

2017 Southern Tour, 24th Feb to 6th March.

Day 1 - Friday 24th, Warwick to White Cliffs.

Kelvin and Ian, Goynes and Hawthorne's left Warwick at about 7.15am, with a sendoff by Denise. Our first refuel and morning tea stop was Moree where we met up with Louise and Randolph in their Technam as well as Peter and Lyn Bugg in their Virus.

Doug kept in touch by text and advised positions of Martin and Chris and John and Leanne (both their planes are RVs). He was like our guardian angel!

Next stop, a very hot Bourke where the bitumen was all but melting. The air conditioner in the terminal wasn't working properly either, so it was even hot in there. We met up with Hones and Bridges and all ate our packed lunches together there.

Final stop for the day was White Cliffs where John and Louise were waiting to join up. Once we booked in, some swam while the others chatted and relaxed with a cold drink. We had our first tour briefing (Kelvin) that evening and then ate dinner all together.

We were all together except for the Dennis's who were waiting in Warrnambool and Chapman's who had flown to visit Wal's brother in Orange. Both couples were to catch up with us when we arrived at Goolwa on Saturday. That would make nine planes in all, three RVs (the Tin Team) one Virus and five Jabirus (the Fantastic Plastics). That's with Louise and Randolph leaving us and returning home tomorrow.

Day 2 - Saturday 25th, White Cliffs to Goolwa.

We were all up bright and early and left for the airfield in two groups (pilots generally first load, navigators next).

The RV's were planning on going straight to Goolwa while the rest of us were re-fuelling at Broken Hill. Martin called in to BH quickly for a top up and kept going. The rest of us enjoyed a coffee before heading off for the 2 and a half hour trip to Goolwa. It was surprisingly cool at Broken Hill after the heat of the day before!

Arrived at Goolwa about 12.30 to much confusion re the active runway. Every radio call seemed to be using a different strip. Even Ground Unicom man changed his mind. We ended up using 16, as did Kelvin and Phil thought he did (but he actually came in on 19). It was all a bit of a 'dog's breakfast' to quote my pilot!

Our bus was waiting for us, so once we all loaded up we found our motel and booked in then went for a stroll to find food for a late lunch. Aha, a bakery just up the road!

Once everyone was fed we jumped on the bus and drove to Victor Harbour. It's a beautiful (very touristy) place. Made me think of an English seaside village for some reason. Perhaps it was the horse drawn carriage taking tourists across the bridge to Granite Island, or the ice cream vendors? Dinner was at the local pub just down the road. What a great feed! Both pubs were very busy, so we were lucky to get in.

We wandered home for the night with contented stomachs and minds! Daylight comes late and goes late here!

The downer for the day was that Leanne was taken to hospital for a few hours to stabilise her ongoing treatment. Such a shame, but such an elegant, brave lady! Hopefully she will be back on top of it and able to come to Kangaroo Island with the rest of us.

Day 3 - Sunday 26th, Goolwa and district (by bus)

We said farewell to the Goyne's for the day as they were spending it with Phil's brother Richard and family.

For the rest of us, it was an 8am start for a bus tour to Aldinga. We went to Cape Jervis firstly and had our first view of Kangaroo Island from the mainland where the ferry leaves.

We enjoyed a coffee in the ferry terminal before heading off again over hill and dale to Aldinga. The countryside changes quite a lot, but was generally fairly dry and very hilly and reminiscent of a landscape that has to handle tough weather conditions.

As we neared Aldinga we saw a few wind farms with their huge wind turbines. They are always a source of interest.

At Aldinga we found the airfield where Adelaide Biplanes are based. There was a lovely cafe where we enjoyed sandwiches (some toasted, some not) and drinks while watching the many and varied planes take off and land. What a thoroughly pleasant place to spend time.

Enough bus riding for one day, so we headed home the quick way, via the airfield, so John Reid could replace a spat bolt.

Briefing and dinner in the in-house restaurant tonight. If Leanne is ok then we should be our full complement of 18 tonight.

Off to Kangaroo Island tomorrow for two nights.

Day 4 - Monday 27th, Goolwa to Kangaroo Island.

We awoke to good weather again. We flew south west along the coast towards Cape Jervis and once we reached 4500 feet headed over water to Kangaroo Island. We then tracked clockwise around the island enjoying the beautiful coastline with its spectacular rocky outcrops. We saw the Remarkable Rocks and Seal Bay all the while staying mindful of our height and distance from the coastline because of the sensitive wildlife. We spotted Admiral's Arch and then rounded the Cape and headed for Cape Borda Lighthouse. The northern coastline was quite different, with less rocks and with more of the coastal land having been cleared.

Once we landed at Kingscote we picked up our hire cars and booked in to our motel with sea views. After lunch we went for a drive to American River and Penneshaw.

We enjoyed a delicious seafood dinner on the deck of our motel that night. What a wonderful day. Off to bed in readiness for a sightseeing drive tomorrow!

Day 5 - Tuesday 28th, Kangaroo Island.

We headed off in tandem with the Bugg's and Dennis's to drive the coastline we had flown yesterday. Our first stop was Bales Beach where we met a Kangaroo Island tiger snake. He was all black and fortunately very sleepy. Next stop Seal Bay where we had a look around but didn't pay to go through to the beach. We stopped for morning tea at Seal Bay Cafe and Cabins. What a lovely experience. The owner took us for a walk out the back to see a koala in the wild after we had finished our morning tea.

Off we headed again. Next stop was Remarkable Rocks. We couldn't believe how huge and amazing they were! They didn't look that big from 1500 feet! Lots of photos with Bob and Robyn taken there.

Off we went again - this time we stopped at Admirals Arch. There was a long boardwalk down to the arch where we found lots of seals at last. They were a bit wiffy, but so amazing to see so many with the little ones playing in the rock pools. We walked down to the actual arch where there were lots more seals and some truly beautiful views of the Southern Ocean. Such a beautiful place.

We had lunch at a lovely cafe on the way out from the arch, where I could buy a few souvenirs for the kids.

Different cars went different ways, but we all saw the special sights. That night we dined at the pub up the road. Very enjoyable.

Day 6 - Wednesday 1st March, Kangaroo Island to Warrnambool (via Goolwa)

Today some were going to Goolwa to refuel and some to Aldinga on the way to Warrnambool. Then we flew along the Coorong, past the mouth of the Murray River. It was really interesting scenery once again. We could see the line separating where the river water ran out into the salt water.

We then overflew Mt Gambier to have a look at the blue lakes.

Everyone landed safely at Warrnambool and the speedy Gatton RV's (Tin Terrific team) had already refueled and taken off again for King Island. They parted company with us at this point of the tour. Now we were down to seven aircraft.

We picked up our bus and car and headed off to book in to our units/cabins and do some washing. Then we went for a drive to Tower Hill Reserve which looks like an inactive volcano. Bob and Robyn had received all the good info on dining that night, and as a consequence, we went to Macy's where we had a fantastic three course meal for just \$16!

Day 7 - Thursday 2nd, Warrnambool

Our trusty tour guides had a full day of entertainment and sightseeing organised for today. First stop was The Pavilion, near the breakwater, for breakfast. As we arrived we realised that lots of race horse trainers swim their horses in the calm water there. We had a bird's eye view. What a lovely sight.

While we were having breakfast, and enjoying watching the horses a fog rolled slowly in and changed the whole atmosphere. Very beautiful to watch even if it hid the sun.

At 9.30 we were to meet a ranger to do a tour of Middle Island (just over the road and across the beach a little way). This is where two Maremma dogs guard the Little Penguins. The water was a bit deep for we 'elderly' people, so they brought the Maremmas to us. I love them and admire what they do. We then went for a lovely walk out to the nearby point to enjoy the beautiful ocean views.

After lunch, we visited the Flagstaff Hill Maritime Museum overlooking Lady Bay. I didn't think I would be all that interested but it was very, very interesting and was complete with Lighthouse, village shops and garrison. We were able to follow the story of the Loch Ard sailing vessel which was shipwrecked off the coast near the 12 Apostles in 1878. There were only two survivors, one was the ship's doctor's daughter, Eva Carmichael (she lost her mum and dad, two brothers and two sisters) and a young deckhand, Tom Pearce, both 19. The Museum houses a gold watch owned by Mrs Carmichael and the fabulous Loch Ard Peacock (which also survived the shipwreck by floating ashore in its packing crate).

That night we went to Pippi's restaurant for a delicious two course meal before going down through the Flagstaff Hill historical village to the laser light show, Shipwrecked. It was really well done and even the grandstand jumped around when the ship hit the rocks! Today was a truly enjoyable day from go to woe, thanks to Bob and Robyn for all their organising.

Day 8 - Friday 3rd, Warrnambool

Today was a drive along the Great Ocean Road. We called in to Peterborough for morning tea/brekky, then off to see the Twelve Apostles. Lots of photos and a nice walk later we headed for Razorback where there are more spectacular limestone rock formations and then towards Cape Otway. We turned around and visited the inlet where the Loch Ard was Shipwrecked, saw London

Bridge and called in to check out the Bay of Islands before stopping at very pretty Port Campbell for lunch.

We stopped at Cheese World on the way home and bought a few more souvenirs and tasted different cheeses etc. it was a huge dairy processing plant and interesting to visit.

We returned to our various accommodation to do a final bit of washing, some packing and have a rest before heading back to Macy's for dinner again that night.

Day 9 - Saturday 4th, Warrnambool to Bendigo

Today was our day to fly the Great Ocean Road. It was quite hazy and cloudy, so we weren't sure if we would be able to do it. A few planes took off early and didn't come back so away we went. The further we flew the clearer it became. We saw all the sights we had seen the day before from the air - fantastic, and just before we reached Cape Otway we turned inland towards Bendigo, our next overnight destination.

We left Bob and Robyn in Warrnambool so they could attend Bob's granddaughter's 'engagement' party. Now we were down to six aircraft.

Once we arrived at Bendigo, we taxied to our motel before having lunch and going riding on the Bendigo tram. It was a great way to do some sightseeing and spend the afternoon plus we enjoyed our very cheery conductor.

Dinner that night was very nice, but the young girls messed up the bill and overcharged our group by \$60. A frustrating end to another enjoyable day.

Day 10 - Sunday 5th, Bendigo to Narromine

Were all up early ready for the second last leg before getting home. Three planes stopped at Temora for fuel and three (including us) at Wagga Wagga. We were able to have a break, coffee and morning tea before heading off to Narromine for the night. We had a good tailwind all the way.

We rode the Services Club taxi into town for lunch and then came home for a rest and so Grah could watch the V8s.

That night the Narromine Gliding Club hosted a barbeque dinner and for \$15 a head it was a really lovely meal with a choice of T-bone steak or Atlantic salmon with homemade salads. Then they very graciously showed us through their Aviation Museum. Another special evening.

Day 11 - Monday 6th, Narromine to Warwick

Final day! Here we parted company with the Reid's who headed for Lismore and the Chapman's who headed home to Guyra. Now we are four!

We decided to fly straight home, so headed off about 7.30 am (NSW time). We enjoyed a 15 knot tailwind all the way home once again, so arrived home just after 9am (Qld time). The Bugg's landed at Warwick briefly and then headed off for home at Southport. The three Warwick Jabiru's (fantastic plastic) all arrived safely after yet another wonderful trip to see another part of our amazing country. We enjoyed great weather, great company and fantastic scenery.