



From Porcupine Gorge we head South through Hughenden to Muttaborra. After camping on the stagnant and lifeless Thomson River there, **Lake Dunn** 170km to the east surprises us with plenty of water entertaining a colourful array of bird species and wildlife. The lake sits on private property and the water stems from a major downpour back in January (now Sept at time of writing). The station has not seen rain since but they consider themselves lucky: Most of Outback QLD (and NSW for that matter) has not seen rain for six years. All the hundreds of Outback creeks we have crossed so far are bone-dry; many rivers are reduced to stagnant billabongs (waterholes) if they still carry any water at all. Locals are reeling from this drought and many small villages are threatening to fold up as their economy is on the brink of collapse. The tourist dollar, treasured and welcome by many shop keepers and businesses, is only a temporary life line that lasts a short five winter months. Most Australian coastal dwellers have little idea about the seriousness of our parched Outback's current struggles!







Ironically, much of this bone-dry land sits atop an ocean-size pool of water: The Great Artesian Basin. A lot of this precious wet is pumped through bores to water folk and stock but only soaking rain can bring the rivers back to life and the country to normal.





The road to and from Lake Dunn is part of the so called **L. Dunn Sculpture Tour**. Starting from **Aramac**, the triangle roundtrip features the biggest permanent outdoor sculpture exhibition (...“in the world” according to advertisers). Created by, as some say, **“a Sheila with too many roos loose in the top paddock”**: A local sculptor who resides on a grazing property and needed a platform to display her work. With incredible creativity and astonishing detail she turns junk into life-like art that puts smiles on the faces of passing travellers. Make sure to take plenty of food and drink (plus “a tankful of gas”!) to enjoy a picnic lunch and afternoon tea before embarking on the daylong 220km gravel-road journey to view the thirty odd sculptures. Here are but a few...







*Sheep's body detail*



*Lone Rider*



*The echidna*





*Emu with chicks*



*The Hog*



*Kookaburra*

We end up in the tiny town of Alpha with its numerous visitor luring murals – all featuring early settlement times. This place is much more alive - even has some economic offerings: The butcher sells award winning sausages (one way to lure a German!), the baker prize fetching pies.





Feisty Nola (80), a volunteer, rides her 'Harley' into town seven days a week to man ("wo-man") the local Tourist Info pointing visitors in the right directions. She says, four stubbies of XXXX beer every afternoon keep her going and she doesn't touch sweets nor eat pies. Though she highly recommends the 'Steak, Pepper & Cheese variety at the baker's next door!

Nola, sweet one of a kind and full of humour, says she's never met a 'bad person in all her years at the Info' and happily obliges to pose on her pocket rocket for the photo ☺

Afterwards we follow her 'Steak, Pepper & Cheese directions and the pies are delicious!

#### On the side...

Has anyone heard about making authentic fresh **yoghurt on the run?**

Acquire an **EasyYo Kit** from the supermarket, mix the culture sachet with water, shake & let mature (instructions on the pack!), then store in fridge (as easy as it sounds!).

There is a choice of different styles (we like 'Greek'). What a bonus for the travelling yoghurt lover!

We never knew until a fellow traveller by the name of 'Linda' let us in on this secret - we fondly think of her as we tuck into our yoghurt topped brekkies!





We reside by a number of lakes: Bundoora Dam, Theresa Dam and Lake Maraboon. All the while temperatures are soaring in the high thirties. Frequently we spot dust devils sweeping the savanna.







We try our luck for more yabbies but much to Katherine's disappointment only score one eel-tail catfish:  
Although filleted and crumbed it tastes absolutely ghastly...  
our promising looking dinner hits the bin in an instant!



*Eel-tail Catfish*



*A 'Willy-Willy' dust devil sweeps the savanna*







*Camp Matrix fire gaze*

One thing has to be said, the idea man at AOR (Australian Off Road) must be a very practical bloke. How else would one think of a fire wood stacker for a caravan? Far from being a practical joke our Matrix wood rack is part and parcel of touring and free camping – not just a fancy gizmo.

Camping for us means cooking and baking in the camp oven, sizzling meat over the open flame, potatoes or vegies roasting in foil and fire gazing, wine in hand, when the chores are done 😊



*Fire wood rack getting a good work-out*

Picking the right wood for the job does the trick: **Gidgee** and **Snappy Gum** work well as they produce the long-lasting heat-retaining coal needed for camp oven stewing or baking.





On our way south we must stop by one famous highlight: **Carnarvon Gorge**.

A National Park since 1932 this location offers an unforgettable journey into a dramatic steep-sided gorge with towering majestic sandstone cliffs. Carnarvon Creek, fed by multiple artesian springs, is constant-flowing. We venture deep into multiple lush and narrow side-canyons, cooling as if they were air conditioned while temperatures outside reach 38C.







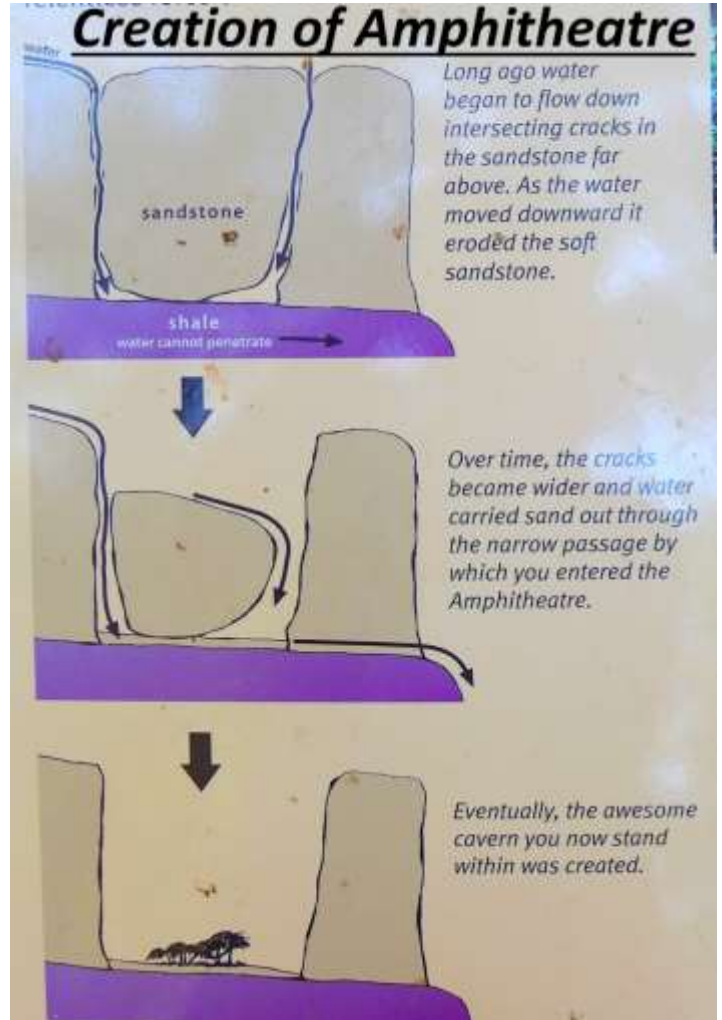
***Boowinda side-canyon***



***200m deep inside Boowinda***



**Boowinda** is an indigenous word meaning ‘thunder’, and it is therefore well worth remembering in case you hear thunder in this part of the gorge: Time to get out fast as Boowinda is prone to flash flooding! Then there is the **Amphitheatre** – one of those places that need to be experienced as words or pictures cannot do it justice. It is accessed by a narrow, elevated slot canyon which opens up into a towering triangular vertical-walled amphitheatre with a window to heaven 60m above – indeed a place for quiet contemplation!







*Amphitheatre window to heaven above*



*During our visit to the Amphitheatre the sun moves into position a moment in time beaming a ray of light through the window above into one of the theatre's corners – a stunning moment that only lasts a few precious minutes.*



*Amphitheatre special effect: KJ's ray of light from heaven*

On our second day we tackle **Boolimba** Bluff; the steep climb, almost 1000 steps and 200 vertical meters above Carnarvon Creek, rewards us with breathtaking views. Although far in the distance we notice a southerly change creeping in. In two days we hike almost 38km checking out every remote corner and side-canyon of Carnarvon Gorge – just in time before the weather caves in!



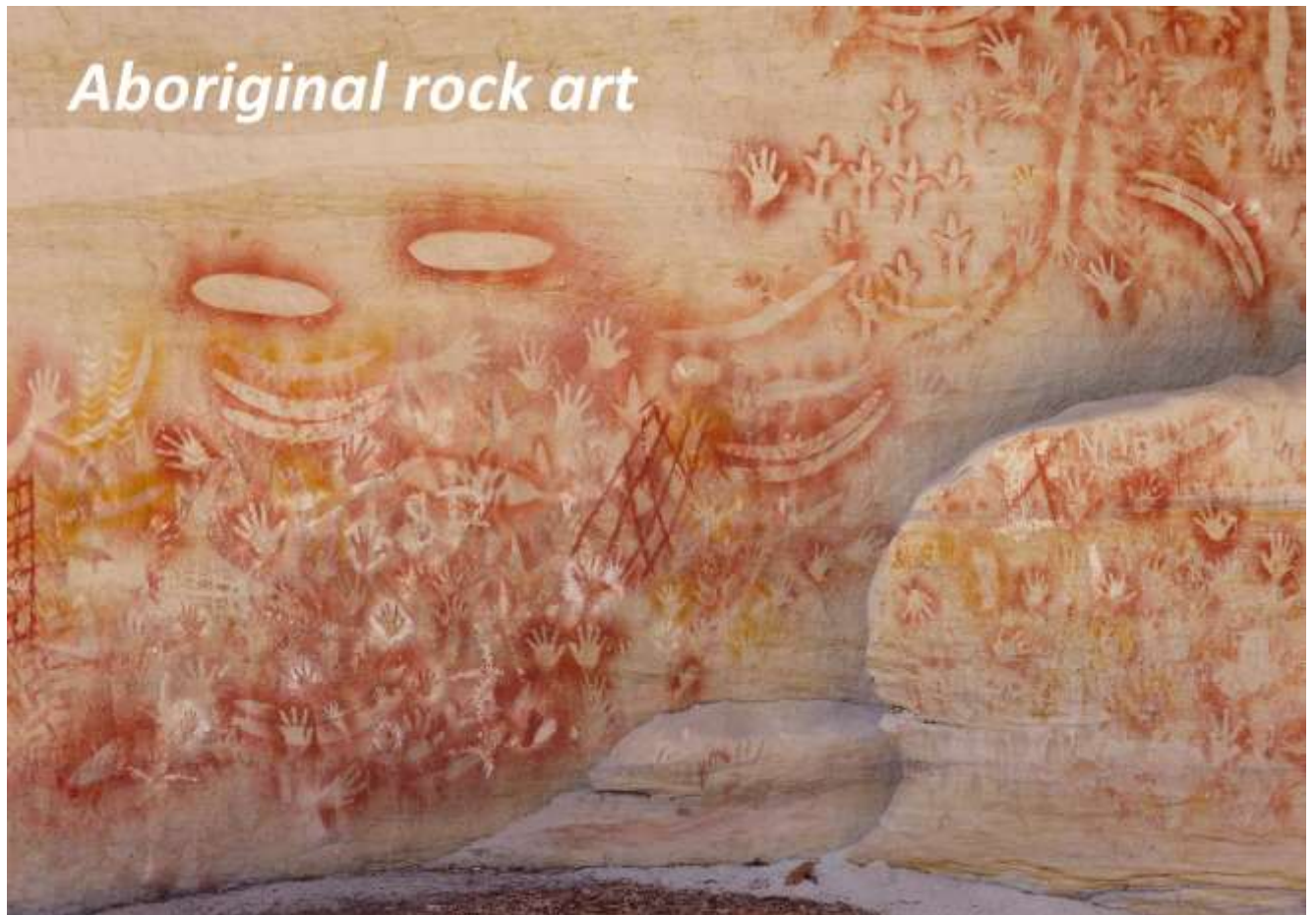
***Carnarvon Creek's  
spring waters revitalising a  
weary hiker***



***There are up to 20 creek  
crossings like this  
one...***







### **The Art Gallery**

Australian Aborigines have no actual written language. Their stories have been recorded by stencils, freehand painting or engraving. Stencils were applied by blowing finely-ground powdered ochre pigment and water from the mouth around an object held against the sandstone wall.

Bodies of their deceased were often wrapped in paperbark and laid to rest in burial caves.

Some of the bodies of their people were removed without consent and efforts towards having these returned to their land are ongoing.





***Aboriginal burial site***





***Where real fun begins: Quite some way beyond the sign 'Official Track Ends Here'...***



***Reaching the far ends of Mickey Creek's Gorge – a side-canyon to Carnarvon Gorge***







(no tree-hugger)  
**Tree- Hongi**



**Tackling Boolimba Bluff**

Hiking poles, although very popular in Europe for years, here still seem to carry the stigma of *'invalid's first step to a walking frame'* for some. Others may comment sarcastically *"...not a whole lotta of snow out here, mate"*. BUT the comparison or analogy of a **4WD vs a 2WD** vehicle gets the nod by most confirming the message begins to sink in. Hope yet, **Nordic Walking** may indeed catch on downunder sometime soon. Not only does it turn a human being into a four-legged hiking power house while preserving knee joints on downhill runs, it also adds 20% to one's aerobic effort! Most would agree, THAT IS a good thing...





*Atop Boolimba Bluff*







*Boolimba Bluff/Carnarvon Gorge -  
early morning with southerly change looming*

***Later that day at Sandstone Camp: Our 4 ½ month sunny spell ends!***



*Storm clouds gathering over Camp Matrix*

**What an insanely long sunny, blue skies run we've had!**

Since we left Sydney mid-May we haven't had a full day of rain! That long sunny spell is broken today... God bless the farmers, they desperately need the wet – we rejoice with them.

No reason to complain for us!

Fact is, we quite enjoy the different experience of being cooped up in our super-cosy Matrix, diesel heater, air con (we have indeed used lately!), inside hot shower and bathroom facility, three-burner stove and best of all... watching TV in bed 😊

We certainly don't envy anyone out there with their canvas-clad outfits as the elements unleash:

The temperature drops from 38 to 17C in 24 hours.

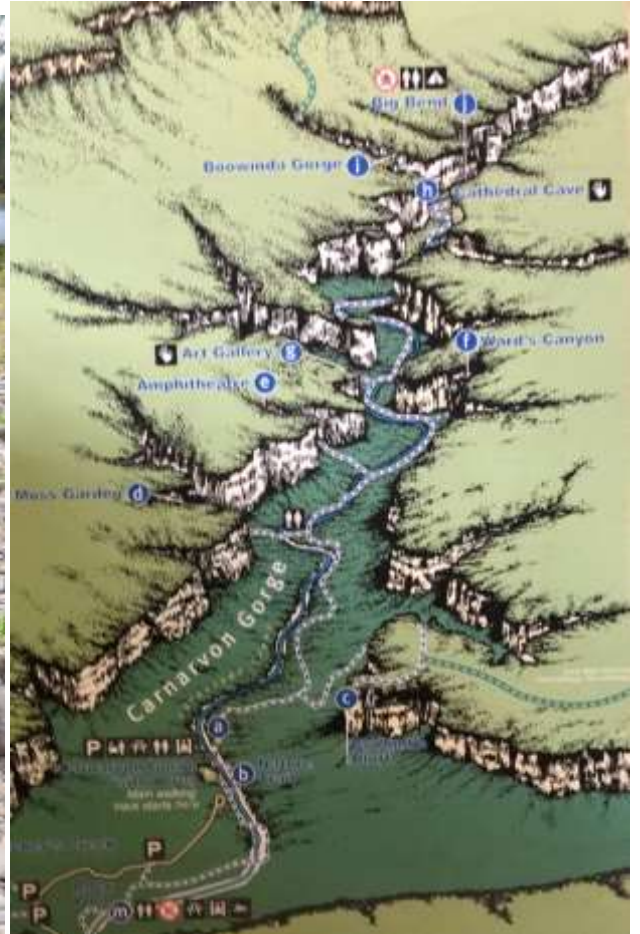
It feels 'arctic' after weeks of heat wave conditions – but no need for despair:

Our trusty diesel heater keeps us warm as toast 😊😊



***Any other ideas for a rainy day?***





Map of Carnarvon Gorge



**"TheNotSoGrey Go-Mads"**

***Greetings from  
Chris and Katherine***