

the Grey Nomad Times

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In this issue: • **And the bear came too** • **Un-happy hour?** • **Enter our comp and take a seat**

Nomads told to keep cool as mercury rises

Travellers warned to stay safe as 2012 sizzles into life

It's been a scorching start to 2012 with grey nomads sweltering in a record-breaking heatwave.

Waterfront campsites have been in hot demand as temperatures in much of the country have soared to 40 degrees plus. It's not all been fun in the sun though. People – particularly those of mature age – have been warned to keep their cool in order to avoid medical issues. And, hundreds of bushfires have kept firefighters busy, particularly in the southern states. A number of camping areas and caravan parks have been threatened by the flames. In South Australia, Adelaide recorded its hottest start to a new year since 1900 as the mercury reached 41.6 degrees on January 1. Victoria has been just as warm and the state's ambulance service treated hundreds of patients for heat-related illnesses in recent days. While the excessive heat presents challenges to everyone, travellers face particular difficulties, especially those without air conditioning or access to electricity.



Campers search for waterfront sites as temperatures soar

Grey nomads and other motorists have been warned to carry extra water and petrol. In south-west Queensland where places like Birdsville have recently recorded temperatures of 44 degrees plus, the need for commonsense is obvious. "Our advice to the public is to take plenty of water with them when travelling, and to let a visitor centre or the police know about their movements," Diamantina Shire Council tourism and community manager Steve Baldwin told the Sydney Morning Herald, "What a lot of people don't realise is that vehicles use more petrol in extreme heat, so we're advising people to carry extra fuel. It's a pretty simple equation to survive." Elsewhere in Queensland a

gas bottle explosion at Cravens Creek campground on Moreton Island sparked a blaze that destroyed around 200 hectares of scrubland. Campers on the island's western side were forced to flee to the beach and were later evacuated as the fire spread and flames leapt up to 10 metres in the air. There have also been significant bushfires in Victoria's Grampians National Park, in South Australia's Flinders Ranges, around the Western Australian capital of Perth and in many other places. Motorists and campers are urged to stay alert and have a bushfire survival plan in place. A cool change has brought what may be temporary relief to travellers and firefighters.

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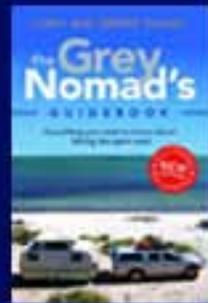
Mozzie menace drives you crazy on the Big Lap

The buzzing nightmare that is a mosquito invasion has been ruining grey nomad happy hours since the caravan was first invented. As we reported in our last edition, mozzies are more than just a nuisance. A recent increase in mosquito-borne diseases has left grey nomads covering up and slapping on insect repellent in record quantities.

Given all this, we asked whether mozzies were the biggest pest on the Big Lap. While 63% of you admitted breaking out in a cold sweat at the sound of the telltale buzz, 37% of survey respondents thought there were worse things out there. David and Chris agreed. "The mozzies at Hexam can pick you up and carry you away with ease," they wrote. Rick was less certain. "They don't bother me but they drive She Who Must Be Obeyed crazy. She must have sweeter blood than me!" And so what could be worse than mosquito misery? "The flies are maddening at times," wrote Terry. "If you aren't watching they can fly into your can and spoil an otherwise good beer."

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Characters of the Road

The adventures of Peter, June and Crosby T. Bear

This Bribie Island couple has done some serious travelling in 2011 ... and so has their teddy!

What rig do you travel in?

Our 4WD is a 3 Lt GU Nissan Patrol, which we call the 'Beast with Grunt' and our caravan ('The Woodshack') is a 17'6" 2000 model Regent, which suits our needs just fine at present, although we do talk about upgrading at some stage. We also take our little tinnie ('The Tub').

How often do you travel?

Before Pete retired, we were restricted to annual holidays and our longest trip was five weeks, visiting places north to Townsville, west to Mt Isa and south to Charleville. That trip really cemented our intentions to do a lot more travelling. This year we have been to Townsville and Canberra to visit family, taken an extended eight-week tour of Tasmania, and spent a relaxing month at Bjelke-Peterson Dam near Murgon where the 'yellow-belly' were plentiful.



Peter and June decided they wanted to travel more



June and Peter setting off with tug, tinny and van

Do you also travel overseas?

Friends try to get us to travel overseas and we say: "We will when we see all there is to see in this wonderful place we call home. We have everything we want in good old Australia."

Do you travel with pets?

I have to confess that another little character is part of our family - Crosby T. Bear (T for Teddy, of course!), and he comes with us on our travels. I have started to write a journal of his 'mis-adventures' as we travel and send a copy to our grandchildren who just love hearing of his trips.

Where do you camp?

Our camps have, to date, been in caravan parks. Being novices to this lifestyle, we haven't ventured to free camping as yet, but I'm sure that we will as we get a little more experience under our belts. We have met some wonderful people on our travels so far. Everyone seems to have their take on what we should do, be it from free camping to how best to park our rig at different places.

On-the-road-hobbies?

We both enjoy lawn bowls and Peter also likes fishing, golf

and Sudoku. I enjoy needlework, knitting, reading (I have an e-reader - much lighter than carrying books!) and at times, I too like Sudoku. I ensure I always have room in the van for my sewing machine.

Favourite spot?

We haven't a favourite spot at present although many places have been great, like Legerwood in Tasmania where a local has used a chainsaw to make made carvings out of old tree stumps of the WWI diggers who came from the area. Other places we really enjoyed are: The Combo Waterhole near Kynuna where Banjo Paterson first heard the story of Waltzing Matilda; the Stockman's Hall of Fame at Longreach; the Spa Baths at Moree, and the Warrumbungles near Coonabarabran.

What advice?

The best piece of advice I think we have been told is - if you have taken something in your van and haven't used it - don't take it again! Another tip was not to travel with full water tanks if you are not going to free camp - why carry the extra weight?

Website highlights

Harrowing hike

This week our website www.thegreynomads.com.au reported on the dramatic survival story of a 56-year-old grey nomad stranded in the Victorian bush after a breakdown. The female solo traveller hiked nearly 30 kilometres in blistering conditions before finding a mobile phone signal and summoning help.

[Read more here](#)

SURVEY

Should remote travellers be required to take emergency communication devices?

Yes No

Other website must-reads:

Hoons on the loose
Holiday peace shattered

Weekly Mailbag
Staying safe as a solo

Healthy living
Training up for a tip-top trip

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the Grey Nomad Times

EMERGENCY!

Call the ones you trust



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

Dear Editor,
Re: Tasmania free camp review (GNT: Issue 10). We thoroughly enjoyed our stay in Tasmania. If we didn't have free camping we wouldn't have stayed there for nine weeks. We are pensioners so the cost of the trip over and having to pay for van parks would have made it unaffordable.

Jenny

Dear Editor,
I imagine the gold coin donation situation has been evaluated by relevant department ... maybe a realistic discount upon production of Pension Card.

Lawrence

Dear Editor,
We must have people power. We must show these councils and government departments they cannot dictate to us. Boycott Tassie until they wake up to themselves. People power can change anything.

Jimbo

Dear Editor,
I suspect that a lot of the hysteria is due to the belief that competitive pricing is going to be applied to every free camping spot. That just isn't the case. It might put more pressure on the truly wild and truly free spots we frequent, but I suspect the average traveller will just pay the few dollars extra and still have a great time.

Tony

Dear Editor,
My wife and I are grey nomad 'gonnabes'. My jaw hit the ground when I found out the cost of getting a rig over to Tasmania. I think the withdrawal of free camping would be the last straw.

Jeffrey

Dear Editor,
I am a van park owner in WA and have just returned from a holiday in Tasmania. One of the biggest problems for park owners is the rapidly escalating costs charged by local and state governments. In the seven years we have been in parks our costs have doubled. Power and water charges are crazy. We are far from being the protected species that some letters seem to imply. We are seen as an easy source of income from greedy shires. Many parks have now changed their identity from a caravan park to a 'Tourist Park' and replaced sites with cabins. This is a decision based on economics, but it does not help caravanners.

Leslee

Dear Editor,
We have been on the road for three-and-a-half years and are currently on a three-month stint in Tasmania. We commend the government for the excellent camping facilities but wonder at the wisdom of providing them for free. We have seen 50-60 free campers within a 10km radius of an excellent caravan park (priced at under \$30 a night) which is struggling to survive. If caravanners don't use the parks they will close - they need to make a profit!

Alison

Dear Editor,
Re: Characters of the Road (GNT: Issue 10). I was impressed to read that Robyn manages to include her sewing machine and beading materials. Tell me Robyn ... how do you store the beading materials? I am a 'beader' and have difficulty coming up with a way to store my supplies and

have reasonably easy access to them. I always have to get the whole lot out of the tub to see what I need.

Sue

Dear Editor,
I enjoy reading your newsletter even though we are never going to do the Big Lap. This seems to be the focal point, but why should it be? I am still endlessly delighted by places we visit in Victoria and neighbouring states. Being a 'nomad' should not require you to travel great distances. Being a 'nomad' should mean exploring and enjoying everything, near or far.

Brenda

(Point taken, Brenda. What do you all think being a 'nomad' means? - Ed).

Dear Editor,
Re: Jaclyn and Heidi column (GNT: Issue 10). We solved the problem of noisy caravan parks and hordes of children during the holidays by house sitting for four weeks. We have a lovely outlook in the Perth Hills, use of a pool, spa, barbecue and lots of bush walks. All we have to do is look after one dog while the owners are away

Valerie

Dear Editor,
Yes, it would be good to be able to hear happy laughter without the language, and be able to ask nicely for kids to pick up their bikes etc. But, remember, these people are working and keeping us in the way we love ... on the road.

Sue

Dear Editor,
Stop complaining. Any day, no matter how bad it is, is better than missing one.

Robert

Dear Editor,
Go inland during school holidays as most young families go to the coastal areas. Works most of the time!

Kay

Dear Editor,
Try to remember when you were young and how much fun you had at that age. You could have been annoying older vanners then ... but that's life. Try to be more tolerant.

Allan

Dear Editor,
Times have changed to the point that we, who are over 50 and were brought up with different social standards, are now falling victim to what we judge to be the often unacceptable behaviour of those younger.

Anthony

Dear Editor,
Betty, try to find a park that caters for older grey nomads away from the beach or water of any kind. Standown Park in Queensland near Tin Can Bay advertises that they do not have facilities for children.

Denise & Rex

Dear Editor,
Wouldn't it be nice if more of us had Jaclyn's attitude? Regrettably it does not include me, I get grouchy and unreasonable too often.

Steve

Dear Editor,
As full-time travellers, we found a solution. Offer your services for house-sitting for a family who can then go away, knowing that all's taken care of at home. You'll then have a comfortable and peaceful holiday yourselves!

Jennifer

the Grey Nomad Times



You have to be in it to win it

new competition

Happy hour tales could net you two Coleman campchairs

Hurry, hurry, hurry! Time is running out to enter the great grey nomads campchair competition.

If you want to be in the running to win a pair of luxury chairs, courtesy of camping equipment kings, Coleman, you need to get your happy hour stories in to us by midnight (AEST), January 22. It really is that easy!

The king-size Cooler Arm Chair is one of Coleman's most popular chairs and could become a fixture at your happy hour gatherings for years to come. This deluxe padded model comes with extra wide arms for superior comfort. It



Sitting pretty ...win a pair of Coleman campchairs

features a large cooler bag with in-built cup holder, so you can settle in for the long haul with drinks at the ready for hours of 'me' time.

It is weight rated to 130kg, with a steel frame and front leg cross supports for extra stability, so you can feel safe and secure in your comfort. Finally for added convenience

it comes with a carry bag with straps.

Wow! And there are two of these grey nomad 'gotta-haves' on offer, courtesy of Coleman. All you have to do to put yourself in the box seat to win this sensational double delight prize is to write and tell us in 70 words or less about your favourite happy hour moment. Make us laugh, make us cry or make us think but, whatever you do, make sure you **email us here** with your entry. A selection (including the winning entry) will be published in the next edition of the Grey Nomad Times. Entries close at midnight (AEST) on January 22. The winner, as judged by the Editor, will be announced in the GNT Issue 12 on January 27.

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Nomads in Brief

Van park tragedy

A five-year-old boy has died after being hit by a car in a coastal caravan park. The child was riding a bike through the BIG 4 Inverloch Holiday Park on New Year's Eve when he was run over. The accident happened near the front entrance of the park, where a large children's play area is located.

Driven quackers

A plague of ducks is threatening to cause more damage to crops than mice and locusts ever could. After suffering drought and all manner of hardships in recent years, farmers in the New South Wales Riverina are being driven quackers by a summer duck invasion. The birds are destroying later stage crops that have rice shoots about 25 centimetres long.



ASK JACLYN and Heidi



Our experts solve your grey nomad etiquette dilemmas

Happy hour whine

Dear Jaclyn and Heidi,

I love the grey nomad lifestyle ... the scenery, the sense of adventure, the camaraderie, and I even love the long hours on the road. It may seem silly but my problem is to do with 'happy hour'. My husband and I both love meeting new people but we don't understand happy hour etiquette. We are worried about asking fellow campers to join us for a drink in case they don't want to and say 'no' or they only say 'yes' to be polite. On the other hand, what do we do if we get invited for a drink by someone who we know we don't have much in common with. Last week, we got stuck with the most boring couple in Australia ... and there was no escape!

Penny

First of all, I'm delighted to hear you are having such a good time and enjoying the lifestyle. Please don't let 'happy hour angst' spoil things. There are no hard and fast rules for happy hour ... other than it should be an enjoyable event for all concerned. If you have met people you like and would like to invite for a drink, then do it. The chances are they will be delighted to come and, if they are not keen, they may politely refuse or invent an excuse. No big deal. Similarly, you can either accept or refuse an invitation depending on your mood. Rest assured Penny, most of your happy hours will be memorable for all the right reasons.

Jaclyn

Happy hour, shmappy hour. The only thing happy about some of the social ordeals I've sat through is the fact they do eventually end. It's a big jump from exchanging a few jovial pleasantries at the amenities block to actually spending an hour or two in someone's company. The chances of you actually liking some van park 'random' are actually pretty slim ... and once you've been too friendly you may never get rid of them. Not good news if you've planned to stay at a camping spot for a while! Take my advice Penny and make your New Year's resolution to keep your happy hours a very, very exclusive affair. Life's too short to gamble an hour or two of it on strangers.

Heidi

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