

# Colo Highlands Trip

8<sup>th</sup> June 2008

Grade C/B

## In attendance

1. Chris	GU Dual cab	6. Denny	75 Series Trayback
2. Andrea and Mark	GQ LWB	7. Brad	GU LWB
3. Doug and Jean	GQ LWB	8. Jay	GU LWB
4. Kev	GQ LWB	9. Max	80 Series
5. Scott and Wendy	GU LWB		

This trip was initially graded a C grade trip. Hearing the weather forecast was going to be rain, I was fairly sure that a sunny day would be in order, especially given it had rained all week and Saturday fined up. Who would have thought that Sunday would be drizzling...all day.

Anyway, the meeting place was Colo River Caravan Park at 8.30am so we arrived about 8.15 and already, there was a crowd eagerly awaiting to get onto the dirt. So I gave a brief run down on what the trip would entail, what to track was like, a quick recap on convoy procedure and basically what to expect from the adventures ahead.

By 8.40 we decided to head off and just as we were about to leave, Denny rocked up....just in the nick of time to join the convoy in front of tail end Charlie. We headed off along Colo River, heading towards Bilpin before arriving at the track's turnoff. The first part of the track was to be fairly easy, so we waited until about 20 mins into the track before we stopped and locked the hubs and aired down.

We had a bit of another team huddle and discussed air pressures, what I was running and then some recommendations for the other vehicles. Those with the bigger tyres were running 10-16psi, and for the rest 18-24psi. After airing down, we packed the kids and dogs back in the cars and plunged off down the track, and over the first obstacle.

This first section had a single ledge to drop off, with an alternative track to the side, which also had a ledge, but was much smaller. The bigger cars headed for the larger drop off, whilst the rest of the crew opted to take the more civil path. Everyone made it safely and without incident, except for Scotty in the GU LWB who gave the alloy side steps a bit of a nudge. (For as long as I remember, alloy side steps usually only last the first trip, and are then replaced with sturdier steel ones. In hindsight, steel side steps should probably be a pre-requisite for club trips, and it would be great if they could be encouraged and purchased through the club as a discount accessory...hint hint).



Most of the track is relatively easy with obstacles located roughly every 200m or so. This means that there we were frequently outside of the car, packing rocks, and guiding the convoy over and around obstacles. For many, the obstacles may have seemed like a daunting experience. Looking at steep rocky sections and thinking that there was no way that the vehicles could drive these, then with good guiding and careful wheel placement, were pleasantly surprised at what their vehicles had achieved.

About  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way through the trip we came to the most difficult section of the track - a large

rocky section with multiple paths ranging from hard to even harder. I was up first, and having been there before, I knew which way to go, so the GU Dualcab crawled its way to the top relatively easily. Max was up next. By this time, most of the convoy had left their vehicles and come up to watch the action and were a little anxious about what was in front of them.



Whilst Max was negotiating an off camber rock step, a large piece of rock off broke off and rolled up under the driver's door, pushing the ARB steel side steps up and fracturing the fibreglass flare in the process. We opted to get a Highlift jack and lift the car to remove the rock to prevent further damage before Max continued up the hill.

Brad was up next, and also crawled to the top without incident. Following Brad was Jay in his GU LWB. His 37" tyres were making relatively light work of the steps until he got to "Max's rock" at which point the BFG muddies, simply gave up and blew a hole in a sidewall the size of a 50c piece. This means we had 2 cars to the top, and 2 injured cars. Whilst taking some time out to change Jay's tyre, many of the others decided that they'd come far enough and the hill was too difficult.

So at this stage, the group split, with Chris, Brad, Jay, Max, Andrea and Denny soldiering on, whilst the rest of the crew sat, chatted, drank their tea and coffee and waited for us to go up and back.

Along the rest of the track there were 2 more rocky sections. The next in particular, was short and steep. It had several lines you could pick, but all of the lines involved rock steps of at least 400mm in height, with some being closer to around 600mm. If everyone made it this far, I was expecting to winch most of the vehicles past this point. I drove to the top, needing a short back and fill for a second attempt at the rock at the top of the hill. For Max, Brad, Jay and Andrea, they all managed to drive to the last rock and which stage we all agreed that it was safer to then use a snatch strap to prevent damage by rolling backwards.



Denny was last, and of course, he opted for take the hard line. This involved about 5 steps, each about 600mm or more and relatively close together. This meant that it was very, very steep. If anything went wrong, there was no question that the 75 series would have ended up rolling over and landing on its lid at the bottom.

Denny showed us what it was all about and muscled the 75 to the top with his great skill **and** a lucky bounce.

Good work Norton!

Not long after leaving this section we were at another short section which due to the rain was quite slippery. Again, only Denny, myself and Brad were able to drive this section with the others needing a snatch to get past the slippery rocks.

After what already seemed like a very long day, we arrived at the half-way point, the lookout. The lookout offers a spectacular view over the main road and bushland below. Given that it was raining and the others were waiting, we only stayed a short time, and then set off back along the track we had come.

The trip back was a lot faster. Obviously getting back down is easier than going up the hill in the first place. Within about 30 mins, we met up with the rest of the convoy, who were now getting eager to get moving to ensure that we made it back to the main road before the sun went down.

With plenty of drop offs on the way back, I paid particular attention to rock placement, for the lower vehicles, trying to make sure that we did not get any more damaged vehicles. Luckily, the return trip was relatively uneventful, with the only action being some recovery work to get some cars back up first set of rock steps. From here it was a short drive back out to the road where we all pumped up our tyres and said our good-byes.

As far as trips go, I'd rate this particular day about a 5/10. I've been through this track with standard vehicles in the dry without any problems. It is an excellent track to learn how capable your car is with good wheel placement. The rain changed this substantially, and more than expected. This resulted in the trip being rated more of a B grade trip as opposed to the planned grade C, which may have left some of the participants feeling a little out of their comfort zone.

This aside, I must congratulate all those who participated in the day. The track was not easy for most and under the conditions you all did a great job. Especially those who had not done this type of driving before, you impressed me with your willingness to listen and follow directions and drive the line set out. Hopefully, you all learned a few things, about the different lines for your vehicles, when to accelerate/brake and ultimately, you left feeling more confident in the capability of your 4wd's and yourself.

Chris Angel  
Trip Leader