

Across Australia and return in my Grenadier Trialmaster.

I have just returned from a cross-Australia trip in my diesel Grenadier Trialmaster. I race radio controlled yachts as a sport/hobby and wanted to attend the 2024 World Championships for the International One Meter Class (IOM) being held in Gladstone (Qld) during October (I am not fast enough to qualify for the IOM Worlds, but was happy to help out and watch the racing).

I travelled to Gladstone via the Eyre Highway with overnight stops at Norseman, Border Village (Eucla), Ceduna and Port Augusta. Then the Barrier Highway via Broken Hill, Wilcannia, Cobar and Bourke (thousands of feral goats on the roads between Broken Hill and Bourke). On to Brewarrina, Walgett, St George, and into Queensland via Roma, Biloela and the Dawson Highway into Gladstone.

Travel took seven days to Gladstone from Perth (on my own on the eastbound trip, approx 8-9 hours at the wheel per day was my limit which equates to about 700 – 850 km per day, depending on road conditions). Only drove during daytime hours and slept in motels/hotels each night on the way (too many feral animals on the roads to drive safely at night: kangaroos, goats, wombats, camels, cattle and emus).

I sat on approximately 100km/hour all the way, generally into quite strong headwinds and the average fuel consumption to Gladstone (4,680 km) was 11.7 L/100km. The car was heavily loaded with tools, camping gear and emergency equipment in case I had a breakdown (approx 250-300kg) plus a 6th wheel/tyre on the roof rack. I planned to return to Perth via The Outback Way/Great Central Road which required additional off-road gear since it includes approx 1300km of rough, unsealed roads.

I had a Brown-Davis long range auxiliary diesel tank fitted a few weeks before my departure (68 L to a total of approx 160L of diesel). Unfortunately, the transfer pump (from auxiliary to main tank) stopped working on day 2 out from Perth, so I had to watch my range and refills more carefully until I could get it repaired in Qld.

The Grenadier performed perfectly, did not miss a beat and was extremely comfortable to drive for hours on end (the left foot hump is a total non-issue for me) and the Recaro seats are just fantastic in my humble opinion! The tire pressure management system is a bit of a pain and I had to adjust the tire pressure downwards on hot days to stop the alarm at 280kPa. I also rotated the tyres before I departed and the result (as I am sure some of you already know) was very confusing! Still, I finally worked out which reading was for which tyre and on we went.

Eventually got the long range auxiliary tank and pump fixed (after 3 trips to Rockhampton from Gladstone). Thanks to the guys at Opposite Lock and TJM in Rockhampton who finally got everything working “according to Hoyle”.

I picked up a mate at Rockhampton (he had flown in from Perth) who was also interested in the Outback Way/Great Central Road return crossing. For those of you who don't know, the Outback Way (incorporating the Great Central Road) stretches some 2,700km from Winton Queensland to Laverton in WA. Approximately 1300 km remains unsealed (the WA, Queensland, NT and Commonwealth Governments have agreements in place to fund the bitumen completion) supposedly by 2030, good luck with that!

The road passes through some iconic Australian outback locations including Alice Springs, Uluru (Ayers Rock), Kata Tjuta (The Olgas) and adjacent to the Petermann and MacDonnell Ranges.

We headed out of Rockhampton onto the Capricorn Highway and headed west through Duaringa, Blackwater, Emerald, Alpha, Barcardine and then to Longreach and Winton via the Landsborough Highway. The Outback Way (East to West) starts at Winton and the first leg to Boulia (362km) is sealed. The next section 262km (Donohue Highway) to the Qld/NT border is partly sealed but the dirt was recently graded and easy going at 85km/hr. The Grenadier suspension and drive train (plus BFG KO2 tyres) handled the dirt, rocks, bumps and corrugations with ease. Just over the NT border is an absolute desert oasis (Tobermorey Station) with great facilities and a beautiful grassed camping area under coolabah gums. A must stay if you are passing by.

After Tobermorey Station we continued west on the Plenty Highway for approx 500km to the Stuart Highway then turned left for Alice Springs 68km south. The last 160km of the Plenty H'way is bitumen which continues south to Alice Springs (via Stuart Highway) and then west near Erldunda Roadhouse along Lasseter Highway to Yulara, Uluru and Kata Tjuta.

The bitumen continues west from Kata Tjuta most of the way to Kaltukatjara (Docker River) and then to the NT/WA border. The dirt sections along the stretch from Kata Tjuta to Warakurna Roadhouse (stopped overnight) were recently graded and 80 – 90 km/hour was safe and comfortable in the Grenadier. The diesel price at Warakurna was \$3.15 per litre, fortunately the long range tank was operational and we only needed a 40 L top-up to get to the next roadhouse.

After Warakurna the road became much rougher with badly corrugated, rocky and very bumpy sections. No problem for the Grenadier at a reduced speed (75km/hour) but still slightly unpleasant motoring. Approximately 250km further west we found a newly graded section which continued for a few hundred km and enabled us to speed up to 85 – 90km/hr.

The unsealed section between Tjukayirla Roadhouse and Cosmo Newberry (approx 210km) was very rough and had not been graded for some time (rough rocky sections and plenty of corrugations). We slowed down to 70 - 75km /hour and were very pleased to see the bitumen just past Cosmo Newberry for the final 90km into Laverton.

The rest of the trip was easy. Overnight at a motel in Leonora and home the next day via Menzies, Kalgoorlie, Coolgardie and the rest of the way back to Perth on the Great Eastern Highway.

Total fuel consumption for the 10,181 km return trip was 1,187 L for an overall average of 11.7 L/100km.

Nothing broke, nothing fell off, nothing came loose, no leaks, no punctures and the Grenadier behaved perfectly on the return journey. All service fluids remained as filled and I could not have been more pleased with the overall result. Best long distance touring vehicle I have ever driven and totally happy with my decision to purchase the Grenadier.

For those of you interested, this is my set-up as ordered/delivered:

Scottish White Trialmaster (diesel)

17" steel wheels, BFG KO2 tyres

Utility trim, heavy duty seat covers and rubber floor mats

Smooth and rough packs (includes diff lockers front & rear)

Roo-bar and siderunners (steps)

Raised air intake

Auxiliary battery, electrical prep and switch panel

Towing pack & wiring

I have since added the following:

Stedi light bar, front bull bar mounted

ICOM IC-450 UHF radio

Ctek D250SE 12V charger linked to the Ctek Smartpass to enable roof rack mounted solar panel charging

Additional dashboard USB charge points for phone and GPS (Alldocube android tablet and ExplorOz software/maps)

ARB on-board compressor

Rear compartment Anderson plug for the fridge (direct from auxiliary battery)

Rear bumper Anderson plug (from auxiliary battery) for caravan charging and running the dust suppression system in the caravan on the road)

Redarc Tow-Pro Elite electric brake controller (for towing)

Low profile Rhino-Rack steel mesh roof rack (can't get into my garage with the big Rhino Rack designed for the Grenadier)

2nd spare wheel (17" steel and BFG KO2 tyre)

Sphere permanent rear viewing camera system for both the car and caravan.

Brown/Davis long range auxiliary fuel tank (68L) incorporating a high flow diesel filling port.

I have not changed anything on the suspension, wheels or drivetrain and the car handles superbly both on and off road.

Cheers

Wombat51