

the Grey Nomad Times

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In this issue:

• Bush poetry rules

• Lively letters

• Competition winner

Lifestyle on the line for aspiring nomads

Australians' growing love affair with overseas travel could be putting the long-term future of the grey nomad lifestyle in jeopardy.

New Roy Morgan research shows more holidaymakers than ever are jumping on a plane instead of jumping in the car ... and that means big trouble for the domestic tourism industry.

"Research on younger consumers indicates the future will see this customer base continue to erode, with Australia's domestic clientele literally dying out," said Tony Charters, convenor of the recent Tourism and Events Excellence conference. He told *the Grey Nomad Times* that governments should be doing a lot more to hold Australians at home, and that the opportunity presented by the grey nomad market was largely being overlooked.

"We are not investing the money we should do to help grey nomads to get around and make the most of their trips," Mr Charters said. "We have to improve access to national parks, to make sure there are good and suitable walks marked out, and that there are volunteer opportunities available."



Will they still be camping when they're grey?

He would also like to see town planning laws looked at to make it easier for people to allow caravans to stay on their properties. And, he says, better facilities and easily navigable touring routes would also help to attract grey nomads from overseas.

However, Mr Charters says grey nomads who like things just the way they are, have nothing to fear.

"This is a very big country and nothing is happening very quickly," he said. "For example, this year visitor numbers to Fraser Island were the same as they were in the early '90s."

If nothing is done - and with

the Aussie dollar still sky high - the fear is that more and more older Australians will choose to join their younger compatriots in seeking adventure overseas.

And could that mean that the grandchildren of today's grey nomads will never hitch up their caravans for the Big Lap? "It is difficult to predict what will happen 30, 40 or 50 years into the future," Mr Charters said. "We don't know what will have happened to oil by then, for example, but the tourism industry certainly needs its grey nomads."

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Bush camper in snake bite horror ordeal

A grey nomad has endured a nightmare 19-hour wait for medical help after being bitten by a snake at an isolated campsite in WA.

When a helicopter eventually reached the 61-year-old man on the Canning Stock Route some 300km east of Newman he was flown to Port Hedland hospital via Newman. He is recovering. The *West Australian* reports the man and his wife were part of a group travelling in seven four-wheel drives. He was photographing birds outside his tent at Durba Springs when he stepped on the snake.

He was probably bitten by the venomous, but normally non-deadly whip snake, which is often mistaken for the lethal king brown.

The travellers called triple-0 on a satellite phone and applied a pressure bandage to the man's leg but had to wait through the night for help to arrive.

"It was just the fact it was so remote," said Newman community paramedic, Chris Hopkins. "In the location they were in, if he had deteriorated it would have been disastrous."

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Characters of the Road

Two years on the road has 'de-stressed' us

Hylda and Jon, both 53, from Grafton have been on the road for two years

What do you travel in?

We have a 17-foot homemade caravan with ensuite towed by a petrol/LPG 100Series 1999 Toyota Landcruiser.

Where do you like to camp?

National Parks are great for the bushwalks, scenic wonders and experiencing nature in general. Bush camps are great for getting away from people and human-made noise and are cheap or often free. Caravan parks are good for the facilities they provide. We like a nice bathroom and toilet occasionally and the laundries are needed sometimes also.

Best thing about the lifestyle?

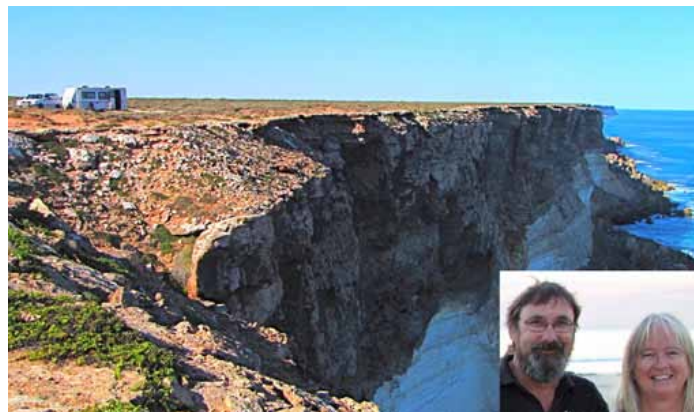
When we get sick of a place we can move on to another and when we like a place we can stay as long as we choose ... how good is that?

Is there anything you miss?

A bigger kitchen would be great! We also miss a nice private bathroom. But we miss our friends and family most.

What have you learned?

More understanding of cultural diversities within Australia ie: Aboriginal links to the



Hylda and Jon appreciate the million dollar views

land and the problems that go with it. Greater respect for the uniqueness and diversity of the Australian landscape.

How have you changed?

We are both more relaxed and less stressed and have new ideas for our future prospects. After living in one place for many years our minds tended to centre wholly on our surroundings. Travel has opened our minds to other thoughts and ideas, which is something we believe was needed.

Do you work as you go?

We've done WOOFing which stands for 'Willing Workers on Organic Farms' where we get free power, water and facilities for two or three hours work a day. We have had volunteering work, plus house sat a couple of times.

Favourite place to camp?

We took a dirt track south off the Nullarbor Hwy in SA and after 1km reached sheer white marbled cliffs which drop down to the pounding sea below and weave their way into the distance in either direction. We set up camp and had the place to ourselves. The view was absolutely breathtaking (see picture above).

Scariest experience?

A caravan tyre blowout in the middle of nowhere at 90km/h. Bits of the tyre were stripped off and left scattered down the road in our wake. In the blazing sun with hundreds of flies for company I finally managed to change the tyre. In the meantime Hylda wandered back along the road picking up the bits of tyre so as not to litter this lovely land.

Nomads in Brief

Factory blaze drama

A massive fire in Canberra has caused camping areas to be evacuated and grey nomads to flee.

The chemical factory blaze sent flames leaping hundreds of metres in the air.

Grey nomads Michael and Joan Hindle from Adelaide were staying in a caravan at Exhibition Park.

"I heard the explosion and I thought it was the army playing silly buggers," Mr Hindle told the *Canberra Times*. "And then I thought, no this is the middle of Canberra ... then [the cops] just rocked up to the caravan and said 'time to go.'"

Bat out of Hell

A woman attacked by a bat at Canada's Jasper National Park has been taken to hospital and treated for possible rabies. The victim was sitting at a table in a picnic area when the bat bit her on the arm and then attacked her jumper. Parks Canada has now posted aggressive bat warning signs. There hasn't been a case of rabies in Jasper in 10 years.

Dingo project

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) says its dingo GPS collar project on Fraser Island is progressing well. Eighteen dingos were fitted with the collars, which send a GPS signal every two hours.

QUIZ CORNER

GRAB A CUPPA AND TEST YOUR GREY MATTA

A Favourite MIDNIGHT WALK DeStINATION:



DO YOU KNOW

1. Which NSW town was made while the sun shone?
2. In which Outback location did artist Hans Heysen like to paint?
3. Which NSW national park is home to a Far Eastern wonder?
4. Where can you find a dog on a tuckerbox?
5. Which town did Thomas Mitchell name after noisy birds?

(Answers on page 5)

the Grey Nomad Times



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Letters to the Editor **Share your thoughts with fellow nomads**

Dear Editor,
I found myself absolutely disgusted by the attitude of Heidi in the 'Ask Jaclyn and Heidi' etiquette section. I find it hard to believe that the editors would support the 'redneck' attitude put across by this woman. NT parks does not even charge for entry to our parks and reserves and this person begrudges paying a few dollars to help maintain facilities that are provided for all travellers. Needless to say that if it is grey nomads who are staying night after night then why shouldn't they pay something to maintain the very facilities they are using?
I am really disheartened to see this in a newsletter that offers some connectivity to fellow travellers.
Shame on Heidi and shame on you for supporting this opinion in a published newsletter.

Gary

(Heidi's opinions are not those of the publishers - Ed)

Dear Editor,
We are only at Issue 2 and it doesn't take much for sardonic sarcastic characters to come out of the closet does it?
I started off reading in open-minded manner, the letter from the GN who commented on a couple who did not pay the park dues. There was nothing in the 'Letter from Heidi' that could be called anything but bigoted, small-minded, sarcastic and sad. Just who the devil does Heidi think she is to refer to park rangers as 'glorified firewood delivery boys'?
I would hazard a guess that if you publish my comment about Heidi's comment that it would only elicit a two-word expletive from her in any

event, and that would of course be in keeping with her 'Heidi -Ho-Ho-NO !' sad and anti-social character profile.

Hattonhall

Dear Editor,
Thank you so much for The Times. Well done. Also, as a solo traveller, I would like to say to Prudence, just do it. There are some wonderful friendly people out there and a lot of other solo travellers, many of whom are women.

Veronica

Dear Editor,
Thanks for your efforts in producing such a great read. We look forward to many more and, as we travel, we will share info for your readers. Keep up the good work, it's most enjoyable. Now back to planning our next adventure.

Max & Judy

Dear Editor
We've just finished reading the 2nd edition of *the Grey Nomad Times*. It was a great read and we are very excited at the thought of hitting the road! My wife and I have been dreaming of becoming grey nomads for a couple of years now but we still seem to be in the planning stage.

I'm sure this situation is very common and there must be lots of couples and singles out there with the same problem. We love to go camping every now and then for a week or so but dream of leaving work and the house chores behind and setting off on a major expedition to far flung regions of Australia.

It would be great hear some stories of how people eventually made the move to become grey nomads and how it worked out for them. Reading

the Grey Nomad Times on a regular basis might just help tip the scales for us!

Paul and Liz

(Over to you guys. How did you take the nomad plunge? - Ed)



Dear Editor,
The lucky gold striker who struck a nugget that sold for US\$1m was "One In A Million". Are there others who have had strikes big enough to pay for the equipment they have purchased in their search for gold?

Acco

Dear Editor,
Leave the parks as they are. Say no to developers.

Doug

Dear Editor,
Definitely shouldn't be allowed. Our national parks are there for the long term for everybody to enjoy, not for business entrepreneurs.

Annette



Dear Editor,
A problem encountered sooner or later by grey nomads is the problem of renewing drivers licences when out of our home state. I will not return to mine (Tasmania) until October 2012, however my licence expires August 2012. I was not

permitted to renew it before leaving Tasmania in April and know from experience the problems of renewing away from home. National Drivers' Licences would be the way to go along with national registration of our vehicles.

Unless things have changed I understand driving a Tasmanian registered vehicle with say Victorian licence is a problem, or is that possible?

Lorraine (JazzinAround)

Dear Editor,
Just to say 'Thanks' we are enjoying the newsletter. We are planning to travel more in the future so great to be updated with the latest and the old true and tried methods of the experienced grey nomads.

Les & Robyn

Dear Editor,
My hubby and I are part of a small group of friends who travel with caravans in Western Australia. If one of us finds an interesting place to visit, that person does the research, contacts the group, and, if we are all up for it, off we go. Our most memorable time was Christmas in the bush at Alexander Bridge campground near Augusta. We all had a job to do and food to bring. We had a traditional Christmas dinner that night ... turkey, pork, ham, chipolatas wrapped in bacon, roast veggies and spuds. And all cooked on the day. We had a campfire that night and some of the campers joined us for Christmas songs. It truly was one magical Christmas in the bush. That's what it's all about, camaraderie and happy campers.

Janet



Our winner picks up a week in a Kea motorhome/campervan

Competition success is a laughing matter

Congratulations to Janet, the winner of our Kea-sponsored funny stories competition.

the winning story

Microwave madness

At a Darwin van park my hubby needed to use a timer as he was downloading files to his computer. I suggested he use the timer on the microwave. "Great idea," he said.

A little later, we were outside reading when hubby went into the van to check the timer and, lo and behold, he hadn't just set the timer, he had set the microwave to cook.

I just heard the words "Oh ***!" and a bit of banging around. I always use the microwave to store bread, biscuits and half-eaten packets of potato chips secured by plastic pegs to keep everything fresh. It's a good idea!!

When hubby opened the microwave door the plastic pegs were melted and on fire and the loaf of bread was well toasted. What a mess!! There are still scorch marks where the pegs were on fire, but the microwave works fine.

Janet (Jangary)

And here's a selection of other rib-tickling entries

After him!

My husband was setting up at Boulder Rocks at Babinda, Queensland, when he thought he heard a little lizard behind him. NOT! It was a massive cassowary! He called out for me and I raced for the camera (OK, I went in the driver's



Janet can camp in comfort in a Kea deluxe motorhome or campervan for one week

door to get my camera from the passenger's side) and then took the photos from INSIDE the van but hey I don't pretend to be anyone's hero. Later that day we got neighbours. When they saw the cassowary He and She ran to their van and locked themselves in. The funniest part was he pushed her out of the way to get in their little van and she was left banging on the door saying: "Let me in!" We later found out they had been chased by a much smaller one. We all had a laugh that night over a campfire.

Leanne & Steve

Furniture removalists

Travelling from Cooktown we were overtaken by a small sedan with a blue cushioned three-piece lounge precariously roped to the roof rack. Further down the track we saw the chair. Someone had picked it up, brushed it off and placed it neatly at the side of the road in the middle of nowhere.

After reaching town, the sedan with its now two-piece lounge was parked in the street.

The next day we ran into a couple we had met in Cooktown who greeted us with wide smiles. We were invited over where they proudly showed us their motorhome with their find, a cane chair with a blue

cushion. "We removed our table to fit this in," they told us. "You have no idea how good it is to sit in something comfortable while on the road ... we are going to take turns on this to rest our sore backs!"

Janet

Storm in a potato pot

Bush camping with no sight of the sky overhead due to the dense lush canopy of green, we set up a two-man tent in the rainforest of Cape Tribulation. It was so hot and we were loving the tropics. Our boys, aged two and four, were excited as we had started cooking our billy full of potatoes on an open fire. All of a sudden, there was a roar like a jet plane overhead. Before we could say "abracadabra" we were drenched by torrential rain. Can you imagine four people soaking wet sitting in a drenched two-man tent with a billycan pot of potatoes? Nothing else could be cooked as the fire was extinguished and the rain fell for hours. Our boys are now aged 31 and 28 and still remember that night!

Les & Robyn

Thanks to Kea, judge Steve Jones, and all who took the time to enter.

The reason rhyme is still flourishing in the bush

Grey nomads are being praised for bucking the trend and helping to keep Australia's rich poetic heritage alive and well. National Poetry Week, which ran from Sept 5-11, passed by largely unnoticed as internet activities and electronic devices continued to push verse down the priority list of the ever-more busy general public.

Melbourne writer and poet, David Campbell, mourns the fact that poetry has failed to spark the nation's collective imagination. "Although the grey nomads wintering in caravan parks up north flock to hugely popular performances of traditional poetry presented by a wandering band of bush poets," he said. "That is the exception."

It seems that while C.J. Dennis, Banjo Paterson and Henry Lawson were all well known in their day, our talented poets from the last 50 years are virtually unknown.

Mr Campbell says whereas once all of the great poets' work was committed to memory and passed on by word of mouth, that oral tradition is quickly disappearing.

He says that those able to quote much of Dorothea Mackellar's *My Country* for example will probably be 60-plus and dredging up memories from long-ago schooldays.

And they're probably sitting around a campfire on the Big Lap.

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A Tops drive from Gladstone

'Great Drives' takes the road from Gladstone to Kroombit Tops



The booming city of Gladstone in Queensland's north has long been a magnet for grey nomads as they explore the wonders of the east coast. Its proximity to the Great Barrier Reef is one of its more obvious drawcards.

For many, the lure of Kroombit Tops National Park, some 85 kilometres to the southwest is also an irresistible one. The journey to adventure begins sedately enough as the Dawson Highway takes travellers to the small country town of Calliope, 20 minutes to the west. Boasting a population of 1700,

Calliope is surrounded by farms and a beautiful hinterland. The nearby Calliope River Historical Village is well worth a visit.

Kroombit Tops-bound travellers then follow the Dawson south towards Biloela for approximately five kilometres before turning left on to Gladstone-Monto Road and then, after just 500 metres, right into Tableland Road.

This road is only partly sealed but, unless there had been a lot of wet weather, is not difficult to negotiate. Caravans should be left behind though



Tops of the World

as it's a fair climb up to the national park and there is no suitable camping once you get there. The Boynedale Bush Camp, further south along the Gladstone-Monto Road is a good option to drop the van. Travellers can enjoy viewing some fascinating old homesteads and native bush as they venture a further 70 kilometres to the park. There are no facilities here and 'rigless' grey nomads can re-acquaint them-

selves with the joys of tent-erecting at one of two popular bush camping sites, The Wall or The Barracks.

The park offers sandstone escarpments, gorges, creeks, waterfalls and a variety of vegetation types. It is also the only place where the unusual call of the endangered Kroombit tinkerfrog can be heard.

For 4WD enthusiasts, no drive from Gladstone to Kroombit Tops would be truly complete without taking the 35-kilometre loop road. It takes in the park's rocky west and delivers stunning views. To reach the plateau of Kroombit Tops, some 400 metres above surrounding areas, is the magnificent climax of a quite stunning drive.



ASK JACLYN and Heidi



Our experts solve your grey nomad etiquette dilemmas

Role Reversal

Dear Jaclyn and Heidi,
Please help. My husband Bob has got to be the worst caravan reverser in Australia ... and he's not getting any better. We've been traveling full-time for three months now and he just seems to get flustered as he is backing into a site. The more people watch the worse he gets and he turns the steering wheel this way, then that. Last week, he scraped the side of the van on a tree and he said it was my fault for not directing him properly! I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. The silly thing is that I grew up on a farm and am used to driving trailers around the place so I know I could do a much better job than him. When I suggested that I try backing the van into future sites he just

laughed and told me not to be ridiculous. He is vey proud.

Raylene

This is a very common problem among grey nomads, especially those towing particularly large vans. It is obviously very stressful trying to reverse into a difficult spot when you are tired after a long day's driving. Having said that, the current situation is clearly not sustainable. You must remember his feelings. Perhaps you could pretend that you are keen to learn how to reverse in case you ever need to do it in an emergency. Get him to take you to an empty supermarket car park or similar and while he thinks he is teaching you, you can actually be teaching him. Let me know if it works.

Jaclyn

I thought that farmer's daughters were made of sterner stuff than this. Seriously, if he hasn't got the hang of reversing a rig after three months on the road, then he isn't going to, any time soon, is he? How do you feel when you arrive at the campsite's bush poets evening or a happy hour get together only to find you and 'Mr Blunderman' are the laughing stock of the entire gathering? You've got to change this. It's time to give this loser the heave-ho out of the driver's seat or to give him the heave-ho out of your life. A chronic inability to reverse a caravan is grounds for divorce in this country isn't it? And, if it isn't, it certainly should be. Younger man time, Raylene!

Heidi

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4. Gundagai, NSW
5. Swan Hill