

Robe/Little Dip Conservation Park
17/18 April 2010

My convoy of 1 departed Tailem Bend at 10am on Saturday 17th April, as the other attendees had decided to leave earlier and meet up in Robe that afternoon. It was a quiet and pleasant drive along the Coorong. The planned stop for morning tea at Meningie didn't happen; it turns out that Meningie is only half an hour down the road (I'll know that for next time!) I sailed through and stopped at Kingston SE for a fuel top-up and to stretch the legs.

I arrived in Robe about 12:45pm and had a quick look at the 'Health, Harmony and Happiness' display in the old Institute building, then had a walk down the main street, grabbing some 4WD maps from the Tourist Information Centre while I was there. These proved very handy for the drive on Sunday.

I met Barra and family, CJ and family, and Greg and Judy at the entrance to Long Beach at 1:45pm, just after high tide. Barra and Greg jumped out with their Staun deflators in-hand, but I explained it was a pretty easy beach run and the fun stuff wouldn't really start until Sunday in Little Dip. I think we compromised with a slight reduction from road pressures to start with.

Long Beach is a great drive, a lovely car beach to start with and then gradually softening as you get further along. This seems to correlate to the number of other vehicles we encountered, quite busy as you come onto the beach and then thinning out quickly until we had the beach pretty much to ourselves, apart from the occasional ute with fishing rods poked into the sand in front.



We continued on, past the Guichen Bay Conservation Park until we reached a rocky outcrop and saw a sign stating "4WD Track >". Naturally we decided to follow it and see where it led. After a short sandy track, it quickly turned into a graded dirt road leading to Wright Bay, which wasn't much of a challenge. We returned to the rocky outcrop and decided to continue along the beach a bit further, but it looked quite a bit softer so we decided to drop our tyres at that point, which turned out to be a good idea. After a short distance we came to a rocky right-hand bend on the beach, which led us into Boatswain Point, a small, pretty bay with a few tinnies anchored just offshore.

We decided to continue on and see how far we could get. The sand was a little soft but no one was having any issues at that point (although my main goal was keeping up momentum). We went for another couple of km until we reached another rocky outcrop, which blocked the beach. I saw a rough exit track leading off the beach, so I aimed for it and kept my foot down. The track was overgrown and hardly used, so a UHF conversation saw us decide to turn around and head back to Robe at that point. I came back onto the beach and we headed back, after a drinks break. Now after checking the map, it appears that at the other end of that overgrown track was Wright Bay. So close!

Barra offered CJ a drive of the Land Cruiser on the way back, and it was somewhere around Boatswain Point that he struck some trouble. A particularly soft spot on the beach, combined with not quite enough momentum, saw the 'Cruiser bog down, back end sliding towards the waterline, and then come to a stop. It took some skilled driving (and the diff locks) for Barra to get the Cruiser out again. But we were soon on our way again and got back to Robe a bit after 5pm.

We met at the Robe Hotel for dinner and a few drinks, and the meals received good feedback all-round. We then retreated to our accommodations for the night - I had a place in town and everyone else was in Long Beach Tourist Park. It rained for most of the night and unfortunately someone's swag was watertight - it filled up with water and none leaked out at all!



Sunday morning we had breakfast at the Tourist Park and then headed off around 10am. First stop was the settlement of Nora Creina, with another lovely bay that we again had to ourselves.

After a quick stop and photoshoot, we headed back up the road to Robe and pulled out the 4WD map from the Tourist Centre. We took the Errington Hole Track and then proceeded north, back

towards Robe. We all dropped our tyres to mid-20s psi and hit the first beach, with Barra leading the way (and compacting the tracks for us smaller vehicles). That first beach was a bit softer than we first thought, and so we found the first patch of firmer ground and stopped to drop the tyre pressures a bit more, down to about 18psi.

We continued on and followed the map, sticking to the beach as much as we could, including the section marked 'extremely soft sand, caution, recovery fee etc etc etc...', which must have been compacted by the overnight rain, as it wasn't difficult at all for any of the vehicles.



We also managed the sections marked 'engage low range' without any dramas. The park is made up of many beautiful stretches of clean, clear beach and tracks through the dunes, as well as rocky, twisty tracks that demand careful attention.



After a few more beaches and a few more laughs, we found ourselves on a well-formed dirt road on the outskirts of Robe, which indicated the end of the trip. We stopped to inflate our tyres and to plan the return journey to Adelaide. Thanks Robe and Little Dip, hope to come back again soon!



Brenton
TRIP LEADER