

the Grey Nomad Times

EMERGENCY!



PRESS CALLS ADD
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In this issue:

• Getting high in Victoria

• Happy hour tales

• Hobby or obsession?

Kangaroos, kookaburras, koalas ... and elephants?

Giant herbivores will eat the grass but what else might they do?

The introduction of elephants, rhinos and other huge herbivores has been proposed as a radical solution to Australia's bushfire problems.

The provocative plan would see the giant mammals used as 'grass-eating machines'.

"We have to think outside the square," said Dr David Bowman, a professor of environmental change biology at the University of Tasmania.

"Last year we had a fire in the outback in Central Australia the size of Tasmania ... these things are very bad."

In an article in *Nature* magazine, Dr Bowman says Australia's sheer size made slashing and aerial spraying programs impractical.

"I'm not saying let's pull up with a barge and randomly release a whole lot of African animals," he said. "It might be a stupid idea but is having a world-famous, out-of-control grass-fire cycle a clever idea? If we stand back and do nothing, it's just as bad as making a mistake."

One major source of fuel for wildfires in northern Aus-



The future image of Outback Australia?

tralia is gamba grass – a giant African species that is too big for native fauna and even feral buffalo to handle.

"Gamba grass is a great meal for elephants or rhinoceroses," Dr Bowman said. "The idea of introducing elephants may seem absurd, but the only other methods likely to control gamba grass involve using chemicals or physically clearing the land, which would destroy the habitat."

He suggests that elephants could be used alongside traditional Aboriginal patch burning to help manage fire risk. Dr Bowman further argues that top predators like dingoes could be reinstated to control foxes and cats, and Aboriginal people should be encouraged to hunt feral animals.

He says short-term programs designed to poison feral animals, fence them out of sensitive areas or shoot them are costly and ineffective. Past mistakes call for confronting solutions that need to be based on science, he says, not emotion and cultural prejudice. Dr Bowman emphasises that any animals introduced would need to be managed properly with their spread controlled by, for example, GPS collars, sterilisation or contraceptives. Critics of the elephant plan say the animals would be a threat to trees and would be difficult to confine behind fences. One environmental group says they would become the '10-tonne cane toads' of the Outback if introduced.

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Most campers would never 'do the dirty'

The free-camping 'shower stealers' who famously sneak into van parks for a freshen up at the amenities blocks are no modern day Robin Hoods ... and so says the vast majority of GNT readers. A whopping 96% of you said they would rather live in the grime than do the crime. Only 4% of those who voted in the poll in the last issue of the GNT admitted they would get wet, wet, wet for free, free, free.

For Tom and Gerry, like many of you, it was a no brainer.

"It is wrong to steal and only gives free campers a bad name," they said.

Lili couldn't see the point either. "I would rather wash myself in a basin full of hot water top and tail," she claimed.

But Barb and Steve reckon showers are just the thin end of the wedge. "We have worked in a caravan park where numerous stealers have been caught using amenities, charging computers and phones, and even unpacking their groceries in the camp kitchen to cook a feed."

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Characters of the Road

Great country, lovely people, a shame about the washing!

Garry, 62, and Sharon, 58, from Toowoomba have a love of the open road ... and a serious sense of humour!

What do you travel in?

Compass caravan, 21'6" internal. 1994 Nissan Patrol EFI (4.2 kms per litre).

Why does it suit your lifestyle?

Single beds, Shaz reckons.

How long do your trips last?

No limit. We did 12 months around Oz in 2009, six months through Queensland in 2010, and we have just returned from two months through outback NSW (we don't recommend that one!).

Where do you like to camp?

Anywhere but caravan parks.

Likes and dislikes?

I love the beauty of our country, the like-minded people one meets, and the peace and the freedom to name a few. I dislike washing day (clothes that is) ... and yet I always end up with the job!

Do you travel with others?

On our first ever trip in 2009 we met, amongst others, John & Linda who have become close and dear friends. We travelled on and off with them over a 12-month period. We did the Queensland trip with them in 2010. I must add that



Gaz and Shaz have made lots of new friends on their trips

during our 12 months around Australia we travelled on and off with two other couples Daryl & Dianne from Newcastle, NSW, and Bronwyn & Colin from Cobram, Vic, with whom we have also become good friends.

Is your outlook changing?

We are just about to welcome our first grandchild into the world, so that may slow us down a bit.

On the-road hobbies?

Fishing, bush walking, relaxing (the latter being Shaz's favourite).

Favourite place?

There are so many, Ningaloo, WA, is just beautiful ... we headed back there this winter.

Lawn Hill, Queensland ... we will spend some time there again on our way to Ningaloo. We just love the NT ... spectacular scenery, great free camps. Esperance, WA ... again just beautiful; Cape Le Grande National Park is spectacular; The Great Ocean Road and Red Johanna Beach; Rapid Bay, SA. These just some of our favourites.

Scariest nomad experience?

Shaz saying she will cook dinner!

Advice for wannabe nomads?

We hadn't owned a van or 4WD until our first trip in 2009. It's not rocket science, and it's not hard. Believe me, you won't look back, so GO FOR IT !!!

Nomads in Brief

Park tragedy

A man has died after a 4WD towing a camper trailer collided with two motorbikes in Kosciuszko National Park. A Jannali motorcyclist, 49, died at the scene while the other motorbike rider, a Sydney man, 43, suffered minor injuries. The driver of the 4WD, a Canberra man, 61, was taken to hospital for mandatory testing.

Wet, wet, wet

Rain-soaked grey nomads in eastern parts of Australia are being warned not to put the umbrellas away yet. The Bureau of Meteorology says the current La Niña weather pattern is likely to continue for at least another month.

Alcohol application

The Gemtree Caravan Park, 140kms north-east of Alice Springs, has applied for a liquor licence. The park, which is surrounded by dry Indigenous communities, says only registered guests would be able to buy alcohol. Visitors currently have to drive to Alice Springs to buy booze.

Water temptation

The introduction of a new water park at the Big 4 caravan park in Bonny Hills near Port Macquarie has seen a huge spike in the number of 'trespassers'. Police say young locals are entering the park to use the aquatic facilities. Non-residents caught using the facilities can be fined.

QUIZ CORNER

GRAB A CUPPA AND TEST YOUR GREY MATTA

LOOKING FOR a CLUE? YOU'RE getting Warmer!



DO YOU KNOW

1. Which NT 'girl' has plenty of bounce?
2. What is the road distance between Port Augusta and Darwin?
a) 2715km b) 2998km c) 3345km
3. In which iconic mountain chain do mathematicians like to practise?
4. What is the circumference of Uluru?
a) 2.8km b) 9.4km c) 22.2km
5. In which stunning national park would you find Dales Gorge?

(Answers on page 4)

the Grey Nomad Times

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

Dear Editor,
 Re: Hectic holiday season (GNT: Issue 12). We are park managers and our rules clearly state what is expected when people ride their bikes, scooters, skateboards etc in our park ... but we are forever reminding everyone. Recently, I asked two children to put their helmets on while riding scooters. The children's dad later came to the office ranting and raving that it was not a public road and that, if the police didn't stop non-helmet wearing scooter riders, why should I. What hope do we have? It was only a few days later that the child was killed in Victoria – enough to make any park manager's blood run cold.

Glenda

Dear Editor,
 Re: Gavan's bushfire survival plan letter (GNT: Issue 12). There are brochures currently being developed for caravaners, bush walkers and for people driving in an area affected by wild fire or hazard reductions. They will be available in 4-6 weeks and, as soon as I have them, I will provide you with a copy for use in *Grey Nomad Times*. I hope this helps.
David (Community Safety Facilitator-Blue Mountains).
(Thanks, David. Keep watching this space, everybody ... Ed).

Dear Editor,
 Re: Character of Road (GNT: Issue 12). Keep it up, and yes, induction to camping at an early age gives better respect of our country. A ranger moving you on is OK, but what do you do when you go to a free area, and find the same guy there yer after year? They are the ones who will spoil it for us all.

Suzanne (EmilyBak)

Dear Editor,
 Re: Camping cop story (GNT: Issue 12). Leave him alone!

Peter

Dear Editor,
 Re: Emergency beacons article (GNT: Issue 12). I have carried a personal beacon (EPIRB) for about 20 years. I nearly used it some time back when I had a kidney stone attack at 1am in Carnarvon National Park. Luckily it subsided but we were ready to pull the activator by 4am! It is always in the side pocket of my LandCruiser's door. You just never know!

Jim (JayCee)

Dear Editor,
 I think an emergency beacon is essential, especially for solos.

Dawa

Dear Editor,
 Re: E-readers article (GNT: Issue 9) I would rather stay with paper books. I love the feel of paper books and the nostalgia that comes with them and – with mobile phones, cameras, TVs and laptops – I already have enough gadgets in the van that need charging.

Marj

Dear Editor,
 Re: Jaelyn and Heidi (GNT: Issue 12) How rude to say people should work harder to get a better rig. It's about the adventure, not how good your rig is.

GE

Dear Editor,
 Darlene, we'd love to meet up with you on the road. I've developed a bit of an obsession with vintage caravans, and would love to see your rig! Ignore Heidi, and don't bother with the not-so-nice travellers because there are plenty of great people on the road who

don't give a damn what you're travelling in.

Jules

Dear Editor,
 We are on a five-year plan, working and travelling in all sorts of places in our beautiful country and meeting the most fascinating people. We have never encountered any prejudices in our travels, but have had lots of laughs with people who have. Remember ... what goes around comes around.

Barb & Steve

Dear Editor,
 Heidi, I hope your comment was tongue in cheek, it horrifies me. I thought it must be a joke.

Shannon

Dear Editor,
 Heidi. A large proportion of our community may not have had the luck or parentage that you apparently have had. Your income-based snobbery does you no favours.

Bobza

Dear Editor,
 I have encountered on the road, single women whose husbands deserted them with kids in tow, couples who lost their homes in bushfires and floods; the list of unfortunate situations I could recount would fill Heidi's less than palatable column! So much for her hard work ethic! I have personal friends who went bankrupt after working their backsides off, so don't come at me or Darlene with your high and mighty, holier-than-thou, attitude. Heidi's lack of empathy and support will hopefully come back to bite her on the arse! What she needs is a good dose of humble pie or the inclusion of this letter in your publication as an entrée.

Anthony

Dear Editor,
 Oh dear me, Heidi. Many of us brought up a family on one income and, after paying mortgages, food and the bills, saving was not a great option. I'm sure it would help us all if you could put a notice on your van to show who you are so that those (like me) who wish to avoid you can do so. It's not April 1, is it?

John

Dear Editor,
 I have found 1 in 4 people have the same attitude as Heidi. They take one look at you and, if you don't match up to their dress code or rig code, they won't give you the time of day. Just remember for every Heidi, there are three good people just waiting to have a chat.

Robert

Dear Editor,
 I drive a 2004 f250 pulling a 2010, 33ft 5th wheeler and am very happy to talk to anyone and tell them the price of my outfit if asked. Sounds like Heidi was born with a silver spoon in her mouth and expects everyone to be the same. People like Heidi need to get a life.

John

Dear Editor,
 Darlene is quite right, there is a definite 'pecking order' on the road, and the large motorhomers are the worst. We have seen more than enough of the happy hour, "mine is bigger than yours" bragging contests. Give me interesting people in smaller rigs any day!

Wayne & Pat

Dear Editor,
 You'll do me, Heidi. Can you cook and do you own a boat?

Cav

the Grey Nomad Times

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It's all in the tea leaves for campchair winner

Sitting comfortably? Then, I will be begin by revealing the winner of our great grey nomads campchair competition ... and some other top entries

THE WINNER

Billy for me

My favourite happy hour moment was when I was given a real cup of billy tea brewed for me by an interesting old Aussie ocker. This guy had it all and knew it all when it came to making a cup of tea. Being thirsty as I was, I really didn't care how the tea tasted so long as it was wet. This old codger with a smile on his face said; "How do you like it, mate? With a pinch of red dust or a gum leaf?" I said: "With the gum leaf will be fine." Swinging the billy around his head, he then poured out the best cuppa I have ever had.

Graham

(Graham picks up a pair of king-size Cooler Arm Chairs, courtesy of camping equipment kings, Coleman. This deluxe padded campchair comes with extra wide arms for superior comfort and features a large cooler bag with in-built cup holders.)



Graham is sitting pretty after winning two Coleman chairs



Was that one gum leaf or two?

Sunset and scones

My favourite happy hour moment was during our trip to Central Australia last July. We were staying at Frewena Waterhole just east of Threeways in the NT and I used the Baby Q to make scones (first time ever making scones). It was great to be able to invite other travellers over to share the culinary delight and to share our travel stories while watching a brilliant sunset.

Jan

Family first

Our most memorable happy hours have been – and it's not a funny or a sad moment – is just the pleasure of sitting around the campfire with our fantastic daughters and son-in-laws chatting. What more can you ask for than that your grown-up kids want to spend time with you camping and having fun?

Sue & Steve

Snakes alive

We stayed at Indee station South of Port Hedland in our van. We were invited to happy hour at the homestead. It was dark when we left. As snakes were a concern they said we

should walk down the bushy track stamping our feet. It worked because we didn't sight one snake. Wonder whether the owners at the homestead were giggling at the gullible tourists?

Jan & Bill

Light relief

We sometimes do relief park management to give the owners a break! On one occasion, my husband went to assist some people who had 'lost' power. He was gone a while and I assumed he was having his usual 'have a chat'! He returned an hour later saying that all tests had been made and everything checked twice. Every time he asked the woman to check she flicked on the same switch to the light fitting. An hour later she remembered the light globe had blown at the park before. The laughs never stop at the things that happen!

Kay (Fingers)

Editor's Note: Our 'Gadgets of the Road' column will return in the next edition.

Website highlights

Stun gun shock

This week our website www.thegreynomads.com.au reported the 'shocking' story of the visitor to an American national park who was 'tasered' by a ranger. The errant hiker apparently failed to keep his dogs on a leash as required by the Californian park's regulations. It raises the question of whether our park rangers have adequate powers to deal with rule infringers ... and whether they are too soft.

[Read more here](#)

SURVEY

Do our park rangers need more power to crack down on rule breakers?

Yes

No

Other website must-reads:

Gum disease

Unpredictable trees pose risks to campers

Shark alert

Series of attacks makes nomad 'nippers' nervous

Chilling Out

Coming to terms with easy street

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QUIZ CORNER SOLVED

Pic puzzle:

Marble Bar
 Do you know answers:

1. Alice Springs
2. a) 2715km
3. The Great Dividing Range
4. b) 9.4km
5. Karijini NP

the Grey Nomad Times



Majestic mountains, sensational seasons

Take the high road to discover soaring peaks, fascinating towns and seasonal colours

Victoria's spectacular Great Alpine Road can be driven in less than five hours ... but any grey nomad who does it that quickly needs to seriously reassess why they are bothering to take a trip at all! This mesmerising 308-kilometre-long drive wends its way past mountains, valleys, forests and rivers and is exactly the reason most people load up the rig in the first place. The route linking Wangaratta in the north with Bairnsdale in the Gippsland region is said to be Australia's highest year-round accessible sealed road. Driving along it over the Great Dividing Range and through



Mt Hotham will, of course, be a very different experience depending on the time of year it is done ... but it will always be a memorable one.

Wangaratta itself is steeped in Ned Kelly-related history and the area also offers wineries and fossicking options to tempt unhurried travellers to dally.

While the beautiful town of Bright on the Ovens River is only an hour so so away from here, most grey nomads are already eager to take a detour from the Great Alpine Road in order to explore the iconic Mount Buffalo National Park. Waterfalls wildflowers, walking tracks, towering peaks and



Beautiful autumn colours in Bright

spectacular scenery make this park a must-see, must-stop destination in its own right.

While any time is a good time to visit Bright, the sensational colours of the town's numerous European trees make it most spectacular in autumn. Then, as motorists climb through Harrierville to the resort of Mount Hotham, the Visit Victoria organisation says the landscape changes from alpine ash to snow gum forest and heathland. Stopping

at Danny's Lookout which offers amazing views to the summit of Mount Feathertop, the second-highest mountain in the state, is highly recommended.

The journey from Omeo – the service centre for the important local cattle, sheep and timber industries – to Bairnsdale is approximately 120 kilometres.

Originally settled as an inland port, the town sits on the banks of the Mitchell River and leads into the Gippsland Lakes. This is another fascinating region and yet more wonders await as you get ready to explore it.

Alternatively, you could turn right around and enjoy the Great Alpine Road all over again ... you most definitely wouldn't be the first!

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ASK JACLYN and Heidi



Our experts solve your grey nomad etiquette dilemmas

Picture less than perfect

Dear Jaclyn and Heidi,
Doing the Big Lap has helped me discover a real passion for watercolour painting. I enjoyed art when I was younger but I guess life then got in the way. I now want to spend all of my time sitting in front of an easel and, when I'm not painting, I'm thinking about painting. It was my husband Jim who initially encouraged me to take up a hobby so I wouldn't get bored while he was off fishing. Now, he says, he is fed up with my 'obsession' and complains that I never want to go sightseeing with him or do any of the other things I used to enjoy. He's actually dead right ... but I'm still not ready to hang up my paintbrush.

Tammy

Wow! What a pickle, Tammy.

First, the good news. You are incredibly lucky to have re-discovered a pursuit that clearly brings you so much pleasure. How wonderful that the grey nomad lifestyle – like it has done for so many others – has given you a new lease on life. There is no question of you giving up this 'hobby' ... you just have to learn to manage it better. Being married is all about making compromises ... and so is living on the road. Negotiate a 'painting time' with Jim and a 'together time' and honour the agreement ... however much your creative juices start flowing.

Jaclyn

Do you want to stay married or not, Tammy? You should have a good idea by now of how Jim's – and every other man's


– mind works. If they start to suspect that they and their silly hobbies aren't the centre of your universe then they are liable to throw a 'mantrum'. Fishermen are the worst! If you forget to throw a withering 'I've missed you' look and a 'you should have been back hours ago' lecture when they skulk back to the van with an empty bucket and beer breath, then look out! Your mistake is not in loving painting Tammy, it is in showing the man in your life how much you love it. The next time he gets back to the van after a fishing expedition just pretend you've been anxiously waiting for him ... he'll soon start staying out longer again. It's all about attention, not fish. Happy painting, Tammy.

Heidi

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