



GLOBAL GYPSIES PTY. LTD.

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TIPTOE THROUGH THE TULIPS IN A CARAVAN CONVOY!

You've probably heard of tip-toeing through the tulips, but how about meandering through the wildflowers in a caravan convoy?

That's exactly what **Global Gypsies** did in early September on their inaugural fun-filled, petal-packed **Caravan Wildflower Safari**. Convoy Leader and former Tour Guide of the Year Jeremy Perks - one of WA's top towing and 4WD trainers and a qualified mechanic - and his partner Jan Barrie led a happy group of seven caravanners over 1700 kms in 10 days through WA's blossom-rich Midwest at the height of the wildflower season.

Like ducklings paddling behind 'mum', the convoy tagged along behind the Gypsy escort vehicle which was towing a Jayco Expanda caravan provided by safari sponsor, **Crikey Camper Hire**. Accompanying the group was Jenny Rose, an aptly named wildflower enthusiast, who provided flower identification and botanical knowledge along the way.

The itinerary included such blooming hotspots as Western Flora Wildflower Farm, Coalseam and Kalbarri National Parks, Morawa, Canna, Mount Magnet and Kirkalocka Station. In addition to 'smelling the roses', the group enjoyed 4WD outings, a towing seminar, 4WD "Girlspeak" presentation, star-gazing session and tyre-changing demo (which came in very handy to one of the participants later on!). Jeremy also made some mechanical repairs to a caravan with wheel bearing problems with valuable assistance from one of the clients!

There were special Welcome and Farewell Dinners and a number of fun activities including a games night, "Open House" viewings of all the caravans and "Pot Luck Suppers" when everybody prepared a surprise contribution for the evening meal. The group also raised over \$300 for the Royal Flying Doctor Service through a series of 'fun fines' for such crimes and misdemeanours as forgetting to travel with headlights on, being late for sundowners and wearing gaudy dressing gowns!

Towing various caravans and camper trailers ranging in size from 5 to 8 metres, participants included Tony & Sue Heatherbell of Noranda with a Jayco Starcraft; Bob & Jan Pearce of Kingsley with a Coromal Excel; Bill & Marion O'Neil of Duncraig with a Jayco Flamingo; Steve & Debbie Pleysier of Bedfordale with an Aussiewide Paranga; John Webb of Mundaring with a custom-designed 'crossover' van from All Terrain Fabrications; Lloyd & Pam Webb of Morley with a Millard Horizon; and Colin & Lisa Willis of North Beach with a Roma Elegance.

Flower Power

Two days spent at Western Flora Wildflower Caravan Park in Eneabba with botanical guru Allan Tinker provided some fantastic sightings of sandpaper wattle, pygmy sundews and scarlet featherflower. Allan also delivered a fascinating educational presentation with microscopic images projected onto a large TV screen and conveyed invaluable background information about the type of plants found in the area, how they are pollinated and the way in which everything has its role to play in the eco-system.

A 4WD day-trip to nearby Stockyard Gully and Lake Indoon resulted in some excellent sightings of *macrozamia*, cats paw and grass trees.

Two days and two starry nights tucked away in Coalseam National Park were a nature-lover's treat. DEC Camp Hosts Tony and Maureen Greaves were keen to share their knowledge of where to find blossoms, birdlife and other local attractions in this peaceful 'good karma' park, and the group enjoyed two lovely walks. The Gypsies were thrilled to discover some perfect, halo-shaped wreath flowers just outside the tiny town of Canna - they also devoured some perfect, halo-shaped cinnamon doughnuts from the yummy bakery in Mingenew!

Kalbarri, at the mouth of the Murchison River, was a delightful stopover with its stunning sunsets, ocean views and scenic bush walks to the rugged ochre Z Bends and Nature's Window. The yellows, reds, purples and smoky greys of the wildflowers in the area make a vibrant montage – it's amazing how such delicate colourful blossoms can survive in the tough, parched conditions.

The final two nights of the safari were spent at nostalgic Kirkalocka Station located 60 kms south of Mount Magnet. Established early last century, this once thriving sheep station now runs export-quality goats and offers a memorable tourism experience to those wanting to remember the 'good old days' and to gain an insight into life on the land. Spreading over 188,000 acres (76,000 hectares), the property is so large you could fit over 750,000 suburban 'city slicker' homes on it!

Owners Ann & Geoff Pilkington provide genuine country hospitality, tranquil surroundings and some terrific yarns with home-cooked meals prepared on request. Accommodation is available at the homestead or in the old shearers' quarters and there are powered and unpowered caravan sites available with limited electricity supplied by eco-friendly solar panels.

Ann, who grew up on the property, also runs a highly recommended half-day station tour including lunch. She led the Gypsies on a fun and informative 4WD outing covering about 40 km of dirt tracks, bushwalks and wildflower sightings which included the unique *grevillea kirkalocka* (named after the station) and a new species, *banksia rosserae*.

The **Wildflower Caravan Safari** was so successful that the Gypsies plan to run it again next year. Due to customer demand, the company is also adding several other caravan/motorhome/camper trailer safaris to its 2011 self-drive tours calendar including a **Southern Ocean White Beaches Caravan Safari** in March; a **Coral Coast Tropical Adventure** in April and a **Karijini Rocks Caravan Safari** in May. Off-road camper trailers are also welcome to join the popular 4WD outback expeditions to the **Kimberley** and the **Holland Track**. Numbers are strictly limited on all tours and safaris fill quickly. For more details visit www.globalgypsies.com.au.

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