



# TRACKS

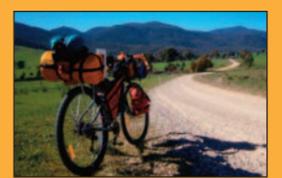
BNT

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
*Bicentennial*  
NATIONAL TRAIL

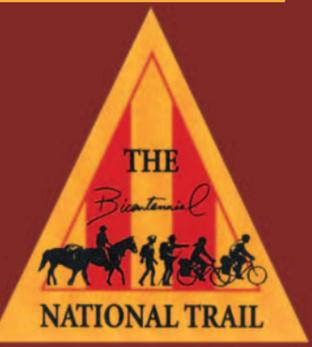
## INSIDE:



**Donkeys for  
Nepal P12**



**Bike touring  
for beginners**



**MARCH 2017**



## Steep learning curve

Brett Wilson puts a big effort into preparing for his ride: **Page 5**

## From the Chair

### Respect for private property

A REMINDER for all members to have the BNT membership card upon their persons while trekking through the many private properties which the BNT traverses.

Trekkers are to keep to the trail through the private properties and phone well ahead of your planned arrival if required in the guidebook and updates.

The BNT values the support from property owners, and therefore always have your current membership card with you and observe the BNT Code of Conduct.

The membership card, if requested by the property owner, is to be shown as proof that you are a current financial member of the BNT and are covered with BNT public liability insurance on private property.

This is the agreement that the BNT has with ALL private landowners. Non-members are not covered and therefore are trespassing on privately owned land. It is with the discretion of the property owner whether you are allowed on their property.

For further information please ring on 1300 138 724.

NICK JACOMAS

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## Letter to the Editor

### Taking care of cultural and historical artefacts

DEAR Ed,

I've just finished reading the August 2016 issue of Tracks which arrived today in the mail. I've been a BNT member for many years now and it's always with enjoyment and a tinge of envy I read through the stories published therein.

I must admit the stories submitted by walkers are my personal favourites though.

When I saw Alienor Le Gouvé's story I was reminded of another French trekker, Henri Gilbert, who walked from Perth to Brisbane between 1897 and 1899 and whose diary was translated and edited by Colin Dyer in 2000 – also a great read.

It doesn't surprise me that Alienor found the New England section one of her favourites, the upper Macleay River gorge country is rugged and spectacular and although you are never far from civilisation in a straight line (...), you are still very isolated in there. I hope she submits more

stories of her trek for publication.

Eliza Allen's article on TSRs was interesting too and it reminded me of reading about the gradual loss of unconstructed, though gazetted roads across Queensland, as reported in Tracks August 2015.

It's worth also mentioning here a few points about scarred trees, middens and artefacts – that is, 'cultural heritage' – along TSRs and the BNT.

All three states the BNT crosses have cultural heritage legislation that accounts for the preservation of cultural objects and places – both Aboriginal and historical.

What this means is any objects identifiable as cultural/archaeological are under the protection of the various State Acts. We, as BNT users (in my case it's more wannabee than actual user), need to be mindful that any Aboriginal object, midden or scarred tree and any surveyor's tree, old water trough, windlass or stockyard, is cultural heritage and should be looked upon with care and a minimum of impact. Just thought it worth mentioning.

While I still have breath, there is still time (to walk the Trail ...). Keep the newsletter coming in the meantime.

GRAHAM KNUCKEY  
archaeologist

## News

### Dave gets another gong



BNT section coordinator and book manager Dave McLeod has been recognised for his service to outdoor education by winning the Queensland Government Award for Outstanding Achievement (Individual) at the 2016 Queensland Outdoor Recreation Awards.

Dave works with Fraser Coast Bicycle Users Group, as well as with the Bicentennial National Trail, Maryborough Special School and the Duke of Edinburgh Award – he's a generous supporter and trainer of young people.

He wrote a series of BNT Weekenders, serves on the BNT mapping committee, mentors an Outdoor Recreation team to work with children with disabilities, trains and leads Adventurous Journeys for the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, just gained his bushwalking qualification for the above and he has cycled 380km on the BNT.

He is a regular contributor to BNT TRACKS magazine.



Proud winner Dave McLeod with BNT mapping coordinator Andrew Graham at the awards.



### New yards and dunny at Monda

ON the 26 and 27th of November 2016, the opening of the Monda yards at Mt Monda, Narbethong, Wilkes Creek (Anderson Mill), Marysville and Kepples Hut.

This project was the culmination of many hundreds of hours work by JoAnne and John Kasch, donations large and small from many individuals, groups and clubs, over \$13,000 and the tireless work of the local DELWP branch in Toolangi, Victoria.

These facilities are located on the first night of the BNT from Healesville.

The location makes it easy for

trekkers starting, as there are now yards at Mt Monda, Narbethong, Wilkes Creek (Anderson Mill), Marysville and Kepples Hut.

This also makes it a very attractive option for the seven-day annual holiday trekker as well.

There were over 60 people in attendance at the opening with a tri-club trail ride also held to honour the occasion.

Thank you to members of Alexandra, Yarra Valley and Marysville riding clubs for supporting the day.

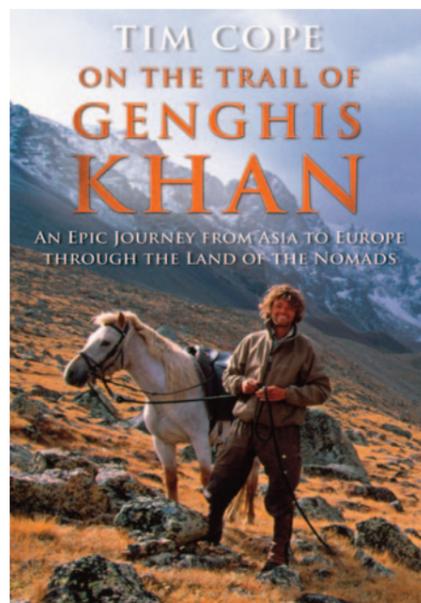
## Snaffle bits

### Movies



POPULAR name that! Follow Robin Davidson on her epic trek across the western deserts with a team of camels. Consider how one woman's adventure turned into a popular book and movie.

Rent for \$4.99 from iTunes or buy from Amazon various prices



YOU have to love Tim Cope. Warts and all, Tim battles the elements, the terrain, bandits and his own weaknesses in this epic journey across Central Asia. A series made for television, it is compulsive viewing. Could you pull this off?

Google Play \$16.99. Buy the book on Amazon, various prices



DO yourself a favour and watch this brilliant award-winning documentary true story set in rugged New Zealand wilderness.

A horse-loving family battles the elements, family problems and fate with a great attitude.

Alternately moving, inspiring and tragic, with beautiful child horse-riding action in the wilderness. You will love it.

\$14.99 on iTunes or buy DVD on Amazon, \$24.99



## Solar-powered electric bicycle

THE Bicentennial National Trail was chartered to cater for non-motorised transport only, meaning the internal combustion engine – noisy, polluting, expensive and destructive.

So what about this idea?

With a BEFREE Solar Bike you can cycle up to 300km daily with no charging necessary.

The lithium battery has an average life expectancy of up to five years, and flexible solar panels on BEFREE trailer last up to 20 years. The solar trailer can produce electricity for a very long time for both the

electric bike as well as for a small solar power plant.

All the metal parts (aluminium, stainless steel, stainless steel screws) are protected by electrophoresis. Electronics has a certificate of resistance to external influence IP68.

Since we have an electric bike converter from 48V to 5V, we can plug in and charge all modern electrical devices such as mobile phone, GPS navigation, GPS tracker, LED-laser safety lamps and any other.

www.befree-solarbikes.com  
email: andrej707@gmail.com  
Facebook: Solar Bike Slovenia



## Man bites bear

HUNTING guide C. Dale Petersen of Jackson Hole, Wyoming, killed this grizzly bear with his hands and teeth. The bear had been aggravated by a group of backpackers. A fight-to-the-death ensued.

Petersen, having his right hand and arm wedged in the bear's throat, actually used his own teeth and jaws to pinch off the bear's jugular vein. When the bear passed out from the lack of blood flow to the brain, Petersen beat the bear in the head to death with a stick.



## Folding micro wind turbine

THIS micro wind turbine proposes a novel alternative to solar panels that can operate in harsh weather conditions and even at night.

The design integrates all necessary components in one sleek unit and is focused on pack size, minimal weight and ease of set up. Check it out at:

http://nilsferber.de/#/micro-wind-turbine/

## Snake bite update

SNAKE BITE treatment is an evolving science. While very, very rare, snakebite is a real possibility out on Australia's trails whether on bike, on a horse or on foot.

First and foremost avoid being bitten. Leave snakes alone and give them time and room to move away. Snakes know that you are much more risk to them than they are to you.

If the unlikely happens, keep the bite victim as still and calm as possible and immobilise the bitten limb. Apply effective compression bandaging to the bitten limb (mark the bite site with a marker pen or similar if possible).

Seek medical treatment as soon as possible while minimising all movement of the victim.

Never try to catch, chase or kill the snake, as this may lead to another bite. Do not give alcohol, tea, stimulants, food or medications without medical advice.

Don't wash the wound, apply hot or cold packs, cut the wound, use ligatures or tourniquets or apply electric shocks, and do not suck the wound or use suction from any device.

Do not allow the patient to walk or run after a snake bite. Do not remove or loosen the pressure immobilisation bandages unless advised to do so by medical personnel.

Do not ignore the urgency of obtaining medical assistance in favour of reliance on traditional medicines or home remedies.

### After a snake bite

BE aware of the potential for sudden onset of dizziness and possible collapse and loss of consciousness. If the patient does become unconscious lay them on their left side in the recovery position and take steps to protect their airway and breathing.

If a person stops breathing or is pulseless then DRS ABCD is vital and can be life-saving, and everyone should learn this approach as part of your overall first aid preparedness strategy. The St John Ambulance of Australia website ([www.stjohnambulance.com.au](http://www.stjohnambulance.com.au)) has specific resources about DRS ABCD and other first aid skills.

Retreat to a safe distance away from the snake, if necessary.

Calm the patient, lay them down and keep them still. The recovery position is the best way to help protect their airway and breathing while you wait for medical assistance. Remove rings, bracelets and any constrictive objects from the bitten limb.

While the likelihood of a snake bite is very low, being out on the trails in the bush does mean the risk is real so carry a compression bandage each on the trail plus one in the first aid kit.

IAN GANDERTON

## Smart snake bite bandage



versatile snake bandage that the market has even seen. This is a huge innovation. We aim to ensure even the layman is prepared for an emergency!

What is the SMART bandage?

The SMART snake bandage makes sense. It uses a clever pictogram to show users how to achieve optimal tension. It starts off as a rectangle and when you have reached the optimal tension, the pictogram will show a square.

The graphics on the bandage help keep you calm during an emergency as it shows when optimal tension is reached.

[www.survivalfirstaidkits.net.au/shop/first-aid-accessories/smart-snake-bandage](http://www.survivalfirstaidkits.net.au/shop/first-aid-accessories/smart-snake-bandage)

KNOWING how to react and apply correct first aid immediately can be the difference between life and death.

In a stressful situation you never want to have any doubt about how to respond to a life threatening event.

Survival Emergency Solutions have teamed up with SSSafe to create the most





## Steep learning curve

BY BRETT WILSON

Hi, my name is Brett Wilson. I come from Coutts Crossing situated not far from Grafton, NSW.

Basically, at the time of writing I am 21,199 days old, have a wonderful family, including two kids, four grand-kids with one more on the way in March, and I'm going to have a crack at completing the whole of the BNT north to south starting in April this year.

My preparation started around 18 months ago when it became evident that I was more than likely going to be one of many deemed to be surplus to the requirements of my employer. At the time I was only 20,652 days old and thus looking to what comes next.

What did come next was a choice between bowing to the money god and finding another job I really didn't want or alternatively spending a bit of cash, grabbing a slice of adventure and in the process

having a lash at maybe helping some absolutely deserving people along the way (which I will expand on later).

I had heard of the BNT some time ago in a conversation with a colleague who spoke in a broad sense of doing certain parts with his son on horseback, which sounded really romantic at the time. Obviously the conversation impacted on my thought process and here I am today.

When I first touted the idea to my family I guess there was a fair amount of scepticism and trepidation, however I feel now they are extremely supportive and also have taken on board the fact I am fair dinkum and absolutely determined. To that end I have found it important to involve them and show I am not going on some kind of suicide mission. On the contrary, I am taking all measures (that I know and am learning) to put critical emphasis on my personal safety and obviously that of my animals.

Regarding safety, I think the best way forward is that it is imperative to try and find the right people to listen to and in turn analyse and absorb the advice offered and don't be dismissive of anything!

I am not the greatest horseman, bushman, navigator or camp setterupper, however I am finding it really satisfying in becoming the best I can be.

Around 18 months ago I was fortunate enough to come in contact with Paul Jones and his wife Cherry who are coordinators of the trail in the Guy Fawkes area. These people have been a godsend as they have gone out of their way to help me from initially riding around their property on their animals to teaching me farrier skills, horse husbandry, how to pack, what to pack. This has now evolved to trips through the Kunderang, Leamons hut and Guy Fawkes regions with my own horses and equipment which (between us) was sometimes daunting, physically demanding,

constant and relatively uncomfortable, but by the holy ghost it's fun.

Over time I have been gathering equipment starting with two horses (tried four so far). I'm having the time of my life developing a relationship with these animals. That one component of the whole horse process has been extremely satisfying. What they have given me and potentially the thought of what they are going to give me is quite mind-blowing (I call them the collaborators and I love 'em).

Speaking with a few in the know I have purchased a good quality Fender saddle made to order by Shane Kilmore from Seelands near Grafton, so far it's been outstanding.

My pack is a second-hand "station pack" which has been kept in good order by its previous owner. I am confident this pack will see the distance provided the maintenance is kept up to it. Again, I've found word of mouth, to certain degree buy, trade and sell sites and obviously the internet should be able to put you onto brand new and/or second-hand. In respect of what is extremely important equipment I like to see it before I buy it though.

I have purchased and registered a PLB (personal locator beacon), a good quality GPS, a good quality compass and topographic maps which my son is currently knocking his head against the wall trying to teach me to read correctly. I have also purchased the first three guidebooks from Cooktown and will be getting the rest in the near future.

I think health and fitness are of the utmost importance for myself and the animals, I have booked in for a comprehensive health check before I go which will include teeth. The animals are also booked in for a vet check in late February. I am sitting down with the doctor and vet with the view of putting together medical kits and nutritional information for all of us.

Currently, and now more urgently, I'm working on getting my personal affairs in order, made easier by the support of my family. Somehow I'm trying to find a way where the only issues I will need to deal with (other than the conspicuous ones in front of me) are emotional, with a knowledge the other mundane stuff is under control and hopefully will be for the duration.

My intention is to truck my horses and equipment from Grafton to Mareeba near Cairns in early April at a cost of around \$1100 per animal. I will fly up the same day



so that I can make preparations for their arrival. I have family in the area and so should be able to get the rest of the way to Cooktown with their help. I'm looking to acclimatise through April and start the trail at the end of the month.

Everyone will have their own experience regarding cost, etc, however my estimation from when I started the thought process till when I actually start the trail including saddles, horses, equipment, travel, vets and other stuff will be approximately \$20,000

It is hard to stop myself pre-empting what is ahead because I'm sure the romance and sense of the ultimate adventure will sometimes desert me to the point it may well be overwhelming, which brings me to the motivation I intend to use to complete this journey.

The short story is my son spent around 500 days in Iraq as part our Armed Forces contingent. My family and I are so grateful he has returned essentially in one piece both physically and emotionally. Both from speaking with him and others this is not the case for so many of who are, unreservedly, some of our finest.

I'm not sure if this is the correct forum for this, however, what I'm about to undertake is certainly an adventure and realistically at times tough – so is joining the forces – but it is literally a walk in the park compared to the journey these people take on behalf of us. The adventure aspect may fade but the tough times become sometimes tougher.

My motivation is to get myself out of what is a comfort zone, move forward and raise awareness and funds for an organisation, namely "SOLDIER ON", to assist our wounded Australians and their families to an improved quality of life.

I am so looking forward to hearing from and meeting people along the way. If anyone has any tips or advice I would be really appreciative of your help. My email address is: giddyupbj@gmail.com.

I am going to start a Facebook page in the very near future called "EYE ON THE STORM".

Thanks for reading.



Paul Jones with his trusty steed. Left: shoeing.



Rog about to tackle the Great Escarpment.

## Long weekend at Leamons Hut

MEMBERS of the Clarence Valley Trailriders, section coordinators Paul and Cherry Jones, prospective trekker Brett Wilson and BNT TRACKS editor Rog Fryer late last year spent a great four days at Leamons Flat, on the BNT below Washpool in northern NSW.

Brett was working the two horses he intends to take on his upcoming trek, Rog was testing out his new hybrid touring bike and Paul and Cherry organised some renovations on the hut.

Leamons Hut is set in a beautiful paddock surrounded by bush, under the lee of Oakey Bluff and close to cascades on the Upper Rocky River.

The hut is basic but serviceable and the owners of the property were grateful for the assistance in maintenance.

There was some evidence of feral pig activity, but there was very little other wildlife observed, except for common birds.

The area is up around 3,000 feet elevation and so Rog took the opportunity to freewheel down the great escarpment, more than 18km to Cangai, on the Mann River – very exhilarating.

Some very tasty camp oven meals were prepared by camp commandant Cherry over the open fire.



Above: What on earth are they doing here? Below: Leamons Flat set like a jewel in the wilderness.



Camp shelter at Ouse.

## Long weekend on the Tasmanian Trail

JANUARY in Tasmania was truly the place to be. Mid-20s every day with occasional rain. I was thankful not to be home in Victoria, enduring those high temperatures.

I began my cycling tour in Bothwell, a very Scottish sounding name, and home to the Golf Museum.

Dropped here with my panniers and bike, I waved goodbye to my parents as they headed to the ferry. Setting up camp behind the information centre, I soon relocated to the front verandah as the heavens opened and dumped over 10mm in less than an hour. When the guttering overflowed and dumped on my makeshift camp, I knew I was in for a bad night.

But no! The friendly lady from the info centre turned up in her car and insisted I relocate to her garage, fed me roast lamb and wine and turned me out after breakfast.

I began following the route the following day, having ridden from Bothwell to Ouse which is about halfway along the trail. That night I shared camp in the recreation ground with solo horserider Dakota, who is soon to become the northern section co-ordinator. The trail north followed a rough track, which I chose to avoid, sticking to the bitumen in a parallel route to arrive at Victoria Valley campsite. Information signs at the camp and at other places along the trail indicated that

they had been jointly funded by the Tasmanian Trail and various government departments.

A long, slow climb up onto the escarpment which forms the highland fishing area of Tasmania, I passed many lakes and hydroelectric infrastructure. Riding alongside the huge flumes that take water from lake to lake makes for a very flat ride alongside a man-made river.

After passing Miena and the Great Lake, the 6 km quick descent to the lowlands took only five minutes of hair-raising bends and squealing brakes. Great fun! The true Trail of course is not quite so easily negotiated, taking a longer, less travelled trail through the mountains, but for bikes, the main road is the way to go.

Once on the flat country again, I chose to stick to the bitumen and sped from place to place, using the suggested campsites on the trail.

For visitors to Tasmania, arriving on the Ferry, you can hop on your bike and hit the trail immediately, discovering wonderful country and end up in Dover, south of Hobart in less than a week. Time enough to turn around and ride back again.

As with the BNT, the Tasmanian Trail requires membership in order to access the maps and other information. You can log your movements on a daily basis using the website links. This was useful for the section coordinator to make me aware of when to expect to meet oncoming horseriders so that I could dismount and let them pass.

LESLEY HAINE

## Bushwalking Wilderness Rescue Squad

BWRS are currently on the lookout for enthusiastic and dedicated people:

**Field operations**  
Trainee  
Team member  
Team leader

Minimum experience at least six overnight bushwalks in the past three years, one of which must be at least three days duration. At least one of these walks must involve a significant amount of off-track walking.

**Base operations**

Whilst our Field members are out in the bush during a search, there is a small

team of people leading our Squad from the Search Base Location.

**Search managers**  
Search base assistants  
Radio technicians and operators  
Logistics and drivers

If you have skills in the use of OziExplorer and GPS, HF and UHF radio networks, administration, communications or 4WD experience, may suit experienced bushwalkers who have retired from active walking.

**Non-field operations**

The squad has a need for people with other skills such as:

**Trainers**  
**Administration**  
Fundraisers/grants and proposal writing  
Marketers/PR/media  
Web skills

If you are in a life threatening emergency contact 000.

For urgent or emergency phone 0427 455 897. Please do not use this number for non-urgent enquiries (such as membership or media enquiries).

For non-urgent enquiries  
PO Box 1251  
Castle Hill  
NSW 1765

Email: [secretary@bwrs.org.au](mailto:secretary@bwrs.org.au)

## Donkey trail walk for Nepal

BY JULIA BYATTE

Our trek on the Bicentennial National Trail has been a long time coming. Adolf and I have done many hiking treks in the past few years, both in Australia and overseas, and the idea started as desire to do a really long trek of about 1000km as a “celebration” of Julia’s 60th birthday. We wanted to be out in the bush, and we didn’t want to carry heavy backpacks. So a trek along the BNT, with donkeys as our pack animals, seemed the obvious way to go.

We had had no experience with donkeys, but we had seen them in Nepal carrying big loads in the mountains, crossing rivers, and up and down hills all day. We allowed 12 months for training and preparation, but in the end we finally set out from Cania Gorge in March 2016, a year later than originally planned.

Our two trekking donkeys were Patrick and General Buttons. We trained on most weekends, walking with them for short distances to start with and gradually building up to about half a day, and also getting them used to walking with pack saddles with increasing weight. We mainly walked around the roads near our property, as well as some walks on local horse trails and did one overnight camp out to test all of our gear before we went.

There were many things we were hoping to achieve from our BNT walk. Primarily we wanted to have a fun adventure, but as well to really experience the Australian bush, test our physical capabilities and survival skills, and to develop a good relationship with our donkeys. We also wanted to raise money to help the Oxfam Earthquake relief effort in Nepal. On our previous trekking in Nepal we had seen the

extreme poverty and hard conditions these people endured, and after the earthquake they have an even greater need for long term assistance to help their recovery. It seemed appropriate that we were travelling with donkeys which are an essential means of transport in the mountains there.

We decided to start from Cania Gorge, at about the halfway mark in Guidebook 4 in Central Queensland. This would make the trek almost 1000km, staying on the BNT until we reached a point about halfway through Guidebook 6 where we could branch off the Trail and head directly to our home near Boonah, southwest of Brisbane.

We had eight weeks available to do the trek, and thought that we would be able to do about 20km per day, six days per week.

Continued Page 14





Adolf and Buttons.

We started in early March, as by then the worst of the summer rains should be over, and we would finish in early May before it got too cold at night. This timing ended up almost perfect, although it was very hot when we started. There had been good rain a few weeks before we started, so there was plenty of feed for the donkeys, and in the whole time we never got any more than a few drops of rain while we were walking. While this was good for us, by the end of the trek the farmland was getting very dry.

Our trek was divided into five stages as we dropped off food parcels at pubs along the way at Biggenden, Kilkivan, Blackbutt, and Withcott, where we would also stay for a couple of nights for a rest day and resupply.

While we had put a lot of time and effort into preparation, the one doubt was whether we would be able to get the donkeys to do what we wanted. Would they suddenly stop somewhere and decide they weren't going to walk any further? Or worse, wander off during the night and leave us stranded?

On our first day we set out in the morning to the encouragement of a small group of people at the Cania Tourist Retreat

who had gathered to give us a send off after watching our clumsy, amateurish process of loading up the donkeys. The first day was long and hot, and we were so tired and aching when we got to the Mungungo Pub that we had a rest day there to recover. After that though, it got better. We were then out in the bush, sleeping in our tent, eating our dried meals, and the donkeys were grazing happily in their electric fence enclosures at night, and getting plenty of grass to graze on along the way as well. We quickly settled into a routine, and the donkeys seemed to be enjoying the trek as much as we were.

The first stage was mainly through cattle farming country, and the donkeys quickly got used to the cows and horses which would come over to look at these strange looking creatures, then leave us alone. A different matter however was a big hairy goat near Mungungo who came to have a look at us, and then wanted to make friends and follow us. This sent the donkeys running off a few hundred metres down the road.

From the start it was evident that we were a rather unusual group of travellers. Most people we passed gave us a smile and a wave or a thumbs up, and many stopped to have a chat and take a photo. Some had a cold drink for us and carrots for the

donkeys. The donkeys of course were the main attraction, and when we passed through a town children would appear wanting to see the donkeys and give them a pat, and the donkeys were always obliging and pleased to be made a fuss of. We got a lot of encouragement from everyone we saw, and people were generally pleased to see us doing the Trail.

Walking with donkeys was a completely different experience from our previous hiking. They walk at a slow steady pace of about 4km/hr, with frequent stops for munching grass, sniffing at horse poo, chatting with horses, looking at things that interest them, etc. So about 20km was a reasonable day; we could do 24km or more but it was a long day, and then there was not much time to set up camp before dark, and have time to relax. The BNT was designed for horses which can go a lot faster, so there were some long days involved, or we had to improvise a campsite where we could.

Our first section in the bush finished at Biggenden, and from there we passed through the towns of Kilkivan, Nanango and then Blackbutt, coming across many relics from the days of the early settlers and pioneers, and giving a sense of the history of the early days. We were lucky to meet some interesting people who could tell us stories about the country we were passing through. We got to Kilkivan the day after the annual Great Kilkivan Horse Ride, and we were made to feel very welcome there. Although we missed the actual event we were privileged to have a private bush poetry recital from Ian Fitzgerald at his property.

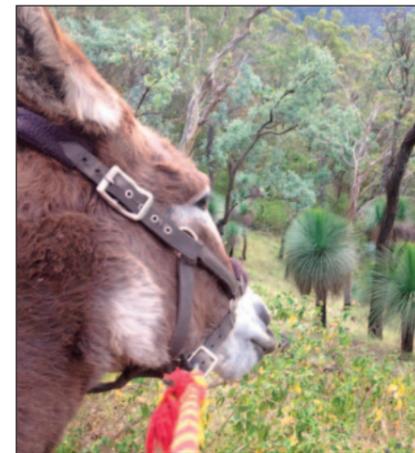
The terrain gradually started to become more hilly, with a lot of ups and downs, although nothing too severe. The ranges around Toowoomba were particularly beautiful. We were reminded of the recent devastating floods as we came through Murphy's Creek. We arrived there the day before Anzac Day, and were asked to stay and participate in the Anzac Day ceremony the following day. With Lynne Anderson's help we made some Red Cross bandanas for the donkeys to wear, and they stood very nicely throughout the ceremony. This was quite a special occasion and we were pleased to feel that our presence was appreciated by the local community.

After Toowoomba we were coming into more familiar territory, but seeing it from a completely different perspective. The Lockyer Valley is well-known for its vegetable farming, but also has a lot of beautiful scenery, with the vegetation and terrain changing completely with each new valley we came into. By this stage we were

feeling very much at home in the bush and very content with our itinerant lifestyle on the BNT, but as each day brought us closer to home we were a little sad that this would soon be ending. However we felt a great sense of achievement and contentment as we walked into our little home town and finally up our driveway after just over 900km on the BNT. This was an average of 19km per walking day, with nine rest days.

At the end we certainly felt that we had done what we had wanted to do. It was a great adventure and we had enjoyed it immensely; we had managed to survive in the bush and felt fit and healthy and happy; we had built up a very strong bond with our donkeys, and they finished the trek in good condition, and really seemed to enjoy their life on the Trail; we had raised \$1500 to help the earthquake victims in Nepal ... and we were still talking to each other.

There are more pictures and stories from our BNT adventure on our Facebook page *Donkey Trailwalk for Nepal*.



Buttons looking at the bushboys.



Julia and Buttons.



Julia, Patrick and Buttons above the Mary River.



Adolf with Patrick and Buttons arriving at Kilkivan.



Julia with Patrick and Buttons at RM Williams Reserve at Preston.

# Cycle touring for beginners

## Part 1



By WAYNE STARK AND DAVE MCLEOD

WAYNE and Dave are keen cycle tourists who come from opposing viewpoints but both love bike touring. Wayne likes riding solo creating some ingenious means of self-support, preferably with credit card accommodation and minimal gear. Dave likes cycle touring end to end with everything including the kitchen sink, mostly fully independent and camping out. Between these two viewpoints there is something for most people cycling the National Trail or portions of it.

We will discuss this topic in two articles. This first article we will investigate fitness levels, basic bike handling skills, bike types and maintenance skills. The next article we will look in depth at the various types of trekking gear, camping gear, and a few basics of bike trekking to help you prepare for some multi-day adventures.

Many people are reluctant to trek because they consider they are not sufficiently fit. No way. You are not racing. You simply ride to your own fitness level. You will get fitter the more you ride and

have fun in the process. A basic measure is if you can talk comfortably while you are riding then you are in your fitness zone. Wayne and Dave set a goal of no more than 40-50 km a day, or if this is too much sometimes we will just ride even one or two Guidebook map sections of up to 30km. We are trekking to enjoy ourselves, not to spend the day hunched over our handlebars grinding away.

Dave and Wayne find that long, slow distance weekly rides, or more frequently if you can fit them in, is a good fitness developing strategy as well as a good chill-out. Cross-training, such as walking and swimming, also help. Many people deliberately keep their first few days or even weeks of a trek short while they develop fitness on the trek and become familiar with the routines of pitching, packing camp and packing their bikes. Regrettably posteriors are not so easily trained. Many cyclists with long years of cycling behind them still experience sore posteriors!

One key skill is maximising your cadence. Cadence is the number of times you turn the pedals in a minute. Low cadence can strain your joints, and make a

good ride a misery. Wayne usually rides on the center chainring and on the lower gears on the rear. You can push your heart out in what is called big gears or go to the lower gears and spin the pedals more quickly. Spinning the pedals faster means you do not feel the weight of the bike so much. Wayne likes to ride around a cadence of 70 to 80 revolutions per minute. He calls this getting over the top of a gear. Again this is a personal issue, you ride how you want but keep in mind that a high cadence can be of benefit. You will find yourself changing gears frequently to stay at your chosen cadence. Practice this so you know what is comfortable for you.

Be at one with riding on dirt and rough surfaces, steep down hills, across stones and grass. Remember a fully loaded bike is heavy. Do not be afraid to walk up hills over and around obstacles or when tired. Walking could be the only way out for help if a major part fails on your bike. If you have not ridden off road much then maybe you need to pick a few easy dirt roads and tracks to practice on or simply take your time as you start your trekking journey to pick up these skills. One thing we all learn is no

matter how long we have been cycling we all still fall off sometimes.

There is no such thing as the best bike. The closest thing to the best bike is the one you already own. You could consider a mountain bike in any format, a hybrid, a dedicated off road tourer or one of the more recent cyclocross or gravel grinder style of bike. It is probably best to leave your light weight carbon road racer or your el cheapo department store bike at home. Bicycles are an excellent example of "you get what you pay for". All bikes have their pros and cons. What you do want is a solid mechanically sound bike with options to fit panniers. It does not have to have new or latest gadgets.

Dave uses an old clunker 26" won at an auction and Wayne has a hard tail 29er MTB converted to an off road tourer. Both are a classic result of the above saying, the best bike is the one you have.

One of the most vulnerable parts of a bike is the wheels. It is best to look for double walled rims and worth spending some money in this area. Wheel sizes depend on so much and it is a hotly debated issue. The usual sizes are 26", 27.5" and 700c or 29er. The choice is yours but primarily governed by your height and type of bike.

Bike fit may be a more deciding factor over wheel size. It is extremely important to have a bike that fits you. There is nothing worse than a bike you never bond with. To tall, too short, bars too far out in front or too wide. There are many issues to consider in fitting a bike. What you want is a bike you can ride all day and feel relatively comfortable on. There are many aftermarket accessories to micro-adjust the bike to you, but you must get the right frame size to start with.

Bike seats are a make-or-break issue in comfort terms. Nearly all good seats are aftermarket seats that fit the sit bones of the rider. Seats are a very personal item and usually you have to pay and try in that order. There are systems around that allow you try a seat for a few days before you commit.

Gearing needs to be low as you are travelling across rough ground, over big hills and carrying a lot of weight. Look for three chain rings on the front and a rear cassette of in the range of 13 to 36 or bigger. The frame of the bike may restrict what you can use if you are retro-fitting new gears. Talk to your local bike shop people on this issue. A modern mountain bike will have gears that are appropriate.

The following list depends on a host of things such as duration of your ride, your mechanical skill, the distance from help and more.



**Tyres** – these need to have some air volume, so anything from 38mm or up to about 2.5" or even larger if you want to push them. Obviously tyres with some knobby tread help a lot. Then it is your choice to go tubeless, tubes, liquid sealant, kevlar strips in the tyre or between the tube and tyre. There are many options to consider. Go with the one you know how to use.

**Spares** – two tubes, patch kits, chain links, zip ties, duct tape, small suitably sized nuts and bolts, folding tyre, spokes, derailleur hanger.

**Pump** – you need one of these and you can use a CO2 canister setup if you want, but you still need that pump for multi-day rides. Your pump must be able to put at least 40psi into a tube.

**Pedals** – flat, clipless or clip-in. It is your choice. Remember you will be riding rough terrain which may necessitate the need to quickly put your foot on the ground.

**Tools** – tyre levers, allen keys, chain breaker, multitool, spoke spanner. Best to bring what you think you need, as all bikes are different. Work on your bike with this tool kit all the time at home. That way you know exactly what tools you need to carry.

**On-track maintenance** – small bottle of chain lube and a rag is about it. This is to clean and lube your chain each day.

**Mechanical skills** – you can research these if you do not already have them. YouTube is a great learning source and you can then practice the skill before you leave.

Handy skills are:

Being able to tune your gears.

Puncture repairs – nothing is puncture proof.

Replacing nuts and bolts that fall out of pannier racks or other places

Chain breaking – is rare, but if you can fix your chain then why not? You can also

turn your multi-geared bike into a single speed with a chain breaker if you have a major catastrophe such as a derailleur breakage or a hanger break. Buy a good quality chain breaker if you decide to carry one. The cheap ones do not work without extra tools to hold them.

Spokes – some are easier to replace than others if they break. Unless you have the tools to remove the rear cassette to get to the spoke behind it then you have to wonder about bringing spokes. It depends on your bike and your skill.

Wheel truing is a good skill to have if the rim develops a wobble but again there are ways around that on the track. But you need to deal with a wheel wobble asap. You can ruin a rim if you let the wobble go too far.

It is a good idea to do a general daily check over the entire bike. Make sure tyre pressures are right, all nuts and bolts and screws are tight. This takes only a few minutes with practice.

Autumn and winter are the perfect times for exploring bike touring as summer temperatures ease and weather becomes kinder. If you haven't tried bike touring before crack out your bike, check it over and head out for a spin. If you live close to the National Trail then look for some easy sections or find a Railtrail or a country road near you. Perhaps ask Section Coordinators for some suitable BNT sections near you (just check your membership is current first). We will discuss panniers (bike bags) versus trailers next article but in the meantime fit a rear rack if you don't have one so you can carry a pack with a map, some food and plenty of water. Don't forget the spare tubes and tyre levers, sun screen, first aid kit and a spray jacket if rain is likely. Tell someone where you are going and when you expect to be back. And look for the bigger picture.

Enjoy exploring!



## Lightning safety for trekkers

A RECENT tragic lightning death on the east coast of Australia has highlighted once again the need for trekkers to plan ahead for the possibility of storms on the Trail particularly in summer months.

There are a range of strategies that can be put into place ranging from advance planning days ahead including consulting maps and trail notes to identifying potential storm “danger spots” (eg, high open ridges, forests, etc) to predicting your location later that day and possibly amending your route – perhaps keeping clear of danger spots or finding a secure building. The worst case scenario would be dealing with imminent storms in open situations.

Weather forecasting is much more accessible now as well as improving in accuracy (most of the time anyway!). When internet signal is available, seven-day forecasts give a reasonable picture, and day-to-day forecasts are usually even better. Bureau of Meteorology MetEye (link below) is a very useful tool. Consider fronts and troughs, typically associated with thunderstorms, that will be moving across

the area from other regions. Once storms are developing, weather radar plots give advance warning of approaching storms and allow some time for late proactive intervention. If no internet signal is available perhaps friends can alert you via satellite phone if you are carrying one. My son watches weather radar constantly when storms are around and he often texts me details for the area I am visiting.

Some power company websites, for example Energex (SE Qld) and Essential Energy (rural NSW), have lightning trackers, though the information may be delayed for commercial reasons. Links below.

However weather forecasting is not infallible and storms can appear unexpectedly. Always be aware of the sky around you in storm weather looking out for tell-tale cloud formations.

If you experience your hair standing up get well away fast. You are being set up for a lightning strike. As electric fields build up from the presence of charged clouds overhead, positive charged streamers

develop upwards (causing hair to stand up if humans are in the path). At the same time negatively charged downward leaders are developing. When a streamer and leader connect, a low resistance path is created followed shortly by a massive electrical discharge of tens or hundreds of thousands of amperes.

This massive current creates a large voltage gradient along the surface of the ground. This can kill or injure in two ways. The first is if your feet are apart and end up at different voltages, as the difference can be enough to kill. The second way is if you are touching something and it is at a different voltage. The voltage difference could be huge on metal fences, especially if they run closer to where the lightning strikes.

Even though many people struck by lightning survive, humans or animals struck by lightning may suffer severe injury due to internal organ and nervous system damage as well as cardiac arrest (heart stopping beating). Keep your feet together and make sure you're not touching anything other than the ground.

Once storms approach, check the time between the lightning flash and the sound of thunder. Under 30 seconds means it is time to seek shelter fast. Don't move away until 30 minutes after last rumble was heard. Ideally you will have already be in a safe place as a result of forward planning.

Remember that clear-air lightning strikes (“bolt from the blue”) are also possible. These come from the anvil cloud sitting high on a thunderstorm. These can strike up to 35km away and carry 10 times the current of a regular lightning bolt.

In a nutshell remember these pointers- RESEARCH, FORECASTS, AWARENESS, DANGER SIGNS, 30/30 RULE. A number of websites(links at end) give useful pointers in much greater detail.

If unfortunately caught in a storm, take the following measures. If no secure building is available (tents are no security at all and open sided picnic sheds are inadequate) move to a hard-topped vehicle if one is available. The “Faraday cage” effect usually protects occupants from lightning. A vehicle is safer not because of the rubber tyres but because lightning will travel around the metal-framed outside of the vehicle protecting occupants inside. Just don't touch door handles, turn off equipment and keep hands in your lap.

If in the open stay away from fences or power lines, and trees and livestock.

Squat on the ground on the balls of your feet with your feet together removing your backpack (and any metal items) and keeping as low as possible. If in a group spread out singly to lessen the risk of whole group being taken out, although in the interests of emotional support perhaps pairing up could be useful. Above all else avoid being the highest object around.

If a trekker is struck then first aid is required instantly if it is safe for those around to do so. If the casualty is in an exposed position move them to a safer location. Initiate the DRSABCD routine and contact emergency services immediately. If the casualty is not breathing commence CPR.

[www.thehikinglife.com/2015/07/lightning-safety-tips-for-hikers/](http://www.thehikinglife.com/2015/07/lightning-safety-tips-for-hikers/) ,  
[www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov](http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov),

[www.gocampingaustralia.com/10-tips-to-camping-in-thunderstorms.html](http://www.gocampingaustralia.com/10-tips-to-camping-in-thunderstorms.html)

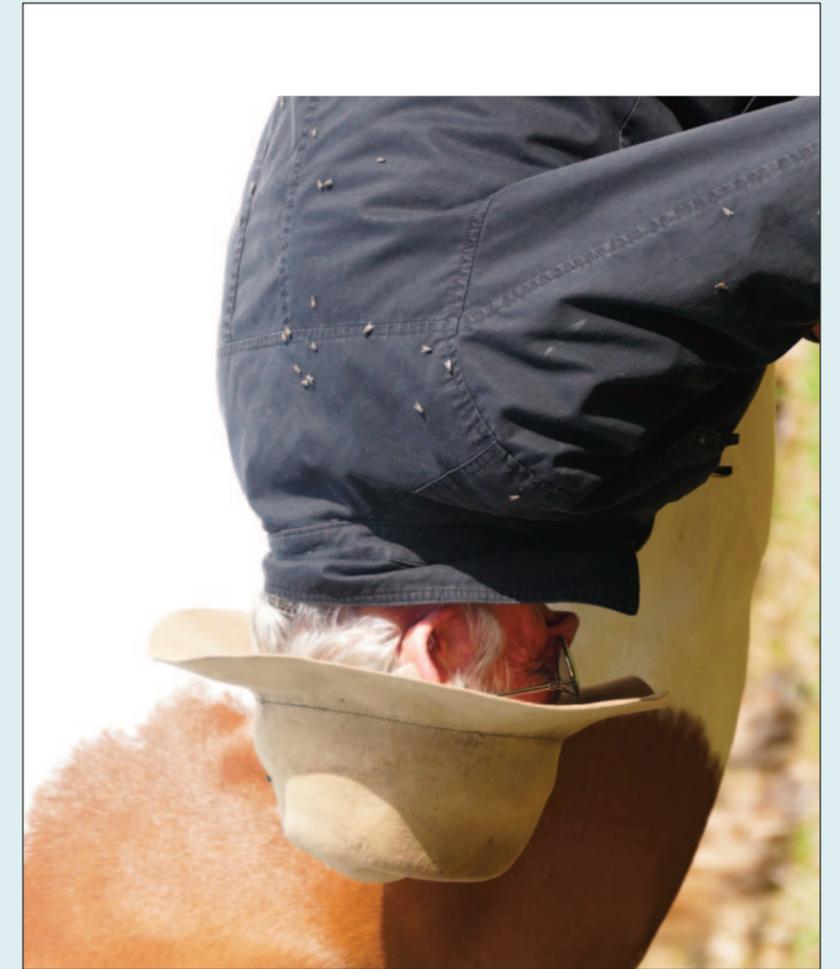
[www.bom.gov.au/australia/meteye/](http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/meteye/)

[www.energex.com.au/home/power-outages/lightning-tracker](http://www.energex.com.au/home/power-outages/lightning-tracker)

[www.essentialenergy.com.au/content/storm-tracker](http://www.essentialenergy.com.au/content/storm-tracker)

DAVE McLEOD

## Who's on the trail



Section coordinator Paul Jones restoring a lost shoe.

JAIDA Bouhamdam walking with two friends Healesville to Katooma via Jenolan Caves for 9 weeks. Started November 2016.

CHRIS Mohr and friends day walking from Emu creek QLD August 2016

JOHN and Jenny Avery from Windsor NSW cycled from home to Penrith, trained to Lithgow, cycled Wallerawang, overnight stays at pubs and cabins nearest to trail. Diverted at northern ACT Border onto the Canberra's Centenary Trail, looped back to Hackett and caught train to Campbelltown, biked back to Windsor.

KIMBERLEY Delavere from Kiama NSW continues with her horse now at Kilkivan QLD.

DAMIAN Watson and David Young cycled from Omeo VIC in October towards Healesville for 18 days.

AMANDA Hay from Woodford NSW planning to start a trek with horse south for February and March.

DENISE Keeley from Wallerawang with two horses trekking south for February and March.

ELIZA Allan and daughter Zadie with horse Fly and donkeys Jasmine and Basil all back home now in Denmark WA after finishing the BNT.

ANNE and Dave Fogg cycling and riding weekends from Sandy Hollow to Aberdeen NSW.

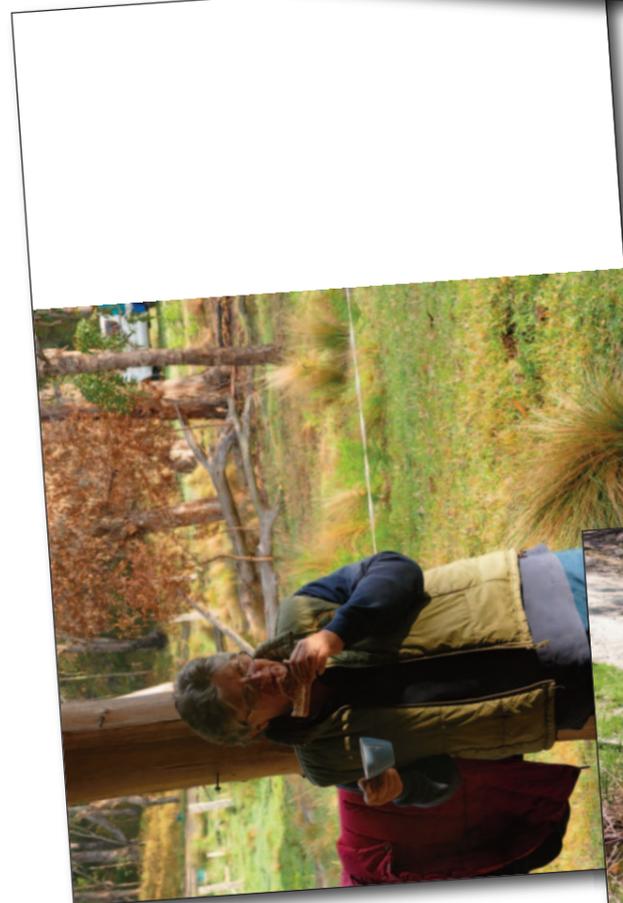
GLENN Smart left Cooktown last June 2016 still walking south getting bothered by mud flies and snakes and having confrontations with wild boars in the moonlight.

FROM FACEBOOK.

# Picture gallery



**Interest in pack trips leads to Section Co-ordinator role**



ALAN Lanyon was the highest bidder for the BNT packsaddle auction (*Tracks article August 2015*). Due to work commitments and other events he finally got his first pack trip in May 2016 – Wares Yards out to Love Nest in the Sallee and exploring in between along a small section of the BNT along the Schofield, Circuits and Pedens Trails.

Above: The Love Nest. Below Circuits Hut salubrious in comparison.

For me the highlight was to revisit Townsends Hut, which is my favourite hut in the northern end of Kosciuszko National Park after my first visit five years ago. This part of the trail is easy and interesting, making the initiated eager for more which is always a great way to start.



With six huts to explore adding to the enjoyment, although I still find it quite puzzling as to why Love Nest in the Sallee could be named as such – pictured above with Alan – the Rooftop's map does describe it as a "small primitive hut".



Alan is looking forward to covering the Guide Book section of the BNT from Camp Dennison to Khancoban in the near future. This is my second packing friend to turn BNT Section Co-ordinator, it must be contagious!

Happy Trails everyone.

KAREN CARTER  
BNT Director

## The Camino



From Page 24

### Pamplona to Burgos

AFTER three days of hiking through forests, countryside and villages with medieval bridges, we reached the famous city of Pamplona. I was fascinated by the medieval city walls, some of the most intact in Spain.

Crossing a genuine drawbridge, we passed into the narrow cobbled streets of the old city on a rainy Sunday afternoon, enjoying the character-filled buildings, genial crowd and a welcome hot drink from a friendly bar. It didn't take long to discover that bars are the pilgrim's best friend. They are open long hours; serve food and coffee as well as alcohol; have toilets and the bar tenders can be exceptionally helpful.

Col de Perdon on the Hill of Forgiveness was the next highlight after Pamplona, for us a hard slog up a muddy hillside to a windy pass where sins are forgiven, massive wind turbines line the

ridge into the distance and there are sweeping views of the surrounding countryside. As well, there is one of my favourite pieces of the marvellous pilgrim art that decorates the Camino, a line of lifesize wrought iron pilgrims striding into the wind with their donkeys and dog.

### On the trail

"FOLLOW the yellow arrows at all times," is considered to be the first pilgrim commandment. These yellow arrows are the Camino route markers – and they make it one of the easiest trails to navigate that I have ever come across. By this time the trail had turned west, heading across the top of Spain towards the Atlantic Ocean.

"The Camino will provide," is another pilgrim saying that so often proves to be true. Along the entire Camino route, there are fountains where pilgrims can fill their water bottles. And there's even a free wine fountain. Wine is so cheap in Spain that pilgrim meals provide wine and water for the same price, but the free wine fountain

set among vineyards is very popular. Installed in the 1990s – with a realtime webcam – by the Bodegas Irache winery, it quotes the original pilgrim trail guide written in the 12th Century by a French monk and scholar who talked about the "land of good bread and fine wine". ([www.irache.com/en](http://www.irache.com/en))

At night, we stayed mostly in the pilgrim inns called albergues, sometimes in casa rurales (bed and breakfast), and occasionally in hostals or hotels. If kitchens were provided we often cooked for ourselves.

And so it continued, with interesting sights every day, walking for perhaps six hours, sometimes more, meeting other pilgrims and being wished "buen camino" by the hospitable Spanish.

### Burgos to Leon across the Meseta

AFTER a few days in the beautiful city of Burgos due to leg problems, we headed out into the dreaded Meseta, four days across a high, flat, seemingly endless tableland with few features or villages. Some pilgrims opt to bus around this area, but others consider the emptiness and solitude a chance to think deeply about their lives. Even if walking with someone, there is a lot of time to walk in silence. When we did talk, our conversations were particularly thoughtful. I would have been sorry to miss this part of the trail.

There are 1,800 world heritage buildings along the Camino, from small chapels and medieval villages to magnificent cathedrals and castles. As a non-Catholic who only visits churches at home for wedding and funerals, I soon learned that churches are zones of tranquillity and looked forward to our visits.

My favourites included the chapels built in stone by the Knights Templar in the 12th Century at Eunate and Torres del Rio and the cathedrals in Burgos, Leon and, of course, Santiago. As well, the trail goes straight past the bishop's palace in Astorga designed by the famous Spanish architect Anton Gaudi and the castle in Ponferrada, considered to be one of the top ten in Spain.

### Cruz de Ferro

FOR most pilgrims, the most powerful stop on the Camino is the Cruz de Ferro or Iron Cross, a few days out of Leon. In a clearing in a forest, there is a huge high cross surrounded by stones brought by pilgrims from home, each representing a wish or



prayer. We arrived there in dramatic weather with rain and wind blowing the pilgrim ponchos, happy to find our favourite pilgrim was there to share our lunch break. Then we all climbed up to the cross to lay our stones.

"Any wish made on the Camino comes true," goes the pilgrim saying. "The Camino transforms your life," says another. Despite our scepticism, this is what we found, and I was pleased we had put so much thought into it.

### Galicia

THE final part of the trail winds through the lush green region of Galicia, with its Celtic-based culture and bagpipes, unlike the rest of Spain.

After 40 days of walking, nearly 800 kilometres and many adventures, we reached Santiago de Compostela and attended an emotional pilgrim mass in the cathedral.

Our Camino had been a very different experience from what we expected. Will we redo it in five years? Yes, that is what we planned from the start. But it will be our sixth trip. Like the German pilgrim we met on day two, we became addicted and have done part of the Camino, or a different camino — the Primitivo, The Via Podiensis in France - every year since then. Our advice for potential pilgrims: use John Brierley's Camino guides. He really is the best ([www.caminoguides.com](http://www.caminoguides.com)).



### Meeting at Cesjacks

IT's just amazing where you bump into BNT travellers. Having recently embarked on a new hobby of multi-day hiking, I've just come back from a four-day walk in Kosciusko National Park.

Since my days on the BNT, I haven't quite upgraded all my equipment from robust, heavy stuff you'd carry on a packhorse to lightweight stuff you'd cart yourself, so it was interesting to compare with other hikers and see how much lightweight equipment is now out there.

One of the highlights for me was on the last night at Cesjacks Hut. Here I met Tim, who I recognised from Facebook posts who'd walked from Wilson's Promontory and went right through to the tip of Cape York in only six months!

Well, once everyone else had gone to bed, I said I was a bit embarrassed to admit it, but we'd done the BNT over 25 years ago with horses and it took us nearly two years! Tim wasn't even born when Ken and I travelled the BNT from 1989-1991 and he thought that was pretty hilarious.

Tim was travelling with his lovely girlfriend Wendy. They travelled fast and light, carrying about one third of the weight that most of us hikers were carrying, and travelling in one day what it would take us to travel in three days. It was pouring torrential rain when we met them and they had only a tarp for shelter. An inspiration to us all.

SHARON ROBERTS

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## Trash trekkers

Two young men set off last May on an unthinkable task: pick up, haul out, and dispose of every single piece of trash they saw on the 2,650-mile Pacific Crest Trail in the US.

It was a Herculean job when you consider that people leave everything from used toilet paper and diapers to spent batteries and box springs on trails across the country, and that much of the PCT wends through wilderness and large stretches are inaccessible to roads and motorised vehicles.

The final weight of junk the two men pulled off the trail was 720 pounds. Among the highlights: a mattress, a 35-pound metal-and-broken-glass television stand, children's toys, and 26 mylar balloons.

"It still blows me away, the non-hiking-related items we find along these scenic trails," said Seth Orme, one of the trail cleaners, shortly after finishing the trail with his friend, Paul Twedt, in late September.

## Contributions

BNT TRACKS welcomes contributions. Photos need to be 300 pixels per inch at size of publication, meaning the file size needs to be at least 500kb.

We are looking for photos, news items, snippets, poems, stories and particularly treks and other activities carried out on the Trail.

Photos should be emailed as JPGs, stories in MS Word if possible, but any format would do.

Contributions are cursorily edited but largely style and correct English is the responsibility of the writer – thus retaining the original flavour of the text as the author intends.

Phone 0427 559 575 for advertising rates.

Deadline for next issue August 30. The magazine is direct mailed to 1000 subscribers.

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## The Camino – a spiritual trek

By SUE DENGATE

My husband Howard and I are lifelong bushwalkers who enjoy wilderness, long distance hiking, and best of all, trekking in the Himalayas. In 2013 we flew into Spain to walk the Camino not because we were interested, but because our friend Bernhard from Germany had nagged us into it during a trek to Mt Kanchenjunga. We thought it would be just another long distance hike. We couldn't have been more wrong.

An ancient pilgrim route, the trail – commonly called the Way of St James (Camino de Santiago) but more correctly the Camino Frances – covers 780 kilometres from St Jean Pied de Port in France, over the Pyrenees, and across Spain to the cathedral in Santiago de Compostela. This is where the remains of St James were buried in AD 42 after his beheading by Herod in Jerusalem. When the Spanish were fighting to free their country from Moorish occupation in the middle ages, it was said that Saint James the Moor-slayer appeared at each successful battle, and he became patron saint of Spain. The first recorded

pilgrimage to his burial place was described in 950, and between the 12th and 14th centuries, the Camino became an important pilgrimage route for many thousands of pilgrims per year.

In the last decade, pilgrim numbers have again risen and 250,000 pilgrims a year now reach Santiago – mostly listing religious/cultural reasons – although only five per cent of those walk the entire way from St Jean Pied de Port. We figured it would take us about 40 days and decided to start in early spring to avoid summer heat and crowds.

### Crossing the Pyrenees to Pamplona

AS IT happened, there was unseasonably heavy snow that year. On the day we were meant to start – delayed by snowbound trains – in a scene echoing Martin Sheen's well-known movie *The Way*, one pilgrim died. Three others were rescued by helicopter and the high pass was closed. The next day, we reached the low pass mid-afternoon after struggling upwards for hours

through forests filled with deep snow and trees encased in ice. By the time we looked down on the snow-filled courtyard of our home for the night, the historic monastery of Roncesvalles, we were starry-eyed about this trip we had committed ourselves to.

If you like walking through mountains and forests, the beginning of the Camino is particularly scenic – but scenery is not what the Camino is about. On our second day, we met a German on his seventh Camino.

“The Camino is addictive; it is like the effect of a drug,” he told us.

By then, we agreed with him. We had already met so many friendly pilgrims of different ages, backgrounds and countries, some with obvious disabilities, who were helping each other to reach our common goal, one step at a time: the cathedral in Santiago.

The diversity of pilgrims, the spirit of cooperation, the feeling of kindness – this is what makes the Camino.

We decided to redo the trip again in five years' time.

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