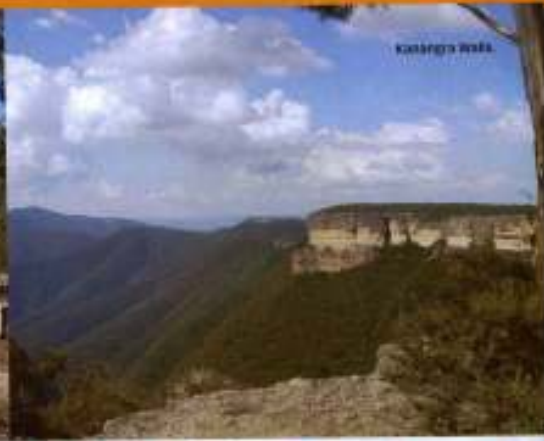


Feature - Trakkadu Safari



A Six Day Trakkadu Safari within 200km of Sydney

Words & Pictures by Ron Newland, N39102.

At the end of March 2006 my wife Roslyn and I had 6 days to fill in while visiting Sydney. The solution was a camping trip to places just west of the Blue Mountains in our then 12 months old Trakkadu. The vehicle is a pop-top campervan based on a T5 VW Transporter modified by Trakka. The destinations we chose were places we had either not previously visited or had not seen for many years.

Day 1. We lunched in the van while taking in the beautiful view of the Grose Valley from Govett's Leap. Our first destination was the Kanangra Boyd National Park which we reached via the Jenolan Caves. The view of Kanangra Walls that afternoon was breathtaking and the vantage points easily (wheelchair) accessible. A walk over the Kanangra Walls Plateau was also well worth the effort. Our first night was spent in the National Park campground at Boyd River Crossing. The site was unpowered and there were no showers but the ambience and wildlife were excellent. The self-pay fee collection box had been removed by vandals so there was not even a nominal fee.

Day 2. After passing through Oberon we reached the campground at Lake Lyall located just before Lithgow when travelling west. This was an attractive, inexpensive campground (\$10/ night for an unpowered site), ideal for boating and fishing. The facilities were good but only one site had power. We woke to a frosty morning and were grateful for our Webasto heater.

Day 3. Our next stop was the historic town of Glen Davis. To arrive at our destination we travelled along the Mudgee Road, turned off at Capertee and passed through the spectacular Capertee Valley. Many years ago our artist friend Les Graham (a Brushman of the Bush) had told us of the great beauty of this valley and that it was one of his favourite locations for painting. We were not disappointed. The road into Glen Davis borders the Gardens of Stone National Park with its amazing sandstone formations and

wonderful photographic opportunities. The valley itself is bounded on three sides by imposing cliffs and beyond Glen Davis joins the Wolloml National Park. Glen Davis contains interesting remnants of its former life as a thriving community, established to mine shale oil. The mine became uneconomical and was closed in 1953. Perhaps with today's record oil prices the mine may reopen as the shale oil deposit is said to be extensive. The council campground was in a pleasant location, had hot showers and, surprisingly, was free. The sites were unpowered and the few shops in the town were permanently closed.

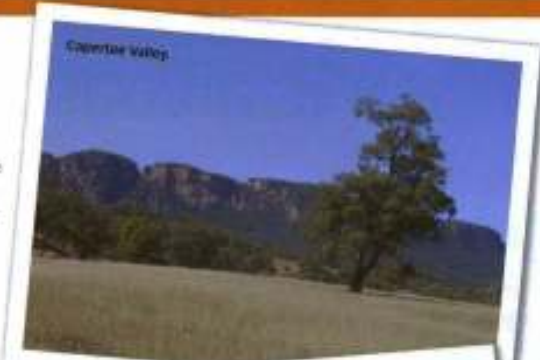
Day 4. The road from Glen Davis to Dunn's Swamp via Glen Alice was unsealed and, in places, corrugated. We saw this as a small price to pay for access to an exquisitely beautiful area in the Wolloml National Park. Of course there is a swamp at Dunn's Swamp but there is also a large lake, formed by a dam on the Cudgegong River, which is ideal for boating, fishing and swimming. The rock formations, bushwalks and wildlife are added attractions. The campground is popular, partly as a consequence of having been featured in the Getaway program on TV. The sites are unpowered, there are no showers and the toilets are of the composting variety. The fee was \$3 per person per night.

Day 5. It was only a short drive from Dunn's Swamp to the historic town of Rylstone but, as we had just completed some challenging walks at "The Swamp", we decided to stop there at the Apex Caravan Park. The park had excellent facilities (including a laundry) and was only a short walk to the town. It was \$20 per night (for a powered site) and we had the place to ourselves. Dinner that night was at "The Shed" in the main street where one could have unlimited helpings of pasta, salad and garlic bread for \$10 per person. After a very restful night we were woken by a chorus of birds, including many yellow-tailed black cockatoos. It was quite a performance.

Day 6. Back to Blackheath for lunch at Govett's Leap – we love that view. Then down into the Megalong Valley, to the end of the road where it reaches the Blue Mountains National Park. We saw three camping areas in the valley but chose the one just past the school, next to a creek which the road crossed. The location was great but the facilities were very basic. There was no power and no fee. Some of the roads in the Megalong Valley were very steep so we were grateful for the 400Nm of torque delivered by our 2.5 litre diesel engine.

On returning to Sydney we were left with a feeling of exhilaration as we had seen such a variety of interesting places in such a short space of time and at surprisingly little cost. We were also left with nothing but admiration for the capabilities of our Trakkadu. Our van was the very first of the new series. We were relatively inexperienced having never previously owned a vehicle of this type. In retrospect I think we made several good decisions. Firstly the vehicle; the long wheel base 2.5 litre turbo-diesel VW T5 Transporter is a winner. On a recent trip to Tasmania with a fully laden van, including two bikes, we recorded an average of 8.05 litres per 100km. Another sound decision was to include solar panels. All but one of the sites on our 6 day trip were unpowered but we had sufficient power for the refrigerator, DVD player and lights. Our hot and cold shower was also a very useful addition. Water is heated by the engine using a heat exchanger and the water remains hot for about 24 hours. At the time we saw the Webasto heater as somewhat of an indulgence but would now not be without it.

As mentioned, our Trakkadu at the time was 12 months old. The dock was showing just over 27,000km. In my view it is an incredibly versatile vehicle and an absolute pleasure to drive. 🚐



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