

# the Grey Nomad Times

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In this issue:

•Satphone prices plunge

•Meet our GN character

•A laughing matter

## Park 'developers' told to take a hike

The Victorian government looks set to reject persistent and growing calls to allow more private development in the state's magnificent national parks ... at least for now. Proposals put forward by business groups included boat cruises at Wilsons Promontory, new hotel accommodation at Point Nepean, and privately operated tourist walking huts on the Great Ocean Walk from Apollo Bay to the Twelve Apostles.

The proposals have been the subject of a review by the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission. However, Environment Minister Ryan Smith, says his goal is to preserve the sanctity of parks. Asked about plans to open them to development, he said: "It's not on our agenda." He said while he wanted to see natural assets developed, that didn't mean 'developments'. Rather, he said, it just meant appropriate access to tracks, toilet blocks, and such like. The Victorian National Parks Association welcomed the Environment Minister's comments. "The VNPA strongly supports the long tradition in



Privately-owned walking huts too big a step? Pic: Tourism Vic

Victoria that private developments should not take place inside national parks," it said. "And strongly supports the current policy that such developments should occur on private land, or low conservation value public land, outside national parks."

Tourism experts Associate Professor Sue Beeton and Dr Warwick Frost from La Trobe University said the ideas for hotels, conference centres and wildlife cruises in Victorian parks were not appropriate. "They are not exactly the type of traditional, low-impact holidays national parks are known

for such as hiking, camping, cross-country skiing and family day trips," they said. "Taking a blanket approach towards national park development is dangerous, as each of our parks has quite different needs." Victoria's Chamber of Commerce and Industry had argued that interstate destinations – such as the Bay of Fires and Cradle Mountain in Tasmania, WA's Ningaloo Reef and South Australia's Kangaroo Island – had a mix of high-quality accommodation, and that Victoria was falling behind in the race to attract overseas tourists.

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## Grey nomad gold diggers eye pay dirt

There's gold in them thar hills and the soaring value of the precious metal has sent grey nomads hunting for it like never before.

Many find the on-the-road lifestyle perfectly suited to gem fossicking and gold prospecting ... and metal detectors don't take up much space in the van.

Like many former gold rush towns, Mudgee, about 250kms northwest of Sydney, has noticed the influx. Prospecting supply shops have seen many more new arrivals in the past six months. And it is the lifestyle as well as the potential windfall that sends people out hoping to strike it lucky. There is a camaraderie on the goldfields that only a common purpose and a passion shared can create. While some nomads still venture out with pans and sift through sludge, many splash out as much as \$6,000 on high-tech detectors. Is it worth it? Well, last year, a solo prospector near Kalgoorlie, WA unearthed a football-sized nugget that sold for over US\$1 million!

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## Get it off your chest

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budget ideas?  
happy?  
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# the Grey Nomad Times

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## Characters of the Road

# Picnics in paradise are tough to beat - Rosey

Meet 65-year-old Rosey (aka Gerty Dancer) from Canberra



Rosey and partner love life on the open road.

**Why does your current rig suit your lifestyle?**  
 My partner and I travel in a Prado VX 120 series diesel auto, towing a Jayco Discovery pop-top. The caravan is light enough to be easy to tow, yet large enough to be comfortable and quick to set up.

**Where do you like to camp?**  
 We like to camp in National Parks for the peaceful environment when possible, but bush-camps and caravan parks are fine and we enjoy the variety. In colder weather we choose to stay in caravan parks so we can use the heater.

**Likes/dislikes of the lifestyle?**  
 The feeling of independence and freedom of choice, as well as relief from work (or volunteer) commitments at home. However, on longer trips, we miss our friends and family, although we keep in touch.

**What have you learned?**  
 We've learned to pace ourselves and plan rest days regularly. We are also considering downsizing our home which will allow greater freedom from home-maintenance.

**Scariest moment?**  
 Mr 'Dancer' had a heart attack while we were tent-camping. He didn't realise what was wrong as he only had a sore arm, until I took him to hospital the next day. Seeing him in hospital surrounded by doctors, was a very scary moment, realising how serious it could have been.

**Favourite on-the-road meal?**  
 Our lunches are special, they are almost always picnics, and while they might be simple sandwiches and fruit, we've eaten in some awesome places, such as in Kings Canyon, on a lookout in the Bungles, Palm Valley, beside waterfalls, up hills and in secret valleys. Favourite happy hour drinks are a sweet white wine ... only one glass a day though.

**Favourite place in Australia?**  
 Wherever we are at the time often becomes our favourite place. A few special ones have been ... camping in the Simpson Desert (in a tent), Cape Tribulation FNQ, Karijini NP, WA, Arthur River in Tas, Ormiston Gorge in NT, Crowdy Bay in NSW, Buchan Caves in Vic the list goes on and on ...

**On-the-road hobbies?**  
 Sight-seeing, bushwalking, birdwatching, photography, reading, and of course the internet and our forum!

**What would you do different?**  
 We might have timed it differently to be at popular places when they would be less crowded. And we might have brought a few different things, and left a few things at home.

## Nomads in Brief

**Roo ruckus**  
 A 94-year-old Queensland woman had to defend herself with a broom after being attacked by a giant red kangaroo recently. The buck bounded into Phyllis Johnson's Charleville yard as she was hanging out the washing, knocked her to the ground and kicked her several times.

**Camping for charity**  
 BIG4 Holiday Parks is holding a charity 'Camp and Care' night at a range of parks across the country on Friday, November 11. Everyone can camp for a flat fee of \$20 per site. The cash will then be donated to a local person, group or organisation in need.

**Champagne moment**  
 The Visitor Information Centre in Alice Springs has welcomed its three millionth tourist ... and they are grey nomads! Julie and David Chester-Master from Brisbane were greeted by streamers, bubbly and cake to celebrate the milestone.

**Tent terror**  
 Five campers were taken to hospital with suspected carbon monoxide poisoning in England. The family went to sleep with the barbecue still smouldering in their tent and were lucky to survive. Fire-fighters in Cornwall warned that any item that produces heat or vapours can cause carbon monoxide poisoning.

**QUIZ CORNER** GRAB A CUPPA AND TEST YOUR GREY MATTA

**FIND THE PHRASE** You shouldn't need a clue for this one!

**DO YOU KNOW**

1. Which highway followed a golden opportunity?
2. Where don't brave people stop on the Oodnadatta track?
3. What is the best bay in Tassie for breakfast?
4. What is the tallest waterfall in Australia?
5. Three states are around which corner?

(Answers on page 5)

# Call from the wilds

## Subsidies help bring satellite phones into the reach of grey nomads

More grey nomads than ever are taking satellite phones with them as they head off on extended trips into the Outback. A number of high-profile mishaps in the bush, as well as falling handset prices and lower call costs have combined to cause a serious spike in demand. And the sat phone's popularity is likely to grow yet further as more nomads become aware of the Federal Government Satellite Phone Subsidy Scheme.

The subsidy rules state that grey nomads and others who spend 180 days or more in areas outside mobile phone

coverage in the two years after buying the phone can get a whopping 50% rebate off the purchase price, potentially taking the cost well below \$500.

People who normally live in an area without mobile coverage receive an even more generous 85% reduction. These subsidies must be applied for and approved before a handset is bought and the process generally takes three or four weeks. Even without subsidies, many travellers are finding sat phone



prices have plunged to affordable levels. Those just planning a short one-off trip into the wilds can choose to rent a sat phone instead.

As well as offering the peace of mind of knowing help can be summoned in case of medical emergencies, accidents, or mechanical failures, sat phones enable grey nomads to talk to children and grandchildren on birthdays ... however remote their location.

The latest sat phones are incredibly user friendly and only slightly larger than the average mobile phone. Handsets such as the newly released Inmarsat Isatphone Pro handle email, text and GPS, and most users find the costs surprisingly low. With the pre-paid option, for

example, the credits can last 24 months before expiring. With pre-paid there is no connection fee and no minimum monthly spend and calling a landline is approximately \$1 per minute ... and a bit more to call mobiles. Anyone with internet access can send unlimited emails of 120 characters to an IsatPhone Pro for free. While sat phone users don't pay for incoming calls they might be wise to warn the family that ringing in can be frighteningly expensive. Different telcos have different charges but it may cost as much as \$20 a minute to call a sat phone from a mobile.

[Click here](#) for subsidy eligibility criteria.

[Click here to comment](#)



## Letters to the Editor

Share your thoughts with fellow nomads

Dear Editor,  
Just received the first edition of the *Grey Nomad Times*. Very impressed. Keep up the good work. Thanks.

**Ross**

Lawn Hill, Burketown, Kurumba, Cooktown and down to Innisfail where we are presently enjoying the warm days fishing, boating, walking and meeting great folks.

**Brian and Suzie**

Dear Editor,  
You have brought a smile and a laugh to us as we travel down the east coast of this fantastic country we are honoured to call our home. This is only our second trip around Australia, having travelled for four months over winter in WA last year. This year we visited our daughter and her husband at 'Tinderry', a station about 300kms south west of Quilpie, Queensland. The grandkids sure do grow up fast in the Outback! Our travels have taken us from Beechworth, through NSW on to The Isa,

Dear Editor,  
My wife and I retired a few years ago and follow the sun north each year. We have met some amazing fellow travellers and friendly locals, and experienced some beautiful and unique sights. We have found that, where possible, free camping is the most rewarding social aspect of caravanning. We must appreciate the progressively minded communities which permit and subsidise free camping facilities and not take them for granted. They suffer the impost

of maintenance and upkeep, as well as opposition from park operators. We, as travellers, must however do our part, respecting the facilities and leaving them clean and tidy, making gold coin donations where requested, staying only the permitted time, and spending our money in their community. To do otherwise will result in an eventual loss of facilities, thus increasing the cost of following our lifestyle.

**Tim and Colleen**

Dear Editor,  
I notice you had an article in the *Grey Nomad Times* on iPads. A great free iPad app is Antenna Mate which helps you locate the nearest TV transmitter to where you stop. Just the thing when it's "Home and Away" time. You simply launch

it and it finds the nearest TV transmitter to your location and points towards it. There is a listing of the channels that are serviced by that site, the power they run and the polarisation. What else do you need? Just go to iTunes apps and download. It's that simple and very easy to use.

**Brian**

*(Anyone else got great apps to share? - Ed)*

Dear Editor,  
Thank you for the newsletter! I would love with all my heart to become a grey nomad but fear to hit the road alone. Are there any other single people who feel like this?

**Prudence**

*(Check out the Solos pages of our website forum. - Ed)*



Win a Kea RV for a week ... enter the grey nomad funny story competition

## Travel tales take a very funny turn

Have a giggle at a few randomly selected early Kea comp entries ... more to come next week

### Ain't no bull

We had been warned about wild Kimberley bulls, so we were on the lookout as we walked the length of Windjana Gorge in WA. As I topped the rise, there on the cattle pad in front of me was the biggest Brahman bull I had ever seen! He spotted me, snorted ferociously, and spun around, but I was already running back down the gully, yelling: "Quick there's a big Brahman bull up ahead and he's coming this way!" We ran down the side gully, and waited, puffing, but couldn't hear a thing! When we eventually decided to risk a look, there was the bull beside the pad eating grass. When he saw us, he looked up casually, almost as if to say: "Oh, there you silly buggers are!" and continued eating grass!

Myra

### Thong and a dance

We were sitting with a group at a bush happy hour and I had my food tilted in my thong. I felt something go between my foot and the thong and looked down to see something had crawled in under my foot. I shot my foot out to get away from it and accidentally kicked one of my companions in the shin. It turned out to be a bobtail lizard investigating the sole of my foot. I don't know who had the biggest scare me or the lizard and, of course, I had to



Put yourself in the picture ... win a Kea vehicle for a week

apologise to, and console, my companion with the sore shin.

Vic

### Jam and Bed

We only took a tent on our recent trip to Perth from Melbourne and one night when the weather was very windy we hired a fairly old, but comfortable, onsite van. We slept in our sleeping bags because no linen was supplied and the double bed had a queen mattress on it! When my wife turned over, out she went, 'bang' onto the floor jammed between the wardrobe and bed! Trying to get her up was a lot of fun but eventually we did. We told the story to some friends and the story preceded us to the next caravan park. My wife eventually had an X-ray in Kalgoorlie and had broken a bone in her elbow! All in all, a great trip!

Nev and Bev

### Skip from the loo

We were camping at Eden many years ago and it was far from a three-star park. After a week of no clean toilets, my

wife took a bucket and started to clean out the loo near us. A lady walked in and said: "It's about time you cleaned the toilets, they are a disgrace." My wife said she was also a camper sick of the dirty toilets, and they had a good laugh.

Paul

### Runaway inflation

My mate and I like to go crabbing in my 14-footer. I have a rule that everyone on board must wear a life jacket at all times. On this day we set off up the river with our over-engineered homemade crab traps weighing in about 8kg each. Getting to our secret spot, my mate stands up to launch the first trap over the side. It was with the trap sailing through the air with all the grace of a swan that the manual inflation toggle on the life jacket became entangled in the trap. Whoosh! The jacket inflated in an instant and there was the mate looking like the Michelin Man. I suppose we now know what the toggle is connected to and that it works as intended.

Douglas (Wombat 280)

There's still time! Make us laugh and drive off in a luxury rig

There is just one more week to go before entries close for our great funny story competition. *The Grey Nomad Times* is offering lucky readers the chance to win a KEA deluxe campervan or motorhome for an entire week ... and if you can make our judge laugh, it could be you. KEA's range of campervans and motorhomes include 2-berth and 4WD campers, as well as 4-berth and 6-berth luxury motorhomes, and they all guarantee an unforgettable travel experience. The sensational prize also includes unlimited kilometres and free insurance.

For your chance to win, **email us here** with your funny on-the-road stories in 150 words or less. A selection of early entries is printed on this page. All entries received by midnight (AEST) on September 9 will be read by our judge, Travel Today editor Steve Jones, and his verdict will be announced in *the Grey Nomad Times* on September 16. More stories will also be printed.

### The prize includes:

Seven consecutive days hire of a luxury KEA campervan or motorhome from/to Adelaide/Alice Springs/Brisbane/Cairns/Darwin/Melbourne/Sydney/Perth.

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**KEA terms and conditions apply. Valid to August 31, 2012.**

# the Grey Nomad Times

**Goodbye detergents!  
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for more



## Wet and wonderful

**This issue 'Great Drives' takes you from the Coffs Coast to the New England tablelands**



The Waterfall Way in northern New South Wales was once famously voted the third most scenic drive in Australia which begs the question ... what could top this?

The 191-kilometre route between the Coffs Coast and the New England Tableland twists and turns its way up mountains, through villages, around rainforests and, of course, past numerous stunning waterfalls. It's an epic journey that could be done in a day – but should be done in weeks.

From the coast, the journey

really begins when you leave the Pacific Highway and head inland along the route of the Bellinger River past green and arable farm country. The community of Bellingen is packed with crafty and artistic shops and stores ... and has a subtle but real 'alternative' edge.

If you are towing a van, you need to keep your wits about you as you climb towards Dorrigo. Drivers should not stare too long at the sensational views that appear to their right ... the road is narrow and potentially treacherous.



**Dangar Falls near Dorrigo**

Both the Newell and Sherrard Falls are worth a look as you pass by. Just before Dorrigo is the World Heritage Listed Dorrigo National Park and its famed Skywalk, a timber boardwalk that passes above the rainforest canopy.

The mountain township of Dorrigo boasts a pub, a fantastic bric a brac shop, and the world's smallest motorcycle museum. What else could you ask for? It's also only a couple

of kilometres from here to the spectacular Dangar Falls.

The route now takes you to Cascade National Park and then on to Ebor where most visitors take the time to explore Guy Fawkes River National Park and Ebor Falls. Moving westward on this highlight-packed journey you pass Cathedral Rock National Park and its oddly shaped rock formations. Next comes Wolloomombi Falls and Oxley Wild Rivers National Park.

The Waterfall Way finishes at the beautiful, architecturally-blessed university town of Armidale. It's somehow a fitting place to end a truly incredible journey. Is it really only the third best drive in the country?



**ASK JACLYN and Heidi**



**Our experts solve your grey nomad etiquette dilemmas**

### Payback time

**Dear Jaclyn and Heidi,**  
*I am at my wit's end. Last week I was camping at a national park up here in the Territory when I saw a couple leave without putting in any cash in the honesty box. I know they didn't pay because there were only two envelopes for money there when they arrived and there were still two when they left! We have just pulled up at another national park with an honesty box system and they are here again. I am sure they have no intention of paying. What should I do?*

**Thomas**

I understand completely how torn you must feel, Thomas. It is such a shame when two

thoughtless individuals buck the system and spoil it for the rest of us. National parks need to be maintained and we must all pay our share. I think it is far too delicate of a matter for you to risk confronting them directly. A much more sensible approach would be to write down their registration number and the dates they stayed and pop it into the honesty box. Let the ranger hunt them down. After all, fair's fair.

**Jaclyn**

What a sad man you are, Thomas. There you are out in the magnificent Northern Territory at this glorious time of year and you choose to spend your time spying on fellow travellers. Pathetic. And,

when all's said and done, why should we have to shell out \$5 after \$5 for night after night to support the national parks? Grey nomads are on the road for far longer than any other traveller and so have to spend a disproportionate amount for the parks' upkeep. In fact, without us, the whole shebang would probably collapse and all those glorified firewood delivery boys would be out of a job. And anyway how much does it cost to clean a toilet once a week or so? If you feel so bad about it, you should just put your hand in your pocket and pay double ... that way the National Parks service is happy and your little conscience is clear. Get yourself a hobby, Thomas!

**Heidi**

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### QUIZ CORNER SOLVED

**Pic puzzle: Great Australian Bight**

**Do you know answers:**

1. Lasseter Highway
2. Coward Springs
3. Eggs and Bacon Bay
4. Wallaman Falls
5. Cameron Corner