



G'Day, Outback Vic

here. Well its that time of year again, yes just 4 weeks to Christmas, like you I'm also saying where did 2018 go? Well this is where it went for me.

In 2018 we lead 66 separate 4wd tag-along tours and conducted 102 separate 4wd training courses to groups and individuals. Since August I've averaged 5 days per month at home and remember "home" for me means in the office. In 2018 I have personally been to the high country 3 times, crossed the Simpson Desert 6 times (OK 2 of these was on a plane but the other 4 crossings were within a 13 day period). I've been to New Zealand and driven in deep snow on the side of a mountain and had to reverse 1.5k's on that mountainside in the snow! I've cruised off the Kimberley coast on one of the best adventures I've ever had, if not the best! I helped raise \$195,000 for Prostate Cancer and managed to get 37 4wd drives up and over Big Red and back again in just one afternoon, I've driven virtually every road there is to drive in Tasmania in just 2 weeks, I've written a book! I have kick started my radio career again and I've assisted, through mentoring, my Nephew Luke King to second place in the National championship in the Toyota 86 series. Did I mention that I have personally trained close to 1000 people



in the art of 4wd driving and became a granddad once again?

And its all thanks to you my loyal clients (well not the Granddad bit, my daughter helped in that!)



Even the SES choose us for their training

Looking forward

You could say we are almost in crisis mode! But its a great crisis to have, you see a lot of our trips are currently booked out over the next 12 months. The down side to this is a lot of you may have left it too late to book onto our trips, so here is a list of what is available and what isn't

Our 4 day Snowy Mtns trip from 29/12-1/1/19 is not only fully booked, but we are running a second trip and it too is booked out. -Sorry you have missed out on this great trip - next one is over Easter 19-22 April 2019 but hurry as it is already 50% fully booked.

Our 7 day High Country tour from 29/12 - 4/1/19 is fully booked - sorry you have missed out.

Our 7 day camping trip to the High Country from 3-9 January 2019 has only 1 vacancy if you are thinking of joining us.

Our 7 day Camper Trailer High Country tour from 2-8 January 2019 also has just 1 spot remaining.

Our 7 day Camper Trailer High Country tour from 10-16 February 2019 has just 1 spot remaining. But we have listed a second 7 day trip for camper trailers from 17-23 February 2019 and this one has 6 spots available, you don't need to have a camper trailer to join this trip, you can camp too.

My stunning New Zealand 4wd tag-along tour in April is fully booked but I have a second trip scheduled now commencing 24 March to 4 April 2019 and I have 6 spots remaining on it, this is a must do trip for everyone.



NZ, one of the most scenic trips we offer

The 7 day camping High Country trip from 14-20 April 2019 has only 3 spots available.

Our Maralinga trip commencing 7-25 May is also fully booked, so we have listed a second Maralinga trip from 30 May – 17 June 2019 and it has 5 spots remaining.

The 14 day Simpson Desert trip that we have offered since 1992 has also proved very popular and both our May and July

trips are now fully subscribed, so we have taken the unprecedented action of offering a third Simpson Desert trip which will commence 23 June to 6 July 2019.

Our Canning Stock Route trips are also proving very popular – the trip from 1-26 June has just 4 spots available and our second CSR trip from 1 -26 July has just 3 vacancies on it.

Our two Iceland tours in June and July have been fully booked for many weeks.

Our unique Arnhem Land tour 3-22 August has only 2 vacancies now.

The good news for our customers is that our Kimberley tour from 1-26 July has plenty of vacancies at present.

If you intend to join us next year on our Cape York tour well! We have just 1 spot available on 29 July – 16 August 2019 and I have listed a second trip up Cape York for 22 August – 9 Sept, which has plenty of spots at the moment.

Due to a lot of requests I am running a Madigan Line trip across the Simpson from 23 July – 4 August, but don't get excited as it is fully booked, I'll take reserves if you are prepared to wait.



Remote desert travel on the Madigan Line

I am announcing in this Newsletter the much anticipated Across the Top tour (the

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Gulf and Savannah Way tour) so at the moment we have plenty of vacancies but I expect it to fill quickly.

My personal favourite is my new Red Centre trip from 21 August – 4 September which also has a few spots.

And then, as they say you asked for it, so I brought it to you, our fabulous new Tasmanian tour, being run in November 2019 I have already received several bookings which means there is just one spot remaining on the first trip commencing 3 November which means I now have a second trip commencing 22 November 2019, see more on this trip below.



We will drive this track in Tassie

So, as you see, business is booming for us at Great Divide Tours and its certainly keeping us very busy. That doesn't stop me from coming up with new ideas for trips, like our 14 day Kimberley Cruise in April 2020 and an accommodated trip down the Darling river, still in the making.

My advice is, if you are thinking of joining us in 2019 on one of our extended tours please book early to avoid missing out.

Doing it for your Prostate

In September I led the fund raising 4wd trip out to Birdsville to raise money for research into Prostate Cancer, which sadly

kills 9 men every day in Australia. We ended up with 37 vehicles entered in this event. It was not a tag-along as we traditionally know it, with pace notes being handed out for each day's travel and the participants being allowed to make their own pace to each overnight destination.

We had hoped to raise \$30,000 for the Prostate Research and the final tally has neared an incredible \$195,000 which is just astonishing. About 50% of the participants were clients of Great Divide Tours and without your amazing support the whole event will not have been anywhere near as successful.



We had another 15 to fit on top of Big Red

In addition to this we found that we were injecting up to \$20,000 into each town and locality that we stopped in each day, places that have been hit hard by the drought, so there was definitely a win win situation.

Plans are in motion to run another of these fund raising events in 2019 possibly through outback NSW, stay tuned for more news on this as it is developed and a big thank you to those of you who either contributed to my own Prostate Cancer Research fund raising page or participated and raised your own funds – thank you!

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Red Centre Circle Tour

Just reminder about this trip planned for next August and as I mentioned above it is a personal favourite of mine. It will start in Port Augusta and take us up to Marree, then up the Birdsville Track and into the Simpson via Warburton Crossing. When we reach the K1 Line we will follow this delightful track north to Poeppel Corner and then continue north on the Hay River Track all the way to Batton Hill. After a day exploring the local area we will drive down the Plenty Hwy to Alice Springs and amongst other things catch sunset on the beautiful Rainbow Valley.

Then we drive south following the Old Ghan Railway line past Chambers Pillar all the way to Finke and eventually to Mt Dare. A swim in Dalhousie Springs in its beautifully warm waters followed by a drive down the Oodnadatta Track to William Creek will lead us to the Painted Hills and then we will finish the Red Centre Circle tour underground at Coober Pedy. It will be another great crossing of the Simpson and will bring my personal tally to 27.



Driving the Gulf Savannah Way *Across the Top*

Well, you asked for it so here it is, a fantastic journey along the Binns Track in the Northern Territory and then across the Gulf of Carpentaria to Cairns. Starting in Alice Springs and ending near Cairns it will include places like Tower Rock,

Policeman's Waterhole, Davenport Ranges, Daly Waters, Roper Bar, the Lost City at Nathan River, Lorella Springs station, Cape Crawford and its Lost City, Borroloola and across the top road to Hells Gate, Lawn Hill and Burketown, Leichardt River and Karumba, Cobbold Gorge and eventually ending in the rainforests of Malanda near Cairns.

I have attached the itinerary for this trip to the email accompanying this newsletter.



**I found this track by mistake, what a find!
In Tassie.**

Touring Tassie

Finally we can offer you the ultimate Tassie Tour. Over the years many of you have asked about a trip to Tassie, so in October, I packed a bag and flew to Tassie and met up with Duncan Guy, a great client of mine who hails from Launceston. He now lives in Sydney but gets back home as much as he can, so much so that keeps a nice Ford Ranger at his parents home in Lonnie for his personal use. So Duncan and I spent 2 weeks touring all around Tassie, we covered over 4,000 kilometres in researching every back road and 4wd track that we could find. The down side was that many of the 4wd tracks were extreme, to say the least, on one of them we spent 2 hours to cover just 15 kilometres and then had to walk the last 2 kilometres to the waterfall we were chasing. The upside is that we are now able to offer what I believe is the ultimate Tassie tour.

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It will be 18 days of action packed touring, amazing scenery and great food.



Driving the wild west coast of Tassie

The trip is fully accommodated due to the extremes of weather that Tassie can experience, with a mix of cabins in caravan parks, great motels and even a whole town that we will take over!



Striking scenery in Tassie

This is an inclusive trip which in the tour fee includes the following :-
Boat charter to Wineglass Bay
Convict Tour at Port Arthur
Tahune Air Walk
Hastings Cave tour
Wall in the Wilderness tour
Wilderness train trip in Queenstown
Luxury cruise on the Gordon River in Gold Class
Cruise on the Pieman River
And even the Chair lift to the top of the Nut at Stanley.
Several dinners are included too as well as all the iconic locations in Tassie including

Jacobs Ladder, Cataract Gorge, Bay of Fires, Eddystone Lighthouse, Coles Bay, Kates Berry Farm, Elephant Pass, all the natural features around Port Arthur, Mt Wellington, Cockle Creek, Russell Falls, St Columbas Falls, the pub in the paddock, Lake St Clair, the Tahune wilderness, the historic town of Corinna, Strahan and its fabulous beach drive, the beach drive from Granville Harbour to Pieman Heads, the Fatman Barge, Dove Lake and Cradle Mtn and the murals at Sheffield. And a whole lot more, you might just die from exhaustion! Well I hope not, but you won't be wanting for anything else after doing this incredible trip. The full itinerary is attached to this Newsletter email and the first trip is all but fully booked.



We will do this on the Kimberley Cruise

The ultimate Kimberley cruise

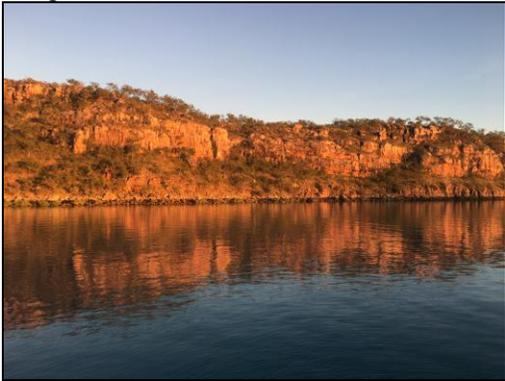
I sent out my last Newsletter as I was flying over to Broome to participate in our 9 day Kimberley cruise with quite a few of my customers. Without a doubt this proved to be a simply stunning trip. The folk on Kimberley Odyssey (our luxury boat for the tour) could not do enough for us and everything about that trip was out of this world – possibly the best thing I have ever done.

I enjoyed it so much I decided then and there that we had to encourage more of you to see more of the Kimberley coast and experience this world class adventure. So in April 2020 we are offering you the

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chance to join Julie and I on the 14 day cruise on the Kimberley Odyssey from Wyndham to Broome. This trip will include the magnificent waterfalls west of Wyndham as well as the spectacular coastline down the west Oz coast including the Horizontal Falls, Montgomery Reef and the amazing waterfalls and landscapes that are so unique to this corner of the world.



Nothing beats the colours of the Kimberley

Once again we have negotiated a special price for you saving your several hundred dollars. We can only take 9 couples, it is a very exclusive tour and we already have 4 couples booked into the trip so please contact me asap if you would like to participate in a world class adventure that you will never forget.

An idea that didn't work out

I had a dream! How often do we hear someone repeat those immortal words? Well I had one too, it was a dream to establish 2-3 off road camper trailers and have them available for hire either on my tours or for general use. Then one of my very good customers who owned an Ultimate Camper decided she wanted to sell her trailer, I knew it was in excellent condition and would have been looked after at the highest level, so I made an offer that was accepted and I became the owner of an Ultimate Xplor Camper Trailer that was only 4 years old and

looked brand new. The perfect start to my camper trailer hire business!

But then reality set in, trying to arrange insurance for it as a hire trailer proved to be very very expensive, with a \$6,000 pa premium and a \$5000 excess. I was going to need to have this trailer hired out 6 months a year to cover the costs etc., And that was probably never likely to happen.



Its for sale and its like brand new

The Ultimate was towed from Cessnock to the training centre in Braidwood and stored in the garage down there whilst I worked though the insurance issue. But in the end the sums just did not add up, so now that dream is over. I have this beautifully kept Ultimate Xplor camper trailer up for sale, I need to cut my losses and move onto another dream whatever that may be.



Call me if you are after an Ultimate

If you are looking for a great off road trailer that is virtually brand new and

much cheaper than a new unit, give me a call to come and have a look at it.

It is a 2014 Ultimate Xplor trailer set up to be towed behind a 200 series Landcruiser (simply change the wheels for any other vehicle) It has never been off road, true, its only been towed between Cessnock and Tennant Creek on 4 occasions and never off road. Asking \$49,000 for it. Call me if interested 02 99131395.



One of the best off road trailers in Australia

Whilst talking Ultimate

Just after purchasing my Ultimate camper I heard the news that Ultimate Campers at Moruya had been placed into receivership. This was a real shock to the 4wd industry and came out of the blue. A real shame given the brands reputation as being one of the best off road trailers made in Oz. Well, last week the good news is that another Australian camper trailer manufacturer has purchased the company and plans to re-establish it in its Moruya premises and continue to manufacture this range of excellent trailers.

This followed the complete dismantling of the Kimberly Kamper manufacturing business in Ballina a couple of months earlier, another brilliant Australian made camper trailer falling into financial difficulties. It is a shame that the cheaper Chinese imports are ruling the Oz market, our experience is that these cheaper brands cause untold problems when towed on

Aussie roads, but it seems buyers don't see this and only see the low price tag.

Too heavy!

Whilst talking about off road trailers, we are seeing a growing trend for bigger and heavier off road vans and trailers. This frightens me when I read of people buying vans or trailers that weight up to 3Ton and expect to tow them with a vehicle that barely weighs little more than their trailer. To me it is a disaster waiting to happen on our roads and to add to this concern is that no special license is required for anyone towing under such circumstances.

One of our most popular trips is our High Country camper trailer tour. I had to totally redesign the route we follow in the high country to make it safe for off road trailers to be used. But now we find we are increasingly being asked if a van or trailer weighing over 2.5 ton is suitable for our high country trips. It simply is not, no matter what is towing it, trying to get 2.5 ton + plus the 3-4 ton vehicle up or down some of those steep 4wd tracks is just lunacy. The biggest issue is the bloke who sold the client the trailer said it **“would go anywhere their 4wd will go”**, that is absolute bull dust and trailer/van manufacturers need to be held responsible for making false statements.

One day I will retire from the 4wd tour business (any offers for a great business??) and I will be looking for a comfortable off road van that weighs less than 2.5 ton to tow behind my Cruiser, but I won't be expecting to take it into our deserts or high country. I hope to be responsible in my expectations and can hardly wait to take the salesman to task over his claims that it will go anywhere!

2nd in the Championship! Yay!

Those of you that have received my Newsletters over the past couple of years will know that I sponsor my Nephew, Luke King, in his motor sport endeavours. For the past 3 years Luke has financed his entry and with his Dad worked on racing a Toyota 86 in the National Championship which has been conducted in association with several of the V8 Supercar rounds. He has had mixed success over the years, holding the lap record at Sandown, and getting up to the top 6 on occasion in the championship as well as several podium results.



The prize money might cover the repairs!

This year Luke had a lot more success and with the final races last weekend at Newcastle he managed to finish 2nd outright in the championship winning a cool \$30,000 for his efforts. I spent the weekend in his pits with him, his beautiful girl friend Liz, his Dad and Mum and his chief mechanic Andrew. The dedication and support that the whole team gave to Luke was simply outstanding, a small time family unit playing in the big game and showing them how to do it.



I can't believe we got it going again

Things don't always go to plan and despite a third place in the first race of the weekend, Luke took a massive hit in the second race when a fellow competitor's foot slipped off the brake as they approached a corner. This subsequently put Luke back from 2nd place to 8th where more disaster awaited him when a lapped vehicle dropped oil on the race line in front of Luke which put his 86 into the wall. Then he was T boned in a sickening accident. Despite a severely damaged car and an injury to his neck he managed to get going and finish in 19th spot. But the 86 was a disaster!



**2nd in the championship well done Luke
That's him on the left.**

With 2.5 hrs to the next race his whole team set about repairing it and getting it ready for the final race, he was still in with a chance to win the overall championship or at least come 2nd.

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This proves it!

Somehow the battered and beaten 86 was fixed enough to get to the start line and Luke managed to stay away from being admitted to hospital to check his injured neck. He came from 19th all the way up 4th position in just 11 laps securing enough points to be crowned 2nd place in the national championship, an unbelievable result given the circumstances. I am very proud of this young man and hope a larger and more cashed up team recognises his talents for next year.



I'd rather be in NZ than listening to a CAMS official who is corrupt!

Whilst on this, I also witnessed bullying, incompetence and what looked like corruption from the CAMS officials at the race track, strong words but that is how I interpreted the harassment and incompetence that these so called professionals displayed. No wonder there is so much argument over the application of the rules in the main forms of motor sport, they are ruining motor sport in Australia.

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This add brought to you at no cost to either party, just give Ty Widman a call if you need a plumber, I put my reputation on his work ethic.

Christmas gift ideas

We usually issue a lot of Christmas Gift vouchers from now until 24 December, so if you are stuck for an idea for your loved one, give me or Jenny a call on 02 99131395 or email info@4wd.net.au and we can prepare a gift voucher for any of our tours or driver training courses. You just nominate the dollar value for the voucher, it might be \$20, \$50, \$100 or you might even want to send your son or daughter on one of our 4wd courses as the perfect gift. We can email the voucher to you within a few minutes, its that simple.

Sad news

I read today that Mal Leyland's wife Laraine Leyland passed away recently. Us older folk know that the Leyland Brothers started all these 4wd shows we see now on TV. They were pioneers in the adventure travel TV documentaries and it was their book, "Where Dead Men Lie" that was given to me by my Dad when I was 14 that started my passion for adventure travel. I remember in 1996 standing on a deserted Gulf of Carpentaria beach 90 k's north of Wollgorang Station when I met Mal

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and Laraine. RIP Laraine and my condolences to Mal and all of their family.

Putting pen to paper

Next week I'm finalising a complete new edition of my 4wd skills book, it will be updated to cover all the latest technology in vehicles, all the proven 4wd skills that we have picked up along the way and will clarify how you really should perform a recovery as opposed to some of the crazy ideas I'm seeing displayed by some so called professionals in this field. The book is being published by the CSIRO, high praise indeed from such a major company to entrust me with writing their 4wd manual. It will also address all the Nationally Recognised standards for 4WD operation so it will become the go to book for all 4wd trainers.

Its a mammoth task and is just one of the many things that I have been occupying myself with over the past 6 months, expect to see it released around mid 2019.

What to do in your 4wd in January ?

Here are some ideas:-

Join us on Stockton Beach tour on 13 January

Come along to our driver training course on 19-20 January

On the Australia Day long weekend 26-28 January celebrate Aust Day in the bush, camping and 4wd driving with GDT on our Ridges and Rivers tour.

And if you were wondering what to do for your annual leave in January join us on our amazing 7 day high country tour either camping or with your off road trailer (a light one!) 2-8 January and 3-9 January 2019 see www.4wd.net.au

Facebook and radio

I have a huge presence on Facebook both via the Great Divide Tours site and my own Vic Widman site, you can watch almost on a daily basis what I'm getting up to, learn about new places to visit and keep abreast of all the new trips I am planning, and occasionally we even have facebook specials, so check out both sites asap.

You will also see links to my new 4wd radio talk back show with 2GB's host The Duck, and you can even download the podcast, whatever that means?

Join us in New Zealand in March 2019

I know I keep telling you that this is possibly the best 4wd trip you can do, and I mean it. My April trip is already fully booked, so I have a second trip departing 24 March until 4 April 2019. You fly into Christchurch where everything is taken care of from that point, transfer to your luxury motel, 4wd hire (usually brand new Prados) for the next 10 days, guided 4wd tour by our local guide plus escorted by Vic and Julie, all accommodation and dinners and the best scenery in the world! All this for \$10,990 for two people. Drop me an email for the itinerary info@4wd.net.au



This track is breathtaking in the Sth Island on our NZ tour

FOR SALE

2005 Patrol 4.2TD, ST-S manual.



This vehicle belongs to the wife of our guide Dave "Coighty" Fullerton, if interested please call Dave on 0411154956

It comes with all of the following extras:-

Black Widow storage with full extension and false floor.

Cargo barrier.

Reversing camera.

2 inch TJM lift and suspension.

Cooper ST Maxx tyres.

Dual battery system.

Tow bar.

Lightforce spot lights.

Alloy bull bar.

Genuine snorkel.

Full logbook details.

New exhaust system.

MSA Canvas seat covers

Second spare tyre.

Rhino Racks

Wiring for Red Arch brake system in place

186,400 kms.

\$33,000 ono.

Call Dave on 0411154956

Merry Christmas

So that's it for 2018, its been an incredible year for Great Divide Tours, not everyone has enjoyed our trips, yep out of 66 trips and 102 driver training courses we had two people that weren't happy, which proves the old saying you can't please everyone. As for the rest of you (the hundreds of you) thank you for helping the team at GDT help you achieve things you wouldn't otherwise do. Have a safe holiday period and Merry Christmas, yes they are Christmas carols you can hear playing!

Regards
Vic Widman



**Our 14 day Kimberley Cruise
scheduled for April 2020 will finish
here at Broome**