

## **The Twelve Days of Tarkine (alias the Tarkine experience Nov 2017)**

“Was it fun?” they asked .. not a word I’d use to describe those twelve days of harrowing torture.

“Would I go again?” .. Well I’ll let you be the judge. Here’s the tale .. with a bit of writer’s licence ..

### **Day one: South Arm to Granville Harbour**

Sheila rather fancies herself as a racing driver with racing gear changes and low slung steering wheel. I spent the day chasing her up hills and around hairpin bends in a spine chilling race for the sea. Of the others there was not a whisper. We caught a whiff of them in Queenie where we finally dared to stop for sustenance... Just 30 minutes ahead of us.

More hairpins and spinal stuff and suddenly we spotted them, framed by a thundering grey sea and blown sideways by a humungous gale brought to us with the compliments of the combined African nations. The mother ship was trying valiantly to remain upright, the shaggin’ wagon was really rockin’ ... and that lot expected us to put up our tents in the path of the gale. Well we did! – with their help I must admit and we jumped in mighty quick lest we be blown right to St Helens. So began our trip!

### **Day Two – Corinna and beyond**

Not exactly perky .. well you try sleeping in a tent in a force ten gale with rain bucketing down, but, eager for adventure, we valiantly practiced our first wet tent routine and set off for Corinna.

We were immediately immersed in the beautiful Tarkine wilderness. The Fatman barge man at the Pieman was not fat and Corinna seems to be a “blink and you’ll miss it “ kind of place. So up the creek a bit (via a quarry where I practiced snitching the bits Derek chucked away). I’ve discovered from long practice the Derek has a good eye so is worth following. Colleen is very particular. She often gets the best specimens but they are the only ones she put her hand to. Lou’s chuck outs are usually half a ton heavy so don’t go there. And Sheila .. her specimens are different.



### **Day Three – Mt Donaldson**

A nice campsite by the Savage River. The mob were getting a bit smelly by now so I shunted them off to climb a mountain while I snuck back to Corinna for a shower and some real coffee. They said the mountain was fun but it didn’t do anything for the smell.

### **Day Four – Bludging around**

... and food and campfire and more food and of course rain every night .. but stop complaining Gill. It stopped now and then and we found burrowing crayfish and we didn’t catch a fish.

### **Day Five and Six – Off to the Julius River via Balfour**

Another wet tent practice and away up the Western Explorer. No racing gear changes here – this highway is an adventure in itself. And on the way there is a tantalising sign that says “Balfour”. So into Lou’s mother ship and bump thump along a dubious 4WD track to what remains of the town of Balfour.





We found the town's only inhabitant in her parlour, fire going and cartons of beer lined up. Balfour at the end of its bumpy road seems to be the watering hole for people from miles around .. as long as they have a 4WD to negotiate the road.

### Day Six – Julius River Camp Site

We camped in a magical spot by the Julius River. Our tents were in a cathedral of tall trees and at night among the leaves we could see stars winking down on us. Beautiful river and forest walks and no rain!



### Day Seven – Via Smithton to Arthur River



Lots of stops .. for rocks and for nice walks. Don't miss Lake Chisholm! Then out of the tall timbers into beautiful farmland.

We stocked up in Smithton and headed south to Arthur River. Sheila and I decided to go up market and hire a cabin for the luxury of a shower. To spite us the others settled in to the best campfire night of the trip so we joined them for the next couple of nights.

Lake Chisholm



Rapid River

### Days Eight and Nine – Messing about on Beaches

We explored up and down the coast finding wild beaches, aboriginal middens, petroglyphs and shipwrecked boots. The weather was perfect.



### Day Ten – A long drive back to Luina near Waratah

Mostly we just drove that Western Explorer back to Corinna where we went up market and bought lunch. Then up the road a bit to Luina. What a doozy! Empty blocks of land with driveways and bitumen streets.

### Days Eleven and Twelve

Another mine every few hours – how many hills did we walk up? How many mullock heaps did we stagger around. You've got to hand it to Lou and Colleen. They can find a mine anywhere. I call them mining magnets.

The piles of specimens grew and grew. The old bones ached and the muscles twitched. And then came the storm. Not your normal pretty storm with a bit of lightening -- a real storm. The thunder was almost continuous and in my tent I could feel the ground shake when it hammered the mountain tops. Camping can be such fun.

**Goodness – we've reached Day Thirteen.**

Another wet tent! I'm outa here. A quick visit to the Waratah mine and I turned my nose south. In fact those hardy fossickers were jumping ship everywhere. Home was looking good.

Would I go again? You bet!