

## Cape Crusaders – Part 10

Frid Nov 24/2017 – Total distance travelled **17,764km** (11,102m)

Girraween was our last stop in Queensland - New South Wales finally calls us back:



*Looks like the 'Jennings mob' had their priorities in order when crossing the border!*



Passing through **Tenterfield** we find out what strong German connection this town has.

Indeed they have a sister town in Ottobeuren in the Allgau Alps of Swabia.

Turns out, the friendly lady in the tourist office comes from my own home town of Ravensburg.

We even share the same fate: Just like me she came to Australia for a holiday first, got hooked and returned for good.

We have a good old chinwag in Swabian dialect – what a hoot! Certainly, this Aussie country town German encounter gets me by surprise...



The initial idea was to check out Mann River Nature Reserve near Glen Innes. We find it closed for maintenance work, change plan on the spot, cross the Dividing Range and head east to the familiar camp territory of **Broadwater Bridge** on **Mann River** west of Grafton. We arrive late after the long drive from Girraween National Park in Queensland and are greeted with a promising sunset.



The following morning presents like this ...



***Mann River maximised!***



***Mann River - Camping in the 'middle of nowhere'!***

We unequivocally vote this one “Best Spot“ of the whole trip – clear waters – 27.5C – swimming holes – rapids (spa pools) – green grass – no crowds: It simply has it all – PLUS crocs are absent 😊



***Clear waters of Mann River***





*Our voted 'Best Spot'; Mann River/NSW*



*Croc free relaxation*



*Mann River frog man*



Follow the friendly frog man →



→ downstream



Frogman surfaces at camp site



Swimming hole at camp site

*Just like the previous year this area seems to attract spectacular weather in between glorious days:*



*Mann River never disappoints putting on a show!*

To the North behind the distant ridge on the photo above lies **Clarence River Gorge**.

Only a few miles as the crow flies but a 1 ½ hour roundtrip by car from here, along a one-way road into this spectacular valley. We had heard about the unique beauty of the Gorge and are keen to find out more. After five nights at Mann River (the longest we've stayed anywhere) we head on over...



*Camp Matrix on Clarence River*

At the end of this valley north-west of Grafton lies an 8 ½ thousand acre cattle property (**Heifer Station**) run by a chap called 'Neil'. He runs about 500 beasts on the land, which roam freely amongst the countless campsites along the river frontage. There are also plenty of hideaway camp sites with spectacular views for those who don't need to be close to the river. Some are in hidden side valleys with their own creeks and swimming holes. There are plentiful hiking and 4WD trails.

Neil ensures plenty of privacy for his guests: Camp spots are set at least 200- 250meters apart.

He offers to take us up into the Gorge by speedboat which we gladly accept (for a small fee).

We disembark the tinnie at the end of the navigable part of the River, climb up the basalt rock face and hike the remaining 900m to the spectacular Clarence waterfall.

The bush walk from the waterfall back to camp takes about 2 ½ hours along a most picturesque bush track (cow trail). Passing a crystal clear spring fed creek on route we gladly rehydrate...







*Clarence River Gorge*



*End of the navigable part*



*Climbing the basalt rocks  
out of the Gorge*

***A 900m bush walk from here takes us to the Clarence River Fall.***



***Thirst quencher: Rehydrating on a cool clear spring fed creek along the 2 ½ hour hike back to camp***





Nah... just a logodile, mate!



Kelpie 'Mick'  
loving Katherine



Clarence River near Grafton

At **South West Rocks** we visit old friends **Brian and Megan** who have successfully escaped the 'Big Smoke' and settled into their brand-new home up here. We have never been to this coastal town before and are impressed by the glassy clear waters and stunning beaches. Ugly weather once again prohibits us from taking photographic evidence of the location's beauty.

However, on the point sits the old 'Trial Bay Gaol' where scores of Germans, suspected enemy collaborators, were once interned at the onset of WWI. Seems crazy – surely these hapless folks must have chosen Australia to escape Europe's problems in the first place. Attacking from 'behind enemy lines' must have been the last thing on their minds as they were building their futures here!



The onset of World War I brought a new use for the site. Trial Bay Gaol was reopened to hold over 500 men of German descent. Coming from Australia and German colonies in Asia, the internees were an elite group of academics, professionals and craftsmen who had been classified as 'enemy aliens'. In May 1918, however, camp security was threatened, and the internees were relocated temporarily to Holsworthy.





**Please don't lock me up!**

***I'm a 'friendly' just trying to get on with life and offering my services for the common betterment of the land...***

However, we do learn a few things about kangaroo safety – must say we've never felt intimidated or threatened by bouncing wildlife anywhere on our travels. They must have some unusually aggressive individuals here...?! - Maybe THEY should be locked up 😊

<p>If you feel threatened by a kangaroo, retreat in a crouched or crawling position to a safe distance.</p> <p>If you are under attack, drop to the ground and curl up into a ball with your hands protecting your face and throat.</p>  	<p><b>NEVER</b></p> <p><b>WALK DIRECTLY</b> toward a kangaroo</p> <p><b>STAND UP TALL</b> stare or hold your arms out toward a kangaroo</p> <p><b>FEED OR INTERACT</b> with a kangaroo</p>
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We fly by the **Ellenborough Falls** south-west of Wauchope on the way to **Blue Knob** at Weelah Nature Reserve north of Gloucester.

 <p><b>Ellenborough Falls now second highest</b></p> <p>In a major revision of Australian geographical fact, Ellenborough falls has been found to be Australia's and the southern hemisphere's second highest waterfall with a single drop of 200 metres. The highest falls in the southern hemisphere are located at Wallaman Falls west of Ingham in North Queensland.</p>	
<p><b><i>Blue Knob Lookout lies 202m above sea level – this doesn't sound much but the views to be had from up here are staggering. We enjoy 70km visibility on day 2! ↓↓</i></b></p>	



***Blue Knob arrival - level with the clouds on day 1***



It has been one of those things on my 'tick-off' list for a while: **Camp one night on top of Blue Knob!** Luckily weather is on our side – only light winds are forecast. Upon arrival the clouds hang low and not before too long we are completely fogged in and it is getting rather chilly. What a grand feeling to be cosy cooped up in our Matrix, diesel heater once more warming our butts while Katherine's tasty chicken casserole is simmering. A little TV session (fab reception up here!), hot showers and we're off to bed. The alarm is set for 5.45am as not to miss the sun rise (I am NOT an early bird!). A first peek out the door due east reveals a thin blue line clearing in the thick fog. No breeze. The air is moisture laden and feels heavy - utterly still! I climb out of the nest armed with my camera. Warmly rugged up, from the viewing tower the next 1 ½ hours are spent watching the day unfold. **Gosh, was it worth coming up here to experience nature's finest...!**



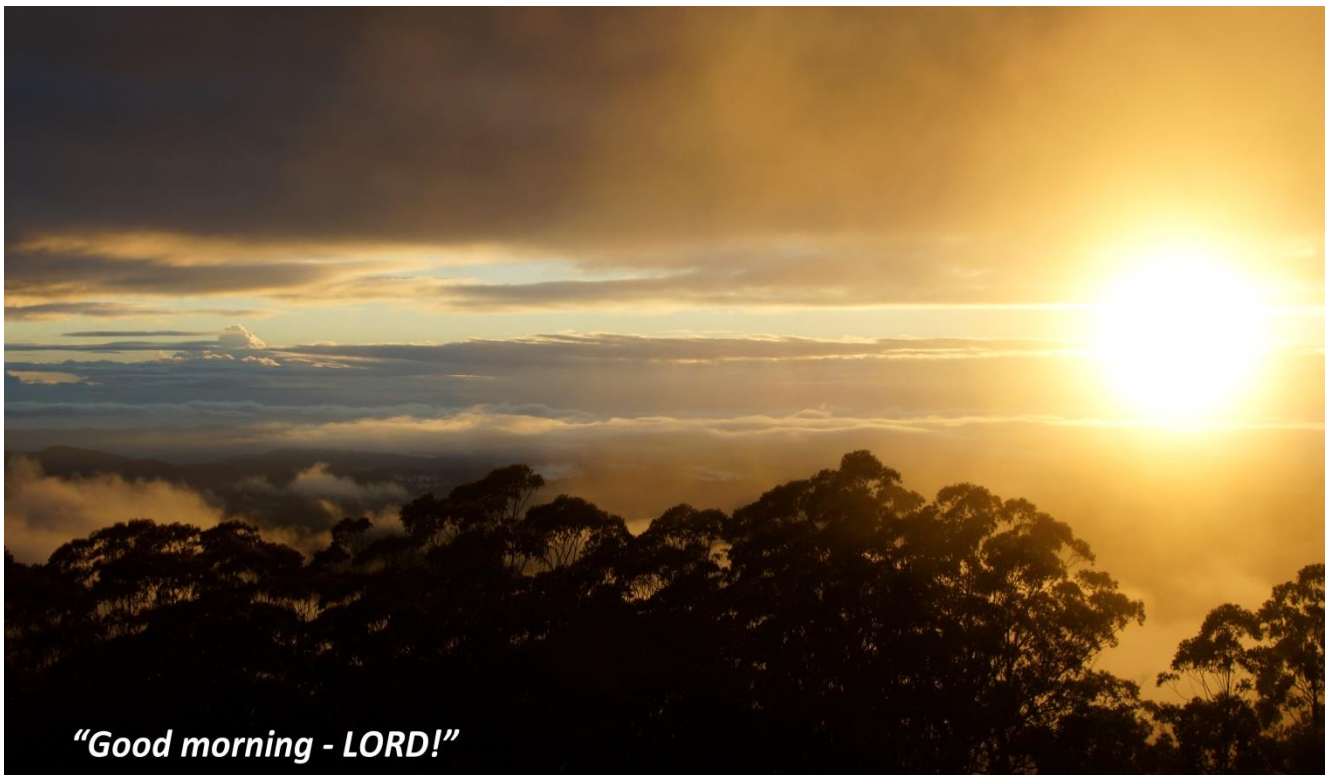
**Soon after arrival bottom dragging clouds enshroud us – we are fogged in completely until dawn breaks.**



*Blue Knob - heavy night fog clearing*



*Blue Knob - daybreak*



*"Good morning - LORD!"*



*First rays' touch*



*Katherine wants part of the action with her binoculars*





*Blue Knob tower*



*Blue Knob warming*



***Our magnificent MATRIX has brought us safely from the ends of the earth...  
to the top of the world... and deep into rainforests!***



***Camp Matrix from the top of the world...***



*... deep into rainforests!*



*TARZAN's territory*

**And we push on further through paradise...**



*God's country: Road from Bundook to Gloucester/NSW*

**Mind you, it's not all paradise for some!**

**Australia has a massive problem with feral animals causing annual livestock losses worth millions of \$\$\$**



**Vermin WARNING: This farmer doesn't take prisoners! 15 feral dogs and cats run out of luck...**



**Latest victims of farmer's pay-back on public display**

The 'Steps Of Girrba' west of Gloucester on the Barrington River are our next stop.



**Swimming hole**

**'Steps Of Girrba' campsite on Barrington River**

*The  
Steps  
Of  
Girrba*



The coast calls us back in the end, first to the lush green picture-book-pretty area of **Wootton** in the *Seal Rocks* hinterland. Keen to see how well our dear friends Michaela and Franz (Fis) have settled into their new country abode we (short notice) alert them about our advance.



*At Fis and Michaela's acreage in the lush coastal hinterland at Wootton/NSW*



*Friends Michaela and Fis*

***True to their ever welcoming hospitality they successfully lure us into lunch with a German speciality dish called 'Kaesspaetzle'***

***(traditional Swabian pasta bake with loads of cheese and parsley – one of my all-time favourites!!)***





***For the uninitiated:  
Scrumptious Kaesspaetzle  
up close***



***Finest Grappa Kaesspaetzle digestive***

By the looks of their fertile orchards and overflowing fruit trees they will be harvesting more grapes, lemons, lime and oranges, figs, apples, hazelnuts and garden vegies than they can ever consume.  
***Running a roadside produce stall might just be the 'ticket of change' from hectic Sydney life!?***



***fresh harvest -  
lettuce for lunch***



Nearing our weekender, civilisation beckons as we enter **Port Stephens/Hawks Nest** – the last stop before Sydney – Already we reminisce as our tour begins to close: After six months on the road we try to comprehend the prospect of our first night in a brick home, no wheels attached, no space limits and unlimited hot water for showers...



*Taking in the ocean breeze and smelling the salt air in the morning feels invigorating.*



*Smelling salt & sea - Bennets Beach - Hawks Nest*



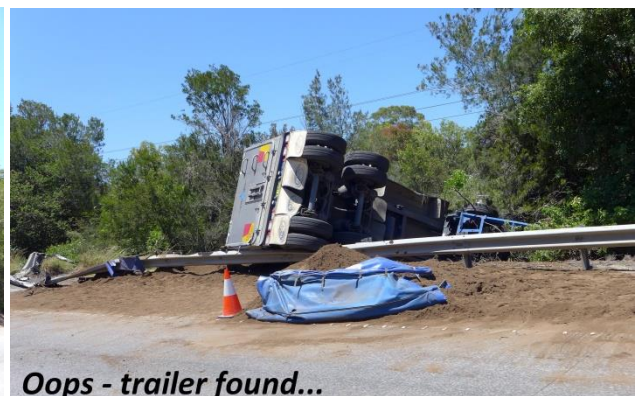
*Scenic Jimmy's Beach - Hawks Nest*

After connecting with many Hawks Nest friends we set off on our **final leg into Sydney...**

Some chap loses his trailer on the freeway – One imagines, the poor guy must be rattling in his boots!



*Lost ya trailer, Mate!!*



*Oops - trailer found...*



### The Great Sydney Countdown

M1	
Minmi	8
Wallsend	19
Toronto	32
Sydney	150
Gosford	
Sydney	123
Sydney	106
Sydney	83
Gosford	
Sydney	77
Hornsby	
Sydney	61
Hornsby	
Sydney	52
Sydney	31
Sydney	25



*Over one final hump*



*Long way from the Cape... ...and welcome home 😊*



Special 'thanks' go to AOR (Australian Off Road) for our magnificent Matrix which blessed us with a trouble free journey.

And a very large 'thank you' to Katherine who conjured up a consistent stream of wonderful gourmet meals on wheels.

She also excelled in her role as chief navigator, tirelessly researching and choosing the best places. Katherine was behind the wheel for a number of stints though I didn't quite pass her required skill test in the navigator's seat (too slow in directing while on the move). Therefore I was assigned to safely steer the rig to destination, doing the dishes and dealing with hardware (i.e. setting up camps).



**Summa summarum/sum of sums/the verdict:**

*“Our **Crusade to the Cape** has been a sound success. For us a test we cherished and a challenge successfully mastered - in anticipation of future explorations of this amazing country we are so lucky to live in. The greatest pleasures were meeting country folk or fellow travellers along the way and experiencing a never-known-before freedom from time restraints to spend the days as they came, exploring this vast land and admiring its stunning nature. Judging by the enthusiastic feedback from numerous of our readers many might be inspired to soon seek adventures of their own...!”*



*Thus the sun sets on our adventure*



*Keep well until next time!*



**“TheNotSoGrey Go-Mads”**

**Greetings from  
Chris and Katherine**