

## NT's Larapinta Trail: 18 Jul to 6 Aug 2013

*Walkers: Coralie, Janice, Kate, Rob, Warwick; day trippers: Mike, Liz*

Participants were asked for three responses for this report. "What was your (1) highlight, (2) lowlight, and (3) amazing experience/culinary delight?"

**Mike & Liz:** We very much enjoyed revisiting the Larapinta Trail after 10 years, with the realisation that walking with a full overnight pack is now beyond us, but we enjoyed doing day walks and meeting up with our intrepid full pack walkers. For Elizabeth, the highlight of the trip was reaching the summit of Mount Sonder after struggling with cramps in her legs. For Mike, it was climbing with our friends from Serpentine Chalet Dam camp to Counts Point. Counts Point has spectacular views of Mount Sonder in the west and the Heavitree Range and the Chewings Range to the north. Elizabeth's favourite meal was our shared meal at Glen Helen Resort served in the Albert Namatjira room and wine, followed by a concert.

Lowlight for Elizabeth was having Mike drive along the very rough rocky 4 wheel drive track towards Birthday Waterhole, while Mike enjoyed the challenge of driving.

**Janice:** My highlight of the trip is the simple experience of walking, summarised by the philosophy of the Lone Dingo Outdoors shop in Alice Springs—*the lone dingo symbolises what so many of us are seeking when we head outdoors: isolation, intimacy with the environment, a simple existence, a better understanding of ourselves*—the motivation behind so many of life's journeys!

Lowlight: getting up close and personal with all that geology as we traversed every bloody anticline and syncline between Serpentine Gorge and Ellery creek.

AMAZING: the positive group dynamics after 19 days of walking!

### **Kate:**

*Lowlight:* Cold nights which meant having to get into bed really early....and cold mornings which meant not wanting to get out of bed!

*Highlight:* Camping on the ridge top between Ormiston Gorge and Waterfall Gorge and being able to read a book and eat dinner with a 180° view of the ranges. It was just stunning!



*Amazing Exp:* I enjoyed how simple and relaxing life was on the trail. Big decisions amounted to muesli bar selection and luxuries included soaking up the sun whilst reading a book. And all the while being surrounded by magnificent scenery!

Kate's other mentions:

- \* Watching with fascination as Coralie and Janice busily went about making camp furniture
- \* Wondering if there are any places in the world Warwick hasn't been to (yet)
- \* Trying to work out how Rob can go up and down rocky slopes so quickly
- \* Wearing the same t-shirt, shorts and socks for 17 days of walking (I did wash them twice!...and the socks went in the bin when we got to Alice)
- \* Finding my lost sunglasses in a gorge
- \* Delighting in the fact that I didn't get any blisters!
- \* Using a space blanket because my sleeping bag wasn't warm enough, crinkle, crinkle!

**Warwick:** Thanks again for allowing me to join you on a great walk and to be a part of the camaraderie. [Warwick is a member of the Bayside Club.] My highlight was climbing the Razorback, I felt great on this climb, not sure if it was due to the straight up start but having seen what was involved from the other end of the valley, you knew the size of the climb, so reaching the top was exhilarating. Lowlight: as expected for me the continuous climbing to each hill by the track surveyor instead of following a softer contour line became monotonous. Culinary delight: eating Aunt Betty's chocolate pudding after climbing the Bluff was the highlight of my evening meal.

**Rob:**

Q1: *Highlight*

Is it possible to choose from row after row of orange-red jagged rocky ranges, broad sandy dry creek beds edged with gums, and water-filled gorges? Reflections of trees in pools must be a generic high if my photos are any guide. I'd forgotten just how many stars are visible in a cloudless, moonless sky. But a choice is required and Bond Gap, a boutique waterhole, seemed destined to be top. That was until my private audience with a black footed wallaby halfway up the cliffs at Scorpion Pool.



### Q2: *Lowlight*

That's easy: waking in the stuffy window-less YHA room at four in the morning convinced that I hadn't got the stove's fuel pump back after the airport inspection. That proved to be a false fear—the missing part was the burner, still draining in a safe place back home. Thank you, hot water providers.

### Q3: *Culinary or amazing experience*

Let's stick to food, or possibly the lack of it, since I lost 5 kg. Considering the uniformity of the menu, it might be unfair to single out the pineapple-marinated pork jerky as the best of the day-to-day fare. Standley Chasm's Mango Swirls dethroned Peppermint Magnums from the comfort foods that can't be mentioned if the walk's hard image is to be maintained. An afterthought bought in Alice Springs comes out on top—the most looked forward to items were the mandarins and apples left in the food drops and doled out one at a time for each lunch.



### **Coralie:**

#### *Lowlights*

- Eating too much of the “Pamper Package’ food and lying awake all night with a groaning stomach.
- Having to ‘fortify’ the tent against dingo entry most nights

#### *Highlights*

- Not having to carry water, and seeing how the trail had changed in 10 years

#### *Amazing Experience*

- The views from the ridge top walking especially the days in and out of Standley Chasm



## **GSWW—Bridgewater Lakes to Cape Bridgewater: 20 Jul 2013**

*Walkers: Diane D, Irene H, Linda H, Lothar (leader), Sue O'M*

After an early start from Warrnambool we drove via Port Fairy to Cape Bridgewater. The kiosk on the beach was open. We had hot drinks before leaving one vehicle behind and all proceeding to the lakes in the other. We parked at the side of the road and scurried up the hill behind us to get panoramic views of the lakes and the cape in the distance.

The first part of the walk was relatively uneventful. We'd donned our wet weather gear as we were expecting bad weather but this didn't eventuate. We detoured from the track to take in the beach where the "Maria" had sunk years ago and eventually reached "The Springs" campsite at about lunchtime. I boiled up a couple of billies and we had hot drinks with our lunch.

Due to the rough seas we decided not to go down the cliffs to visit the springs. But we did pause at the Blowholes. Then it was past the Petrified Forest and on to the seal lookouts. Before we got there however we saw 2 whales – a cow and her calf – relatively close in, and out to sea many seabirds (gannets? seagulls?) swooping, diving and floating on the surface of the water. A bit of feeding frenzy for the birds! And then a few seals spotted below.

The afternoon was topped off by another visit to the Cafe. It was the day before it was due to be closed for renovations and while we were drinking and eating our snacks we were treated to the aforementioned calf breaching in the distance. A perfect end to the day walk!

*Lothar*



## Christmas in July with Bayside in the Grampians: 26 Jul 2013

Our annual combined *Christmas in July* started with the news that one of our Warrnambool participants had been flown to Melbourne, just two nights before we were due to leave. That put a bit of a dampener over the remaining 5 Warrnambool participants. However we still all made our way to the YHA in Halls Gap and sorted our rooms out. That evening 23 of us headed to the Hotel for tea, some brave souls walked in the dark whilst everyone else drove. The Hotel has a different chef than in previous visits resulting in the food being great!!!

Saturday was not raining but crikey it was cold. The usual car shuffles occurred as we all made our way to Sundial car park. The plan was to walk to the Pinnacle, down to Wonderland car park then down the reopened track pass, Splinter Falls and Venus Baths, coming out at the caravan park. This last section proved to be very interesting as we got to see the land slips which had occurred following the torrential run in the Grampians several years ago. A massive job has been done moving the vast volume of rocks to build the new track. It's a credit to all those involved. Allowing for various breaks and lunch the whole walk took 5 hours.



That night we had an unbelievable spread laid before us. The theme was Curries, there was beef, lamb, chicken, vegetarian, rice, roti bread and chutneys. The mouth is still watering. Sweets saw the usual Christmas pudding, strudel and a tart with yogurt and custard. Copious bottles of Champagne and wine were drunk and the traditional Kris Kringle happened.

Sunday morning saw rain falling, so we made changes to the walk planned as the rocks would have been quite slippery. We followed the creek behind Halls Gap and came out at Brambuk where we all had coffee and cakes, very nice indeed. At this stage various people were starting to depart in various directions with the bulk walking back to the YHA and their cars.

Discussions have already begun for next year. It's an activity I can highly recommend. A great bunch of people who really do enjoy a good time, as well as some good walking!

Thank you so much to the Warrnambool Walkers who came and all of you who helped keep 21 people under control on the track, not an easy feat.

Linda

## **Killarney to Port Fairy: 17 Aug 2013**

*Walkers: Helen A, Jim F, Lothar (leader), Rob C, with special thanks to Di P.*

We expected gale force winds and driving rain but got neither on this 90 minute walk. Jim drove us all to the Killarney oval/campground. From there we followed the 4WD tracks behind the sand dunes to the Woodbine corner near the golf course. After a short section along the road we passed the golf course and then crossed the sand dunes onto the beach. From here on what wind there was, was blocked by the dunes. The high tide left us a soft sandy strip to walk on but we managed the last couple of kilometres without too much trouble. At the edge of Port Fairy we walked along the top of the cliffs to the surf club.

We waited a couple of minutes for Di to arrive then went into the cafe for refreshments and excited chatter. Afterwards, Di dropped us back to the car at Killarney. Many thanks to Di!!

A very pleasant morning outing!

*Lothar*

## Ballarat - Skipton Rail Trail: 14 Sep 2013

*Walkers: Gwenda, Helen, Irene, Janice (leader), Karen, Linda, Lothar, Mabel, Rob*

After meandering over the countryside we arrived at Skipton just in time to help set up the Saturday market, then peruse the stalls and make a quick exit, hot footing it to Pittong to commence the car shuffle. Onwards to Nimmons Bridge to start this gentle (maximum 2% gradient) walk!

The web site tells us that this walk "passes through farmland, historic towns, bush land as well as areas of conservation and historic significance, it is suitable for cyclists, walkers, and horse riders of all levels of experience" and it doesn't lie. Walking through the eucalyptus forests enthusiastic flora seekers were delighted with their finds of hooded orchids, pink and white Heath, purple and lilac hardenbergia, correas, and egg and bacon plants. The occasional fauna was also discovered: rabbits, kangaroos and wallabies.

The older more relaxed club members were kept moving by the two newcomers who charged ahead and led all the way. They told me (in confidence) "they had to keep going because if they stopped they wouldn't go again!!!" Haven't we ALL felt like that at some time?

A brief exit from the forest bought us to Linton for our lunch and coffee stop. Lothar decided that the floor of the rotunda needed cleaning, so good heartedly he used his well-deserved coffee to wash the floor.

The trail leaves the forest with a descent into Pittong where there is a kaolin mine, and I have since discovered that this white clay is used for porcelain.

Thanks Janice and everyone for the company and a great day.

*Irene*

