

**Ex/Perth – Margaret River – Augusta – Albany – forests – mountains and *oh dear...***

We have a wonderful time reconnecting with numerous new-found travel friends who reside in the Big City and spending the festive season with Katherine’s family and 92 year old parents.



Apart from gaining several pounds we survive the culinary onslaught unscathed: Katherine’s brother’s wife Sandra is an exceptional cook and much of the Jones’ small talk centres on food (*time between meals is often spent watching TV cooking shows - ha-ha*)...



**Friends Mary and Brian live in Warnbro/Perth.**

**We always so enjoy our times with them.**

**On this occasion we muster a ‘mussel-cook-up’ white wine vs tomato sauces.**

**Both mastered and a complete success!**

After many miles of criss-crossing metropolitan Perth it is good to finally see our Matrix in the rear vision mirror again as we head south to Busselton, Dunsborough and **Yallingup**.

The latter is a perfect base for exploring the famed **Margaret River** region, known for multitudes of fine wines and, you guessed it, exceptional cuisine...

**Our self-imposed temporary limitation of food intake, aimed at ridding new-found festive pounds, is postponed on short notice in view of numerous lunch options at local vineyards.**

The only upside of ongoing culinary experimentation at this point are the limited sizes of some of the lunches served; although exquisite in taste, more often than not, a first investigative look at serving size tempts one to ask for a complimentary pair of tweezers plus a magnifying glass to facilitate finding an elusive meal on oversize fancy china.



Enter **AMELIA PARK** where the chef believes in *"fully satisfying his guests"* (to quote his wife!).

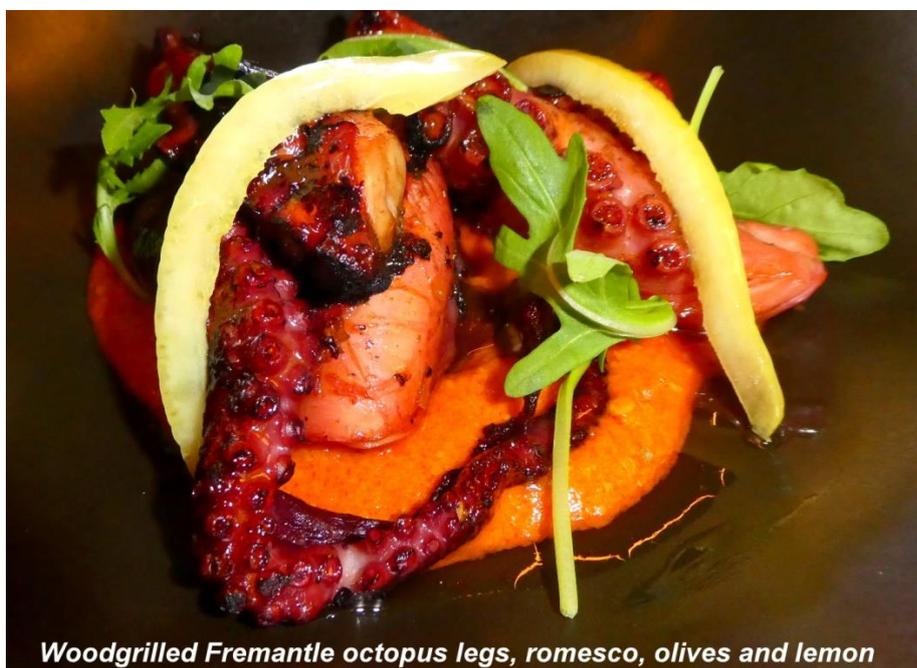




*AMELIA's gateway to exquisite cuisine*



*Lunch view from Amelia's restaurant over estate*



*Woodgrilled Fremantle octopus legs, romesco, olives and lemon*

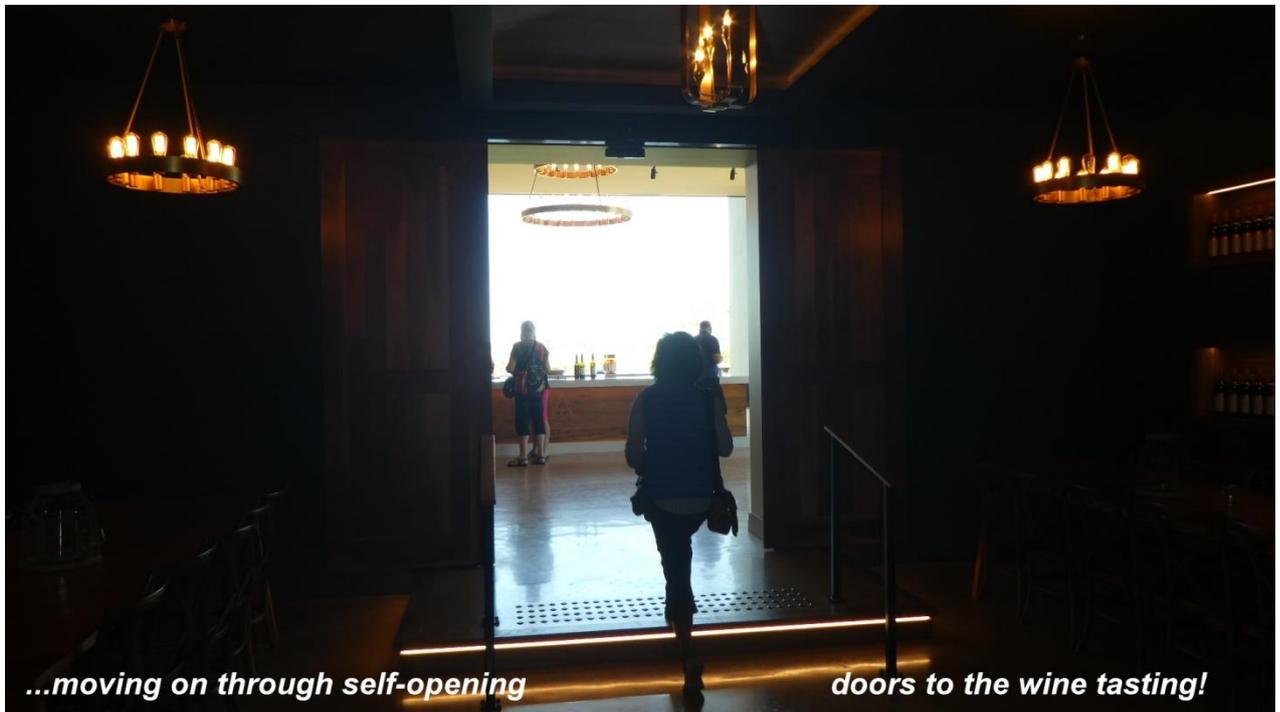


*Slow roasted lamb shoulder,  
white bean skordalia,  
wood roasted peppers, zucchini,  
cauliflower and charred lemon*

While we do appreciate AMELIA's wines, entering their cellar doors is another experience...



*Surprised by a 'WOW' effect corridor...*



*...moving on through self-opening*

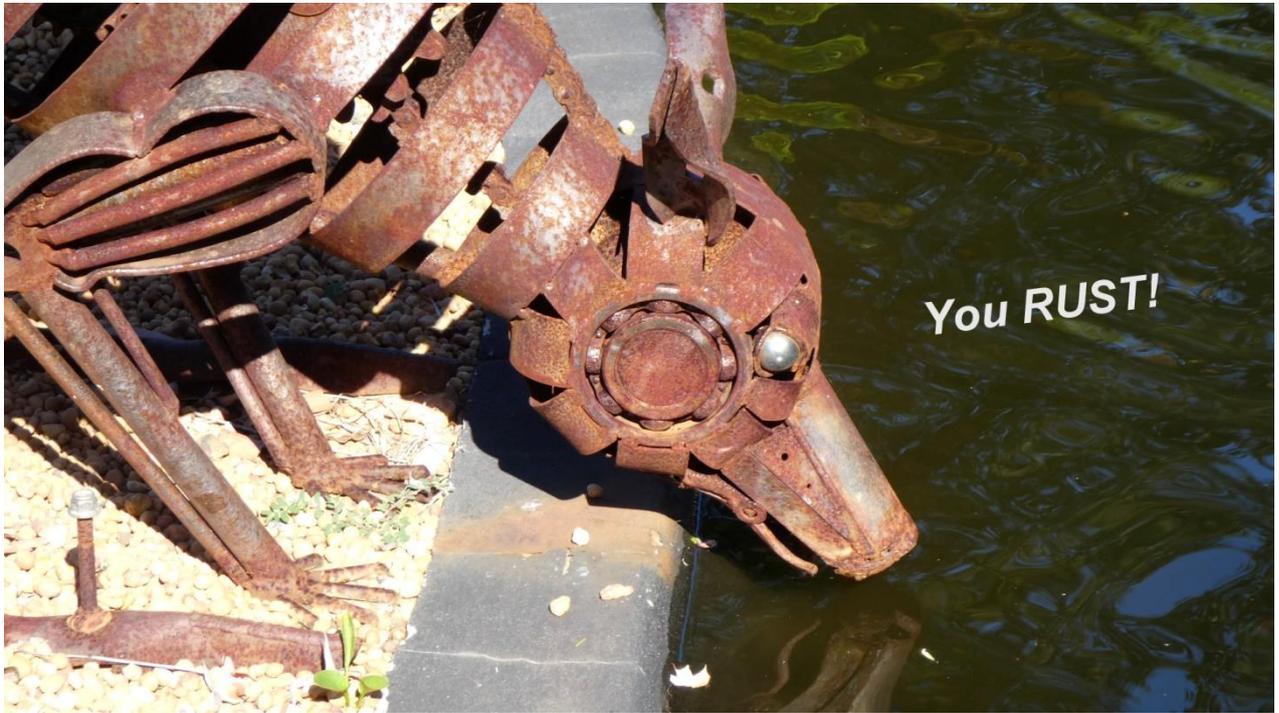
*doors to the wine tasting!*



*Margaret River fine vines*



*See what happens when you drink too much water?!*



*Rid-the-rust* by hiking along the scenic coast from Dunsborough to Castle Rock and Eagle Bay:



# Welcome to Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse

This is where the Southern and Indian Oceans meet at the furthest South West point of Australia. To the south is Antarctica and to the west is Africa.



*Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse: Built in 1895*

From **Augusta** we check out a number of caves. **Lake Cave** is one of them.



*Lake Cave entrance*



In this area we encounter the first big forests which south-west Australia is so well known for. A drastic change in landscape compared to the more or less flat north of the state.

There are massive **Marri, Karri, Jarrah** and several types of **Tingle Forest (Rates, Red and Yellow)**. Tingle trees are often referred to as the “Giants of the Forest”. They grow up to 75m tall and trunks reach circumferences up to of 20m. The Red Tingle is exceptionally rare as it only grows within 10km of the coast and in an area of around 6000 hectares around Walpole.



*Female Tingle Tree*



Massive change from the largely flat northern part of Western Australia:



Some of the tallest trees were used in the past as '**Fire Lookouts**'.

The services of the 'Towermen' (and women) were vitally important back in the day. They would climb these trees and endure at lofty heights (50+ metres) for hours on end (not for the fainthearted, I imagine, as these trees will sway several metres from side to side in strong winds).

Though the 'fire trees' are still daring today; challenging the public to a climb as fire observation nowadays is done from aeroplanes and satellite images.

Most famous of the fire trees is the '**Gloucester Tree**' at **Pemberton** but there are others: **Diamond Tree** and Manjimup – **Dave Evans Bicentennial Tree** in Warren National Park.

# TREE CLIMBING RISK

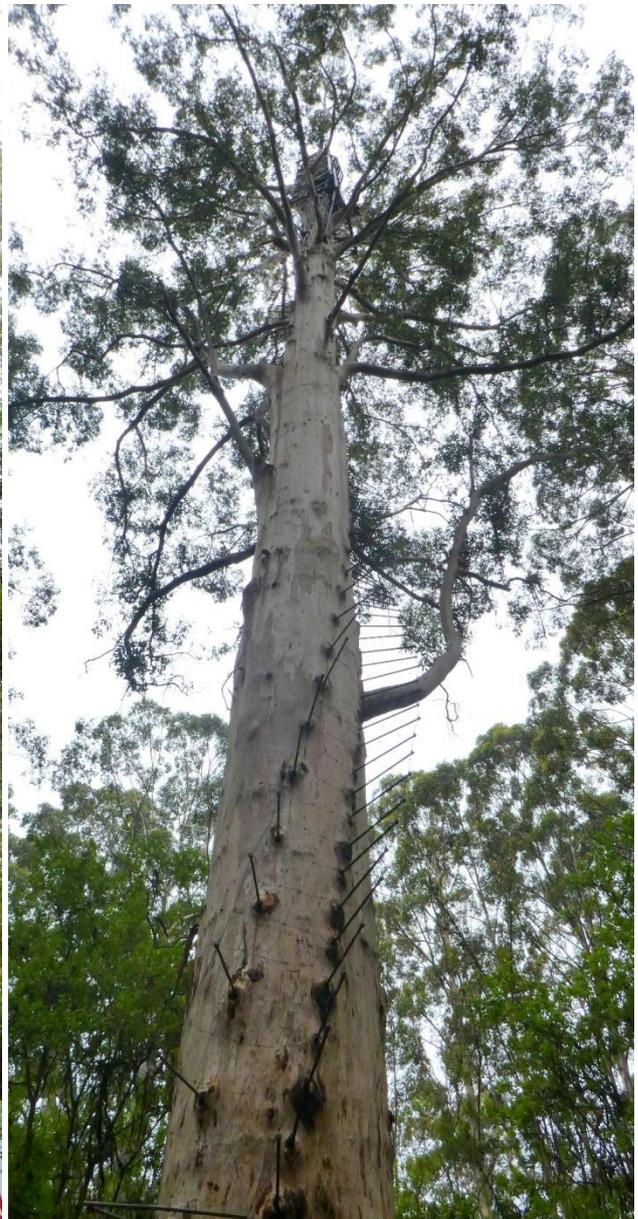
The Gloucester Tree Lookout is 53 metres above the ground.

Space is limited on the pegs and parts of the climb are near vertical. Please be considerate of other climbers when passing.

**For your safety:**



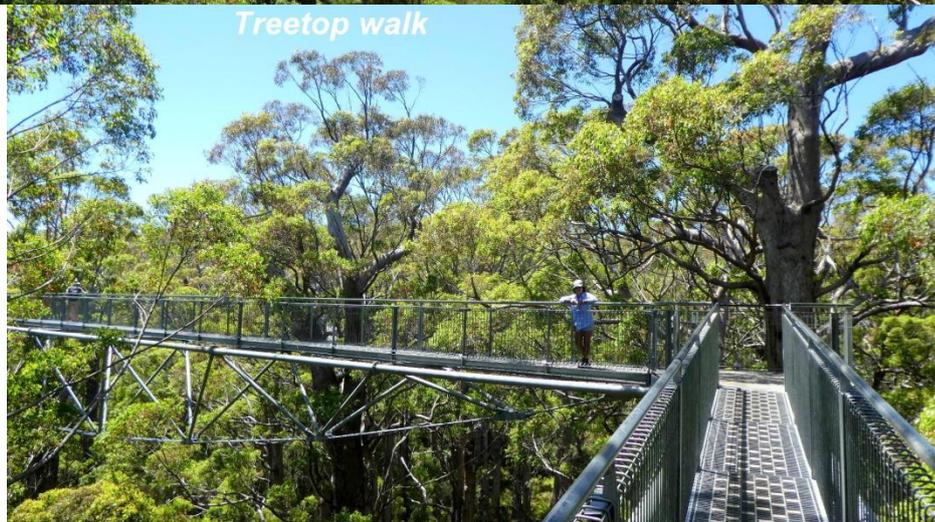
- Wear sturdy footwear - no thongs or sandals.
- Do not carry backpacks while climbing.
- Do not climb if you are unfit, have a heart condition or fear heights.
- Do not climb in stormy, wet or windy conditions. The pegs are slippery when wet.
- A maximum of 9 people on the top platform at any one time.
- Climbing is not recommended for children.

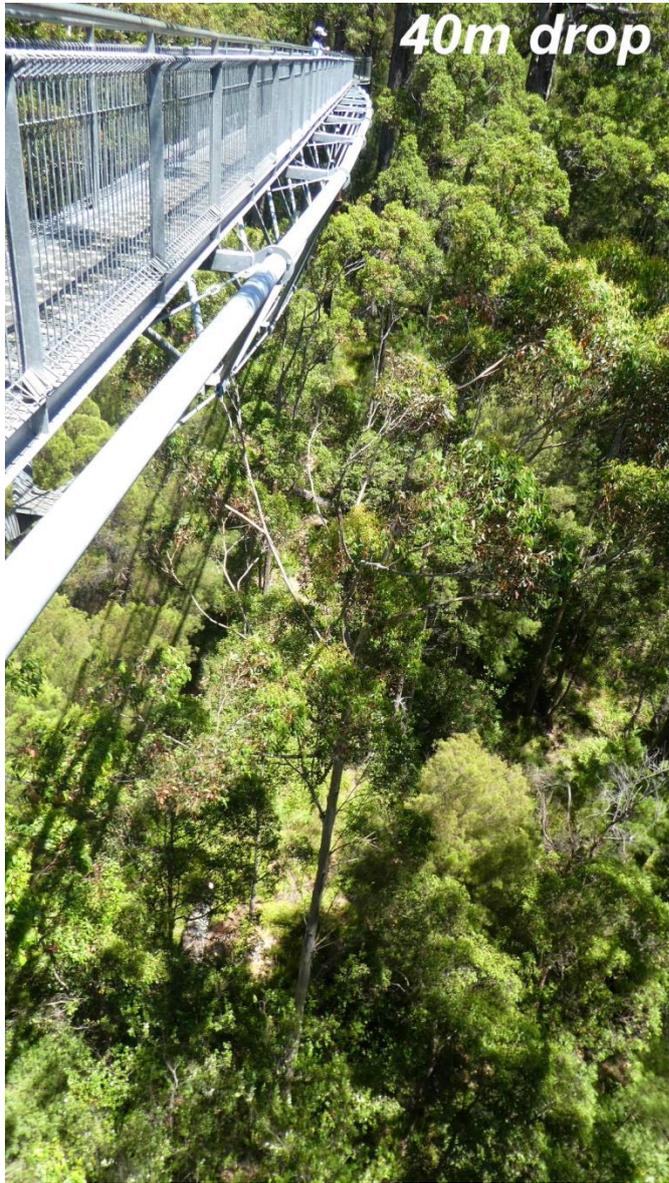


***Surely not for the faint-hearted – all that saves you from falling are these thin metal spikes!***

***53m above ground is a dizzying (horrifying) height – we decline...***

We much prefer the safety of the 'Tree Top Walk' near Walpole. Top height here is 40m above ground level. A long way up indeed but at least 10m short still from the height of one of those 'fire trees'. Check out the drop in the 40m pic below and image you are hanging from a spike!





Though some seem to enjoy a challenge of heights like this chap at the **Western Australian Circus Festival:**





Just when one wonders what new excitement awaits around the next corner it happens: **In fact we don't even make it to the next corner** as our truck's left rear wheel departs without warning: All five wheel studs shear at once, which sends the disc brake crashing onto the rim, slicing it neatly and completely in two halves. The whole shemozzle explodes with incredible bang as the blast shoves tyre and rim bits into the roadside greenery.

Within 50m we screech to an unscheduled halt, **naked disc brake to tarmac.**  
(giving new meaning to the term 'disc brake'!)







As events unfolded on **Australia Day** near Walpole:

There was some foreboding already that morning when we visited the local celebrations only to find... there are **neither bangers nor lamingtons!**

How could such be on this holiest of true-blue holidays?!

Though from there things went (much) worse as one wheel comes off the cart in a big way. Yet there is a stroke of luck on such unlucky day. Some may call it 'pure coincidence' or 'sheer luck', we call it divine intervention:

As we sit on the side of the road seriously scratching our heads who should drive past but the *Workshop Controller* of the nearest Toyota dealership (Manjimup - 120km up the road).

On his way to a fishing outing, he takes pity on us and turns around to see if he could help (showing true *Aussie Spirit* on this public holiday). And boy does he help – setting off such an unexpected and perplexing chain of events that lead us to believe in said divine salvation.

Our *angel in disguise's* diagnosis is swift: Overtightened wheel nuts have led to catastrophic stud failure by stretching/weakening them. Done so by another dealer at an earlier service about a week prior.

Cut a long story short, our '*angel*' calls a mate with a tilt-tray tow truck who brings a hire car piggy-back from Manjimup . Vehicles swapped, our truck is on the way to Manjimup /Toyota as we now have wheels to get back to our camp (*we find it hard to fathom... on Australia Day the whole country shuts down – certainly there is no hire car to be had even on a work day within a 120km radius from where we stranded!*).

Our truck is first on the hoist on the first day back at work and fully fixed that same day.

Total cost of repair, incl. new rim (and freight thereof), loaner car and tow job entirely covered by Toyota.

In retrospect we also feel extremely thankful not having towed the van at time of the incident! *SO HERE WE ARE ON THE ROAD AGAIN – who to thank... coincidence, luck or our trusty LORD??!*

**Off to new horizons:**



From Walpole we travel east through **Denmark** on our way to **Albany**. The latter is major town with all the facilities expected from a regional centre. Founded in 1826 as a military outpost, this oldest colonial settlement in Western Australia offers a lot of history and many great museums to boost. The old historic whaling station is well worth a visit...



*Albany Whaling Station*



*Tool of the trade: Whaler's harpoon*

Explosive head



*Pygmy Blue Whale skeleton*

Artist **Bruce Munro**'s installation *'Field of Light - Avenue of Honour'* is a daunting experience: 16,000 shining spheres illuminate both roadsides up to Mt Clarence as far as the eye can see paying homage to 32,000 ANZAC troops who departed one century ago from Albany to fight in WWI -- 27,500 never came home... 11,500 Australians and New Zealanders fell at Gallipoli alone!

*"It was wildflower season when many of the ANZAC troops departed for the battlefields. Soldiers had flowers in their hats, or their hands. Splashes of colour against a sea of khaki, these blooms were literally their last contact with home!"*



**Near Denmark:**



**Elephant Rock**



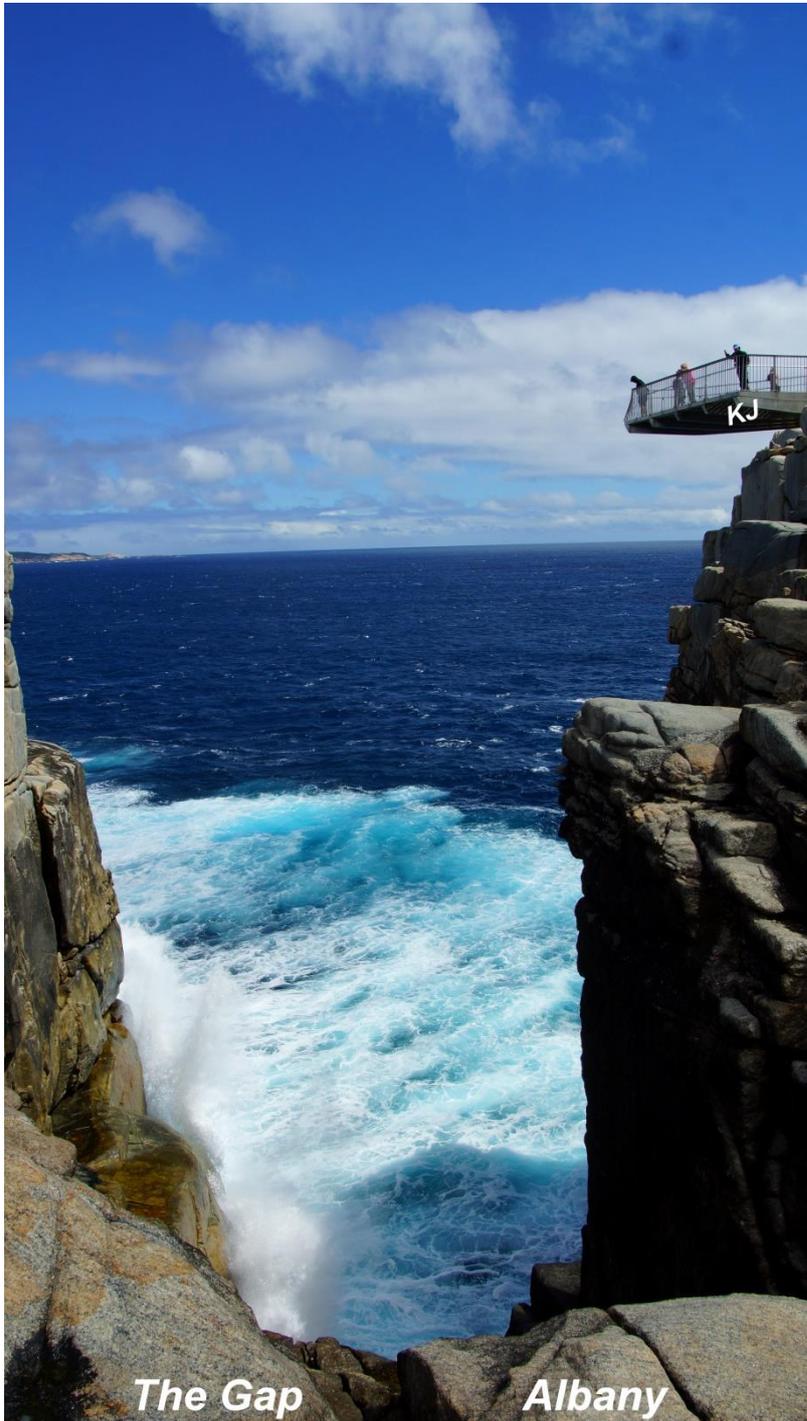
**Elephant Rock beach**



**Silo art - Albany**



**Weedy Sea Dragon**



*The Gap*

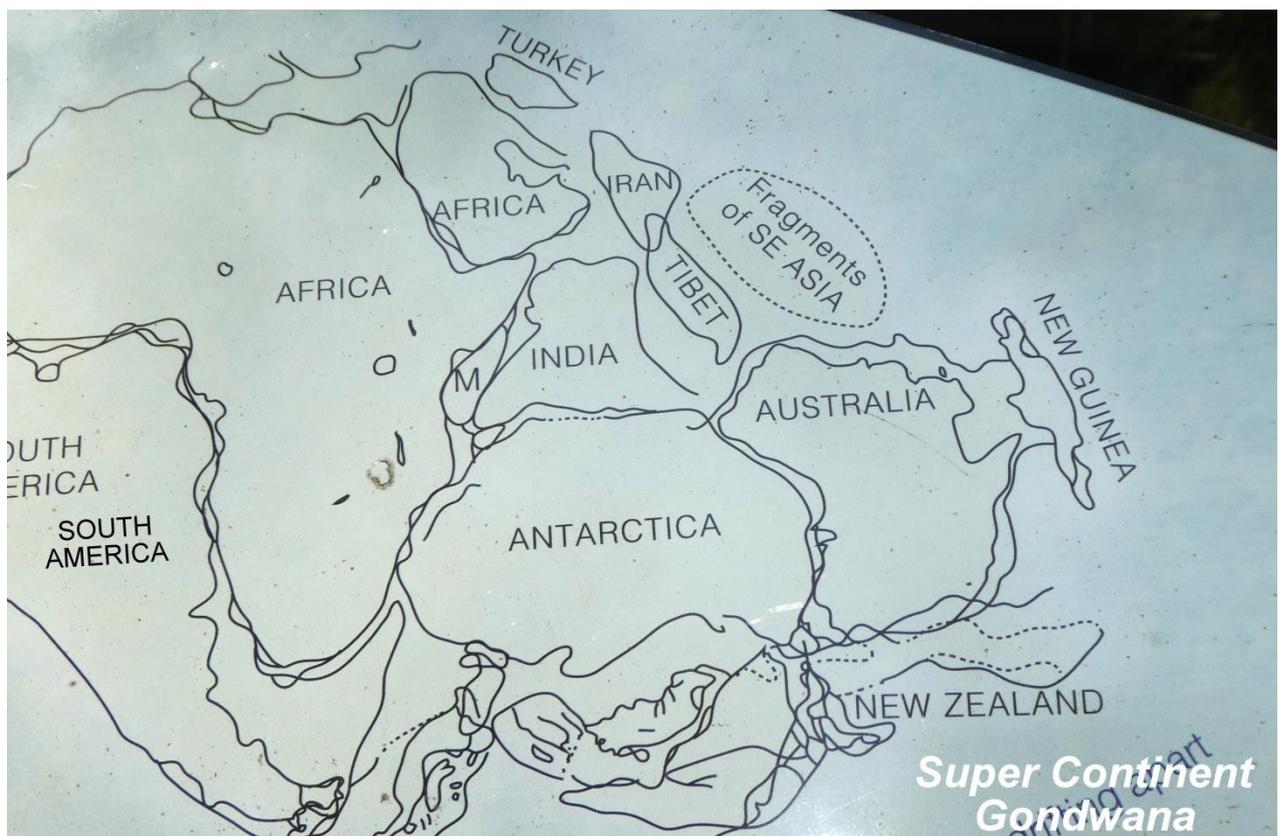
*Albany*

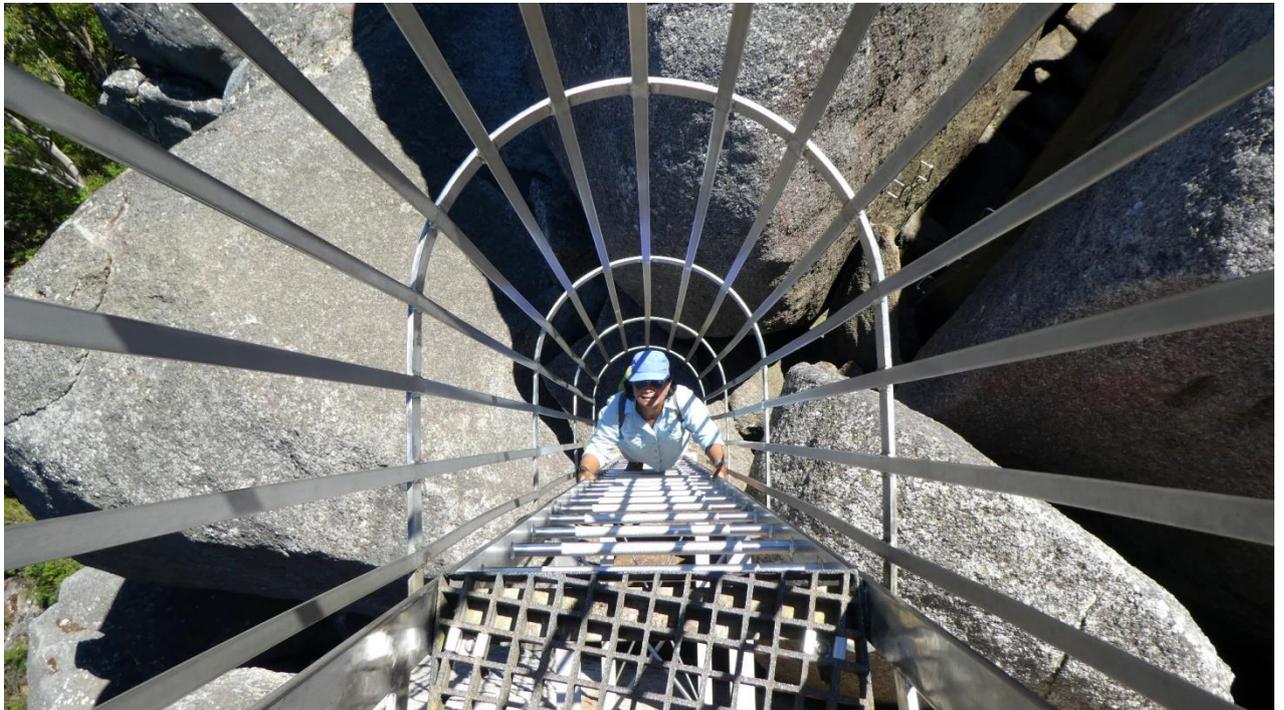
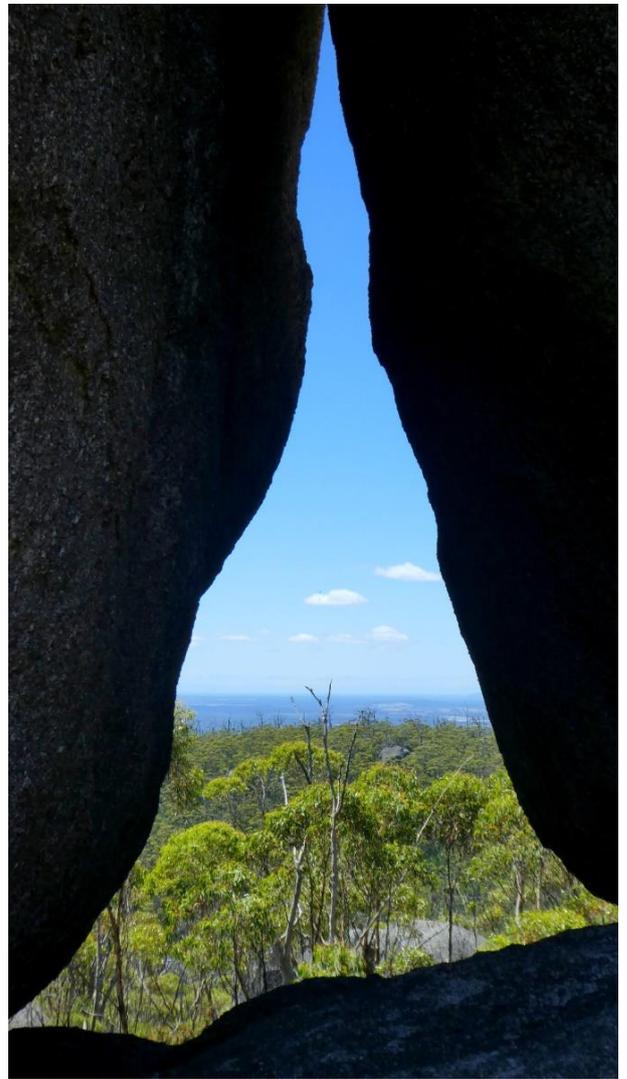


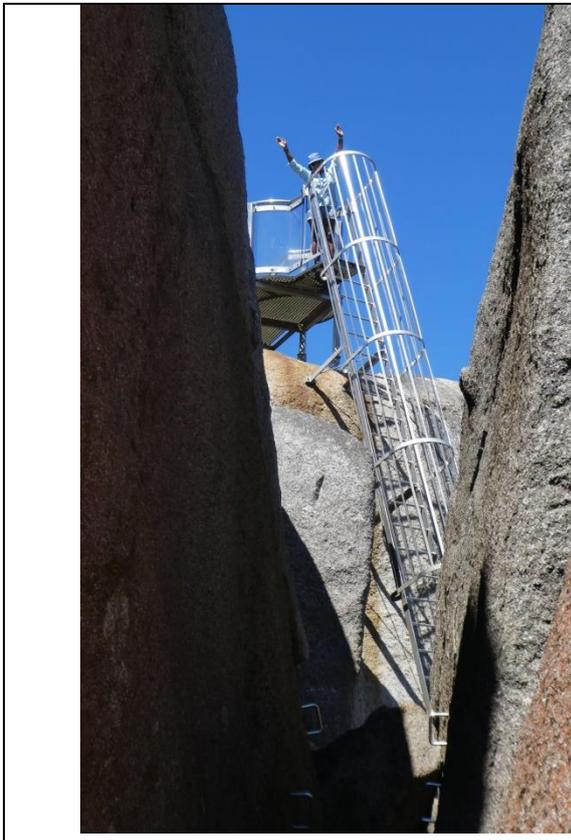


The **Porongorup Range** is an extremely ancient mountain range – result of a slow-motion collision between two continents in the Precambrian age over 1200 million years ago. The Range consists of granite peaks levelled into domes. Some geologists believe they were formed when the Antarctic continent crushed against Australia's southern coast – forming part of the super continent **Gondwana**. Australia and Antarctica separated later in the Paleocene age.

**The Red Tingle Trees** (mentioned earlier) in the forests of Walpole date back to this era.







Suspended from Castle Rock the **Granite Skywalk** offers panoramic views of the **Porongurup** landscape – it is reached by a four kilometre return hike.

In the **Stirling Range National Park (S.R.NP)** Australia's second highest peak is found at 1095m above sea level:

**Bluff Knoll** – its top is conquered by a 'Grade 4' six kilometre return trip. A reasonable level of fitness is required but the trip is well worth the effort rewarding fabulous 360° views from the summit.

(keep watch of approaching clouds at all times as the top is subject to sudden fogging i.e. **orographic cloud formation** and possible severe temperature drops!)

The S.R.NP also offers spectacular wild flower viewing in season. It is home to 1,500 species of native plants with 123 orchid types.

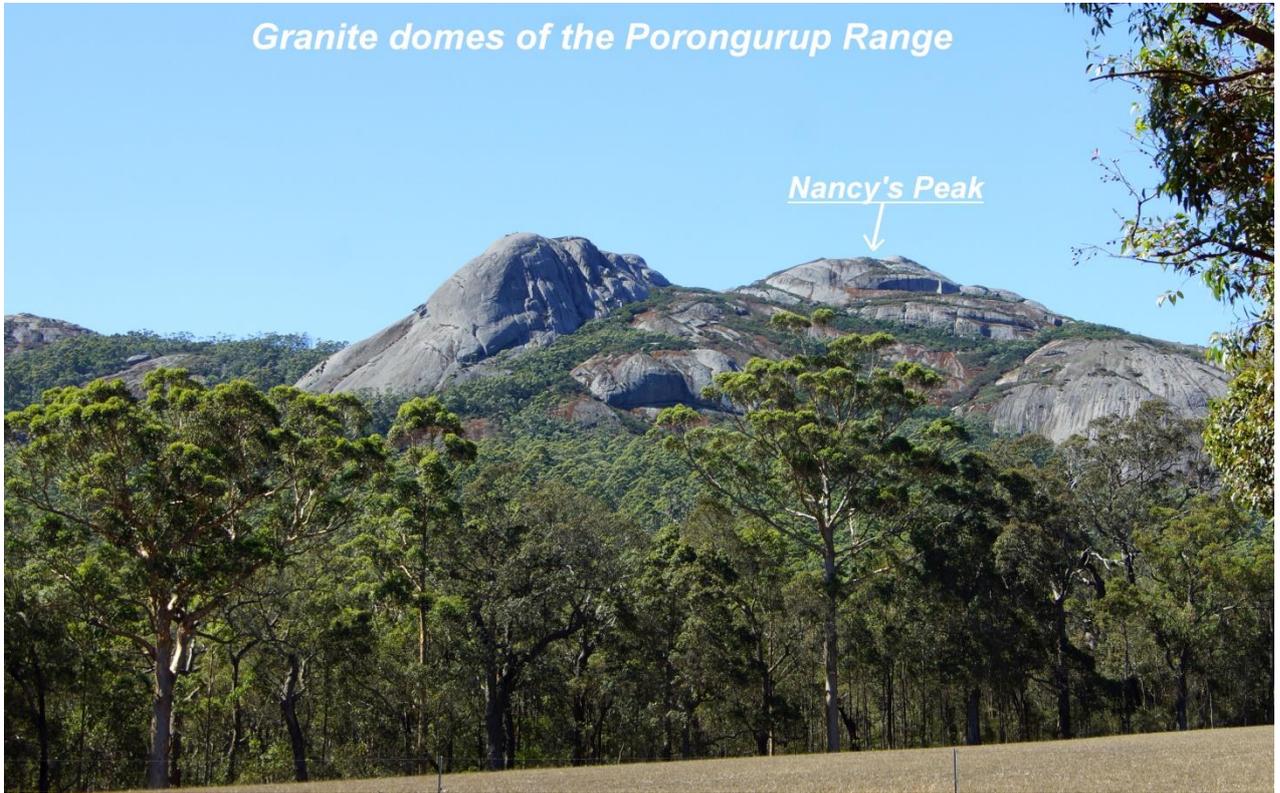


*Sweeping s/e views from Castle Rock Granit Skywalk/Porongurup*



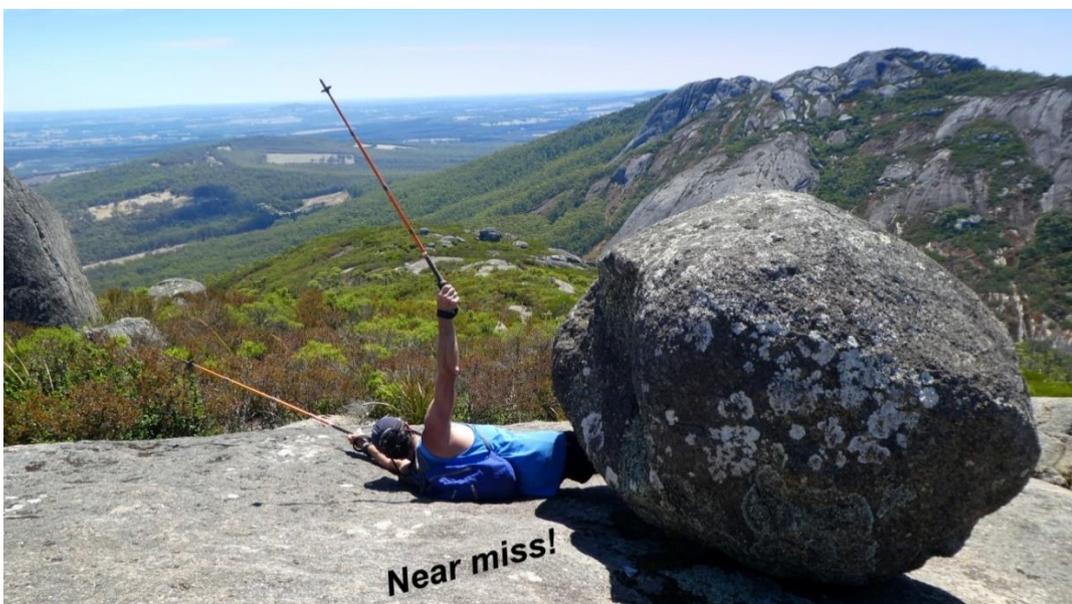
*Distant view of Stirling Ranges*

*Granite domes of the Porongurup Range*



Nancy's Peak

*Stirling Ranges' view atop Nancy's Peak - Porongurup*



**Near miss!**



**Bluff Knoll  
above...**



*Are we meant to scale this??*



*Second highest  
peak  
in Western  
Australia*



As it turns out, this same day by late afternoon a fierce wind whips up, compressing moisture-laden warm air from the sea against the south side **Bluff Knoll** and **Stirling Ranges**.

On contact with the much cooler summit the moist air condenses and forms a so-called **'orographic cloud'**.

This spectacular cloud, like a ghostly veil, creeps over the summits' edges and pours down the leeward side resembling an immense waterfall pouring over the peaks at fascinating speed. Though, halfway downhill, around 500m above sea level the cloud dissipates completely as it contacts the warmer air below!

The last time we witnessed an event like this was in Capetown/South Africa: Table Mountain is famous for its "tablecloth cloud" formed for exactly the same reasons as this one over the Ranges – NATURE AT ITS BEST!

*Leeward edge of orographic cloud pouring over Bluff Knoll*



*Orographic cloud - Stirling Ranges*



A spectacular event – we watch in awe for an hour. Judging by the rapid leeward fall of the cloud and violent gusts at ground level we estimate 30- 40 knot winds at the top accompanied by a severe temperature drop! – Hikers are well advised to heed the sign below.

Suffice to say, this a weather phenomenon to be reckoned with!



**Final word of wisdom on another weather wonder:**



**Locals tell us “the cold winds down here never stop - (fact! they don’t). they only change direction occasionally” – Summer? Never mind - bring your winter woolies!**  
Our trusty Matrix diesel heater is getting a good work out with temps dropping to single digit °C’s on numerous nights 😊

**Next episode: Eastward bound... Nullarbor – South Australia**

***Greetings from  
Chris and Katherine***

