next newsletter coming out?"



This one is going to be a shorty (I think) because things are extremely busy here at GDT HQ and I have some great new trips coming up that I wanted to let you know about, so here goes.

Here is a summary with more details below:

- 1) A flight to see the floods
- 2) A new accommodated trip
- 3) A vacancy in New Zealand
- 4) Hurry only 3 beds left on our Cruise
- 5) Route 66 in 2020
- 6) Madagascar in 2020
- 7) What's coming up back home?
- 8) A new adventure for Tony Davys

### *A flight to see the floods*

I'm sure you have all heard the news of the massive floods in northern Queensland and the devastation that has caused to our cattle country up there. Some very distressing scenes on TV of thousands of cattle drowning in this once in 500 year flood!

Some of the rain fell in the Lake Eyre Basin which means water is flowing south as well as the huge flood that is spreading through the Gulf country. Water is flowing down the dry Diamantina River at present, in fact a huge flood is currently passing Birdsville. Birdsville went from being a town surrounded by drought ravaged wasteland and huge dust storms to a town surrounded by flood waters literally overnight, check out my facebook page for images of what occurred out there this week, it is quite amazing.



**Birdsville cut off by flood waters on 21/2/19**

Of course this sparked an idea in my head, and I called my old mate Trevor Wright from Wrights Air at William Creek and we put together a flying trip to see this amazing sight of the Diamantina River spreading for kilometre after kilometre across the dry interior.

The plan was to not only give you and me the opportunity to see this unusual situation but in the process bring some much needed cash to some of the outback towns that are being hit hard by the drought and now, in the case of Birdsville, being cut off from all visitors by road. But it is the graziers in the Gulf country who are in the most need, so a portion of the money raised with my proposed flying tour will go to the fighting fund to help them too.



So here is the proposed trip commencing 23 March

**Day 1 Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March** You need to catch the Alliance Airline flight from Adelaide to Olympic Dam at 7am This lands at OD at 8.30 am where we are met by our Wrights Air pilot and we fly over Lake Eyre (still dry with maybe some water in the top section) then over what will be a flooded Goyder Lagoon. Landing at flood isolated Birdsville, so you will see all the flood waters surrounding Birdsville. Have lunch in the Bakery or Hotel and drop our overnight bags in our rooms at the Hotel. In the afternoon we board the plane again and do a big loop north following the flooded Diamantina River all the way to Diamantina Lakes (all flooded) and back to Birdsville that evening. Dinner bed and breakfast in the Hotel

**Day 2 Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> March** Leaving Birdsville we will fly west over Big Red

and across the Simpson Desert all the way to Dalhousie Springs where we will land. Time for a swim in the hot springs, how good is that! Then we fly to Oodnadatta where we land to have a Oodna Burger in the Pink roadhouse.

In the afternoon we follow the Oodnadatta Track down to William Creek where we land. We will stay tonight in the great ensuite cabins and have dinner and breakfast next day in the Hotel.



*Photo taken on 20/2/19*

**Day 3 Monday 25<sup>th</sup> March** Up early for brekkie and then fly out to the amazing Painted Hills, which we not only fly over but will land out there and do a ground tour amongst this most amazing landscape, its like nothing I have seen anywhere else!

We then fly back to William Creek for lunch in the hotel and in the afternoon we fly down the Oodnadatta Track to Olympic Dam in time to catch the 5pm flight back to Adelaide where it arrives at 6.30pm

That is the plan, so would you like to join me?

The cost is \$2490 per person which includes the following:

- All flights from Olympic Dam to Birdsville to Dalhousie, to Oodnadatta to William Creek to

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the Painted Hills and back to Olympic Dam.

- Also includes accommodation in Birdsville and William Creek
- Also includes all meals in Birdsville, Oodnadatta and William Creek.
- Includes a donation of \$100 per person to Drought Angels who are providing relief for the farmers hit by the drought and now flooded.

Not included are your flights or travel to Adelaide, your flight to Olympic Dam which costs \$145 each way and any extra nights you need to stay in Adelaide. (For those from Sydney we need to fly out on Friday 22 March and stay overnight in Adelaide on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> March, there are flights back to Sydney on the night of 25 March from 7.45pm.



#### **The Painted Hills ground tour**

The Air Caravan from Wrights Air holds 12 people, and I will be escorting this trip so we have just 11 seats to fill. But we must get 11 bookings to maintain this price.

If you are keen on seeing the outback in flood and ticking off a few other goals (crossing the Simpson, swimming in Dalhousie Springs, eating a Oodna burger and walking amongst the Painted Hills to name just a few) then please email or ring me **straight away on 02 99131395** or [info@4wd.net.au](mailto:info@4wd.net.au)

#### *A new accommodated trip*

For few years now we have been offering various accommodated tours, our weekend trips to Hill End and Barrington Tops and our August snow tour have all proven very popular. I followed this up with a 10 day outback accommodated trip to Birdsville and then our very popular 7 day High Country accommodated tour. Quite a few of you have asked for more of these accommodated trips so here is the latest one on offer.

#### **Down the Darling will run from 28 August to the 5 September 2019.**

It starts in Lightning Ridge and goes to the headwaters of the Darling in Culgoa National Park then via Bourke, Louth Trilby station, Tilpa, White Cliffs, Mutawinji NP, Broken Hill, Silverton, Eldee station, Menindee, Kinchega, Pooncarrie, Wentworth, Mildura, Mungo NP and finishes in Hillston after passing through Willandra Lakes. We will have good accommodation every night from motels to hotels to underground rooms and shearers quarters with dinner and breakfast included. I have attached the full itinerary to this newsletter email, let me know if you are keen to experience the Darling in comfort this August/September.



#### *A Vacancy in New Zealand*

I'm sure that long term readers of my newsletters will know how much I love my NZ 4wd tours that we conduct each April, they are just perfect! I'm only 6

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weeks away from heading over the ditch again for another of these incredible self drive fully accommodated 4wd tours through the beautiful Sth Island of NZ. But sadly, two couples we had booked on this trip have now advised that they cannot proceed with the trip due to work commitments, so before I cancel all the room bookings I have for them I thought I would let you know that I can still fit you in on our trip commencing 8 April if you would like to join Julie and I. The tour fee includes all the accommodation, dinner, 4wd hire, NZ tour guide and escort by yours truly, private station and Conservation Park fees and a fair bit more. Give me a call or send an email if you would like to join us on 8 April 2019. Check it out at <http://www.4wd.net.au/4wd-tours/extended-safaris/new-zealand-tour-with-vic-widman>



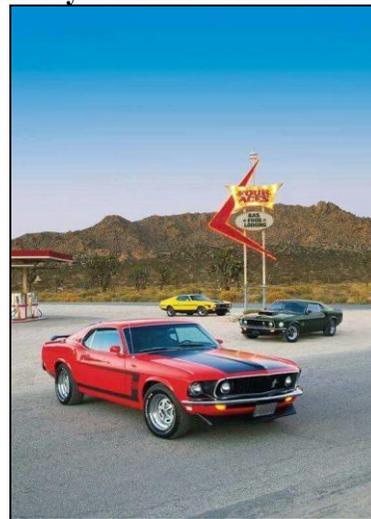
*Kimberley Cruise April 2020 , 3 cabins only*

That's right we have just 3 cabins remaining on our amazing 14 day Kimberley cruise from Wyndham to Broome on the Odyssey Explorer. How do I describe this trip? I've done a lot of travel in and around Australia over the past 45 years and the cruise along the Kimberley coast is the stand out best trip I have ever done. Words don't do the scenery justice, the boat is beautiful, the

food amazing and I can't think of a single thing not to like about this trip. I have 7 of the 10 cabins filled so we have just 3 twin cabins remaining, see here for the details <http://www.greatdividetours.com.au/4wd-tours/extended-safaris/cruise-the-kimberley-coast> Don't miss out on this trip, it is a real bucket list item and worth every red cent of the tour fee.



**Tick your Bucket list with Vic**



*Route 66 in a Muscle car*

Speaking of bucket list items, I've always wanted to do this. Drive a Mustang along Route 66 in the USA. I've now found an Australian tour company in USA that facilitates just that. I'm working with them to organise a Route 66 trip in October 2020, so let me know if you would like to

receive more info on this trip. My plan is to add a few days of 4wd fun too and whilst I'm still sorting this out I hope to have firm details in the next couple of months. So if you are keen on a 20 day Route 66 trip in a muscle car plus a 4 day 4wd trip in an off road vehicle please drop me an email and I'll put you on the further info list.

### *Madagascar self drive now available too!*

Great Divide Tours has had a long association with Self Drive Adventures, we first did a trip to Namibia with them in 2017, then followed this up with our two trips to Botswana last year and this year in June/July we have two trips to Iceland, which will be amazing. SDA have advised us they are running a 31 day trip to Madagascar off the African coast, from 1 October to 31 October 2019 and again in 2020 from 10 September to 10 October 2020, so we are able to offer you the opportunity to join Self Drive Adventures on either of these great trips, just drop me an email and I'll send the full itinerary to you.



**The avenue of the Baobabs**

On top of this I just received the following advice from SDA .

“Self Drive Adventures have a last minute cancellation special on their Southern African Adventure from 25 April 2019 to 25 May 2019. You can save up to \$4250 if you can book by 7 March”. So contact me asap if this trip interests you.

### *What is coming up back home?*

So with all these great overseas trips and flights etc on our agenda please don't forget, we are still Australia's premier 4wd tag-along tour company and this is just a sample of what we have available over the next couple of months .

**2-3 March Next weekend** – a 2 day camping trip to the beautiful Brindabella's and Snowy Mtns region south west of Canberra, camp amongst the snow gums and wake to the sight of a brumby stallion in the crisp mountain air. We have 2 spots remaining.



**The black stallion**

**10 March 1 day Turon River 4wd trip** – A great single day escape from the rat race of Sydney, bring the family on this 4wd tag-along through the Turon River NP just west of Lithgow - Cost is only \$250 per vehicle.

**16-17 March Advanced 4wd course** – want to hone your 4wd skills with the experts from GDT? Learn how to winch weld and plug (a tyre) for just \$650 for two people fully catered at our magnificent 4wd training centre.

**16-17 March Camper Trailer training course** – These courses have proved so popular that we have already filled the two prior weekends with training courses, so we are now offering a third weekend on 16-17 March. 2 days to learn how to 4wd,

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tow your off road trailer and best of all how to reverse the bloody thing! Just \$650 for two people fully catered at the best 4wd training grounds in the country.

**17 March Stockton Beach** – at the time of writing this newsletter I have 3 spots only remaining on our ever popular Stockton Beach tour. If you ever wanted to learn sand driving skills, this is the place to do it. Just \$250 per vehicle, bring the kids for the best day in the sand pit they will ever have!

**23-30 March High Country Accommodated Tour** – Want to see the High Country but don't want to camp or cook? This is your trip. Starting in Bright we will visit all the iconic locations in the high country and then duck out of the Mtns each evening to enjoy great accommodation and even better meals in places such as Bright, Mansfield, Maffra, Dargo and back to Bright. Contact me asap for this one, or if you can't do this at such short notice we have the same trip on again from **25 May – 1 June 2019**



**Nothing more iconic than Craig's Hut**

**7 April Cox's River and Kowmung River** day trip just \$250 per vehicle, another great day trip out of Sydney with fabulous bush scenery, river crossings and quiet camp sites for lunch.

**14-20 April 2019 Our 7 day high country camping trip** has only 2

vacancies so don't be disappointed book it now. Easily the best high country 4wd tour available.

**Easter 19-22 April** – OK you will have to be fast to get this one, we have just **one spot** available on our 4 day camping trip over Easter around the snowy Mtns.

### *A new Adventure for Tony*

Many of you will know Tony our Kiwi friend who has worked with me on a full time basis for the past 5 years delivering our 4wd training at Braidwood, caretaking for me at the training centre and leading many of our trips including the Canning, Kimberley, Arnhem Land and High Country trips to name a few.

Tony has now moved his family to Rockhampton (did anyone tell this Kiwi about the humidity in QLD, or the cyclones or the crocodiles or the jelly fish or the cane toads!?) Tony has a dream to establish his own in car 4wd tour business based around Central Queensland and is now pursuing that dream. He remains an employee of GDT as he will set up under our banner a Central Queensland branch of Great Divide Tours 4wd training. He is currently identifying land on which to do this, getting all his necessary permits etc for his tours and having a great time living his dream.

So, whilst we won't see him leading any of our trips in the future, if you are passing through Rocky on your way up north make sure you look him up and maybe join him on one of his local 4wd trips, they sound amazing. Thanks Tony for all your work with GDT I look forward to lots of driver training with you and wish you all the best with your in car tours.

### *An Ultimate for sale*

If you are looking for a great off road trailer they don't come much better than this one. I purchased it off one my customers last year and now have it up for sale. For just \$48,500 this 2014 Xplor Ultimate could be yours. The other good news is that Ultimate Campers based in Moruya on the south coast of NSW which had gone into receivership has been purchased by another camper trailer business and they have re-opened the Moruya assembly plant and continue to market the Ultimate Campers, which is fantastic news for a great Australian made product. Give me a call on 02 99131395 if you would like to have a look at my Ultimate.



**Its for sale and its like brand new**



**Call me if you are after an Ultimate**

### *Need a plumber?*



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### *Driver Training*

To say that we are a little busy with our driver training is a slight understatement. It is a credit to the work that we perform that we are so busy. We now have 4wd courses on virtually every day at the training centre. Our usual weekend courses for you guys, our Mums and Dads, is booked out every month. The camper trailer courses are so busy that we have now put on three extra courses already, our private individual courses are extremely popular and our corporate work is very busy with us delivering courses thus far this year to the AFP, ADF and Snowy Hydro. So thanks for all the support that you give us by attending our training, we endeavour to make it the best available with best practise procedures.



**Lots of 4wd training already**

And its not always about 4WD training either: just this week we helped the lovely owners of this 2WD Iveco with a large motor home body attached learn where they can get to with their motel on wheels. Working with vehicles in an off road environment has taught me so much about vehicle dynamics and how to read the terrain, and its my pleasure to be able to pass on what I've learnt so you can enjoy exploring our great country.



**2WD with rear diff lock, still goes places**  
*Sad news*

My beautiful dog, Sasha passed away 2 weeks ago, she was aged 12 years and part of our family, we have had 3 Cavalier King Charles spaniels over the past 40 years and each time they pass it breaks our heart. Sasha was a very special dog who showed so much affection and yet was such a fighter in her own right. Four years ago the best vets in Sydney gave her a 5% chance of surviving an illness and yet she fought through it, she then had a relapse 2 years later with other complications and again we thought her time had come, but she survived due in part to the love and affection that Julie and I administered to her. She had the cutest face, the most placid temperament and was such a loving dog who shared our life and home.



**Sasha 12 years ago**



**Our beautiful pup**

### *Finally*

Don't forget to have a look at the itinerary for my flight out to see the floods at Birdsville and all those other amazing places that we will visit. Travel safe everyone and keep busy, I know I am!

*Vic*



**The dusty Diamantina, no more**

8