

# Victorian High Country Trip 2

## 7<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> Feb 2010

### Day 1 Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> Feb Italian Flat to Eaglevale

Not wanting to rush things on the first day and allowing time for the tents to dry out after the overnight rain, we all gathered around for a trip brief by our fearless trip leader Mark at 09:30. After the admin was out of the way, we left Italian Flat and the people from trip1 who were taking their time in packing up not wanting to rush off home. It wasn't long before we were off the dirt and on the black top heading for Dargo, well to be more correct the other side of Dargo, where we would start our adventure. The town folk of Dargo hardly even raised an eyebrow as the 7 Patrols and 1 Pathfinder drove through town in convoy.

After turning off the black top, it was straight into low range for some nice steep driving for about the next 30 minutes. The recent rain meant very little dust while the tracks, although wet, were in good condition and had a firm base. After a brief stop for morning tea, it was back in the trucks to continue the track heading for the Pinnacles. The higher we rose, the more cloud was setting in and the more slippery the track was becoming.

The first really serious wet and rutted climb saw the big trucks and their mud tires going through fine and just turning a couple rocks. This section saw the little Pathfinder having a few attempts but not getting far. After some excellent reserving down a steep and slippery slope, Dave was horrified when we started dumping air out of his tyres as he was worried about losing too much clearance. With the tyres now bagging out ever so slightly, Dave guided the little Pathfinder to the top on the first attempt.

There is nothing like a recovery to build an appetite, so the first lunch stop of the trip was held in the clouds at 1287 meters. From here it wasn't long before we arrived at the Pinnacles. Although we were still in the clouds there were times they did part ever so slightly to give us glimpses of the beautiful scenery.



Next it was off to taken on “Billy Goat Gruff”, what a fitting name as this was steep and rocky, just the sort of thing for a bill goat or some people looking to test their Fourbies. Bill Goat Gruff is first gear low range all the way down with huge drop off either side. It really paid to keep a keen eye of the track. After reaching the bottom of Bill Goat Gruff, we snaked our way following the Wonnangatta River to Eaglevale and our camp for the night. After pitching the tents it was off to the river for a dip where Cindy and Brad served Happy Hour to us all floating in the river. Way to go guys!

Day 1 Total 80.07 Km Time Taken 7:15 hrs Average Speed 11.4 kph

## Day 2 Monday 8<sup>th</sup> Feb Eaglevale to Wonnangatta

Day 2 was going to be a short day as Wonnangatta Station really wasn't that far. We took off heading away from the river to take the Cynthia Range Track. Cynthia didn't disappoint with some more very steep driving and by now the tracks had dried out and we were starting to see the first lot of dust for the trip. The top of Mt Cynthia proved to be an excellent spot to have morno's and also provide perfect 3G reception with a lot of people taking the advantage to update Blogs, Facebook and retrieve e-mail. Standing on top of Mt Cynthia with crystal blue sky was amazing and we all took the time to snap of a few pictures.

From Cynthia Range Track, we took Wombat Range Track heading down towards the Wonnangatta River and looking for a place to have lunch. We arrived at a nice little camp site by the river to find no one there and a fire still smouldering. After lunch and putting out the remains of the fire, we headed off following the river to the Wonnangatta Station and to check out all the history of this beautiful valley. After a good look around, we heading into camp around 2:30pm, the temperature now in the mid 30's, so the trees on providing some very welcome shade.



Day 2 Total 33.83 Km Time Taken 5:51 hrs Average Speed 5.78 kph

## Day 3 Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> Feb Wonnangatta to Wellington River

Leaving the Wonnangatta with all it's beauty was hard to do, but there was lots of driving to be done today and first off we were tackling the challenging Zeka Spur Track. After a nice picturesque drive along the valley floor, and quick stop to remove a small stone that managed to get lodged in the front brakes of the Muppet Mobil, we started up the Zeka Spur Track. The Zeka's reputation for being steep and slow going was well founded and it's pretty much low range first gear all the way. There were plenty of rocks and tight switch backs to negotiate on the 1100 meter climb to reach Howitt Rd.

A short run along Howitt Rd and we arrived at Howitt Hut which was the perfect setting to take in lunch. From Howitt Hut we headed south to Dimmicks Lookout and what a view this provided. Back in the trucks heading for Kelly's and McMichael's Hut and along the way we passed the Snowy Range Airstrip which is the highest airstrip in Australia. After visiting the huts, we headed down from the dizzying heights of 1500 meters down to 340 meters to camp for the night by the Wellington River.

Day 3 Total 91.68 Km Time Taken 7:26 hrs Average Speed 12.32 kph

## Day 4 Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> Feb Wellington River to Horseyard Flat

Leaving the Wellington River we found ourselves on the black top and heading for Licola and a resupply for those who needed it. This was going to be our biggest day in terms of kms and we would head back up into the high country to set up camp. After leaving Licola, we took Burgovnes Track and then on to Chromite Mine Track. These tracks were fantastic for the steep terrain driving the High Country is famous for, constantly rising and the falling until emerging out to Moroka Rd in the rain. Arriving at Horseyard Flat, the rain was still coming down and this was our only wet set-up of the trip.

Day 4 Total 120.21 Km Time Taken 7:16 hrs Average Speed 16.52 kph

## Day 5 Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> Feb Horseyard Flat to Talbotville

Day 5 started out nice and easy and looking at a couple of huts, and taking the opportunity while at



Moroka we snapped off some group photos. From here we took a number of tracks, with everyone was stopping along the way to grab photos of the magnificent views offered along the McDonalds Gap Track. However, today was a special day as we were heading for the famous Dargo Hotel and their well known massive lunches. But standing in the way of that lunch was the Wonnangatta River and the crossing on the Scrubby Creek Track looked to be deeper than what we had at the other crossings of the Wonnangatta. So the call went out to Charles and Jen as their truck been appointed as the big truck of the trip running

the 35's with 88 percent reduction gears to go through first. However the crossing wasn't as deep as first thought and it was full steam ahead to the Dargo pub. After filling up the bellies, some took the opportunity to fill up the tanks in the trucks before heading off to Talbotville and our camp for the night. After happy hour Mother Nature showed why you always need to be prepared in the High Country and dumped one or two inches of rain in less than a hour.

Day 5 Total 90.58 Km Time Taken 6:39 hrs Average Speed 13.59 kph

## Day 6 Friday 12<sup>th</sup> Feb Talbotville Area

No pack up today as we were going to be staying in the same location again tonight. This made for a lazy morning and bit of extra breakfast. As we set off for our day trip the heavens opened up. The climb out of Talbotville was easy enough on the well-make and firm base tracks. The Victorians sure know how to build these tracks with the massive amount of water running down the gutters and under the track in pipes only to be shot out as a geyser on the other side of the track.

Arrived at Grant with the rain still coming down however after about 10 minutes this stopped and we were able to make our way around the historic township.



After Grant, it was back to Talbotville for some lunch then off following the Crooked River Track to the Good Hope Mine with a river crossing about every 10 feet.

Day 6 Total 32.31 Km Time Taken 6:51 hrs Average Speed 4.71 kph

## Day 7 Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> Feb Talbotville to Buckland Valley

Last day today and what a way to finish the trip with the knowledge we were taking on the Blue Rag Track today. Before leaving Talbotville, we took the time to look around at some of the old mining equipment along the banks of the Crooked River. For the hour or so as we climbed back up the range we were clouded in, however this was a good thing as along the way were some of the steepest and longest drop offs I ever seen. Just before reaching Blue Rag we travelled through a forest of dead and petrified gum trees.



The track along Blue Rag is narrow but is in reasonably good condition. That is all except the last 100 odd meters where the track looks to go almost vertical and is very rocky and a bit loose. This section played havoc with tyres with a couple of people having a chunk or two missing by the time they reached the top. With the views so good up on top it was the perfect time to

take in lunch and snap off a few photos. It only took about an hour after leaving the summit before we were out on the Dargo High Plains Road and out of Low Range for the last time on this trip. The run into the Buckland Valley was a relaxing drive and time to think about all the great places we had seen during the week before setting up camp for the last time.

Day 7 Total 70.87 Km Time Taken 5:49 hrs Average Speed 12.17 kph

### Participants

Mark Crowley (Trip Leader)	GQ Shorty	
Glenn Richardson		GU
Patrol		
Cindy Venter and Brad McCurly		GU Patrol
Charles and Jennifer Bottemann		GU Patrol
Hugh and Leigh Hodgkinson & Lydia Bell		Pajero
Claire Broomhead and Jennie Thorpe	GU Patrol	
Chris Hind		GU
Patrol		
David Pedersen		
Pathfinder		