



LAT LENTULES

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Briefly:

- We had a great time at the National 4x4 Show at the Melbourne Exhibition Centre in October. Thanks everyone who dropped in to see us! This year we teamed up with the shires of Baw Baw, Latrobe and Wellington. Amazingly, we distributed about 3000 lots of Gippsland touring information!!
- We get some interesting assignments. Recently a 90-year old lady wanted to visit the grave of her grandfather "somewhere along Donnellys Creek". Despite having to bush-bash a kilometre on foot, in the rain, following GPS directions she made it!
- In December we've been asked to run a trip at Licola for 250 people from the Jewish community!!

Hi friends,

They ganged up on me! Here I was battling my way through the rewrite of "4 Wheel Driving Gippsland" (now desperately needed because the 1st Edition reprint is sold out), when at our last MTE meeting the team insisted that I produce another newsletter to you all before Christmas!

I guess the main reason is that we want to tell you about some fantastic trips coming up in the summer holidays. Also we have had some interesting experiences in the last six months. So I hope you enjoy our latest waffle, and have a great Christmas.

- Ron

Beware the South Side of the Mountain!

A couple of serious incidents this winter have highlighted for us what we now call the "dangers of the south side of the mountain".

It was late on a Saturday evening that we received a call from a General Store up in the mountains. A rescue was required for a brand new (5 weeks old) Land Rover Discovery. It had rounded a corner on a slippery section of track, hit the brakes, and slid downhill sideways for 40 metres, wrapping itself around a tree. Over \$10,000 worth of damage was the result. To make matters worse a navigation error meant that it was at the bottom of a disused, dead end track, with access only from the top. Inspector Gadget to the rescue!

The next morning the winch vehicle was manoeuvred into position high on a ridge with 65 metres of cable, tow straps and snatch block attached. The recovery operation took three hours, with great care required as the cable at times reached piano wire tension. Finally success was achieved, with the insurance company finding our photographic evidence very interesting!

Our second experience involved one of our Defenders being on the receiving end. The scenario involved a group of deer hunters in battered old utes hooting along at characteristic high speed. Cresting a hill from a dry section of road, the first vehicle hit

the slippery stuff, with us being at the bottom end of the hill. With wheels locked it slid for 15 metres before "T-boning" our Defender in the side doors! To our amazement the driver's first words to us were "I can't believe my bad luck. This is the second identical accident that I've had in two weeks" (!!). The result was \$4,000 worth of



damage to our vehicle.

So what was the common factor between these two incidents? Perhaps there's more than one, but our particular observation is that both happened on a sunny winter's day, with vehicles speeding on dry roads on the north side of a mountain. On suddenly encountering the southern side, where there is minimal sunshine to dry the track, the road becomes treacherously slippery and extreme vigilance is required. This is actually worse than a wet day when the roads are more uniformly slippery and vehicles therefore

4WD Accessory Tests

by Dave Taylor, Gippsland 4WD Centre

"Sunday the 29th October. Eight vehicles meet at Gippsland 4WD Centre in Traralgon. Weather in the weeks before, WET, VERY WET. Nerves? You bet. The faces said it all, this is going to be interesting. Ron Camier from Mountain-Top Experience has planned and re-planned the trip as the rain continued to fall through the week. Ron briefed everyone and led the way towards Heyfield. We are to pick up "trip regulars" Rod & Maz at Heyfield. After setting up CB's the group head north from Heyfield. We stop at Burgoyne's Gap for morning tea and Ron takes time to set the scene.

After tea, coffee and a few of Andrea Camier's famous bikkies we head east from the morning tea spot. Easy driving at first with scenic views. We then encounter the first of the testing sections we are to overcome throughout the day. A fairly steep and very rocky climb. A good test for the vehicles and drivers, and an interesting demonstration of varying suspension configurations. This trip is graded as intermediate and the drivers must have some experience in off-road conditions. A sharp right hand hairpin at the top means the vehicles must take it one at a time. Ted and David decide to save the Troopy brakes at the top by using the bank as a "buffer". We suspect this was David's suggestion as it is a technique he perfected on our last trip. The stop at the top allows the drivers and passengers to get out and support and cheer the efforts of the other drivers. Everyone is successful.

The rest of the morning is a combination of easy river crossings and pleasant tracks. The occasional technical section is tackled and conquered. The brand "new" Pajero that Paul is driving does well and you could hardly notice the re-arranged front section that settled on top of a rather large boulder. The different designs of the vehicles was evident on this trip. The more challenging conditions highlighted the better set-up vehicles. Once again the Hawken clan in the pride of ARB's Range Rover took everything in it's stride providing an armchair ride for the occupants.

Lunch was taken on the crown of a ridge. Maxeen, Paul, Bruno and Dave played host and prepared the meal. Snags, burgers, bread, coleslaw and sauce. What more could you want? Lunch is a good time to get to know each other and lots of chats were happening. A group of trail-bike riders out for a quiet day in the bush must have wondered what they had struck when they came to the top of the ridge. It looked like a shopping centre car park. We offered them a snag or two but



Customer convoy

they headed off.

We left the lunch spot and encountered similar terrain to the morning, with fantastic views overlooking the Avon Wilderness. Considering the wet weather we had in the valley the rivers were very low. The ground was dry and even dusty in places. Ron had done his homework in finding an area where we could experience off road driving in some technically difficult sections and combine beautiful views without getting bogged. The point of these trips is to enable all members of the family an opportunity to experience what their vehicles can do. I even had a go at driving the Mountain-Top Experience ARB-equipped Land Rover Defender, finding it surprisingly comfortable. We leave no rubbish and stick to fire trails or designated tracks. The afternoon tea break was beside a beautiful creek and the kids took the opportunity to have a dip. Kerrie nearly took an unscheduled dip but stopped just short of the water. Some were asking for more of the challenging stuff and Ron found some. One section was very, very rough and Peter and Kerrie in the Jackaroo made several attempts on one section. Dave (me) was "helping" by sending them up to the left of the rough section. After Peter beat the section, Paul decided to ignore my advice and go to the right hand side. A wise move. He, and everyone else after that, made it up easily. I was banned from any more directional duties for the remainder of the trip. Sorry Peter and Kerrie.

After being forced to alter the trip several times through the week Ron did a superb job in providing an enjoyable trip for everyone. Having to use seldom used tracks to exit the bush slowed us down considerably towards the end. Tight overgrown tracks made progress slow. But we still experienced beautiful scenery and some lovely river crossings. We exited the bush around 7.00pm. A late finish for those who travelled a long way to join us and a long trip home. I hope the day was worth it.

I would like to thank everyone for making this trip a success. Ron and Peter especially as their professionalism makes my job easy. Also thanks to Paul, Maxeen and Bruno for assisting with lunch. To all those who attended, thanks and I hope your day was enjoyable. We are conducting trips every 2 – 3 months so if you would like to contact Ron at Mountain-Top Experience for additional trips simply ring him on 5134 6876 or go to www.latrobe.net.au/camier. I can't recommend him and his team highly enough."



