

# G'day Mates!

Greek overlanders cross the Outback all the way from Perth to Sydney adding 16,000km on their Discovery. Read an Australian epic from a foreigner's point of view...

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Photos by **Vula Netu** and **Akis Temperidis**



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Malcolm Douglas Crocodile Farm: "Salties" are huge here, newborn crocs are cute.

**W**e are completely on our own in a hostile environment. The soil is eroded by salt, heat is unbearable and flies are annoyingly aggressive. Even if we wear full face nets they still manage to infiltrate our ears, eyes and mouth – I've already eaten a dozen of them! Vzzz, vzzz, vzzz, this is the soundtrack of our trip for the last days in the Outback. We are in Dalhousie Springs on the western side of mighty Simpson Desert. We dive naked into the warm water lake and, yes, the tiny monsters don't dare to come near us. We face a great dilemma where we are. To cross the Simpson Desert or not to cross? At Mount Dear roadhouse, the only one in hundreds of kilometers, we were told that the notorious French line path is closed. We call the ranger from our Iridium phone and the man advises us to avoid the trip: "Nobody has entered the desert for six months, the flooding extends for about 30km. The desert will be closed for two more months at least!"



In less than three months, we did 16,000km and we were only stopped once by police for an alcohol test.





**Quarantine Matters!**

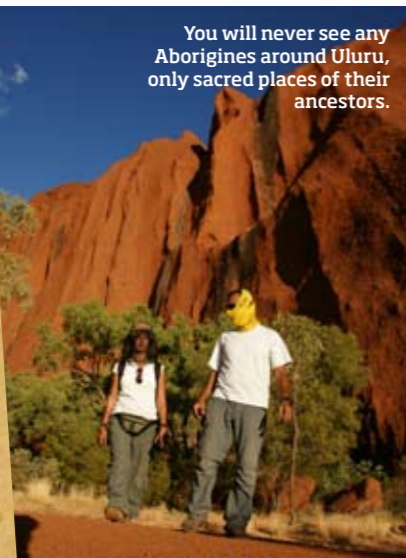
Before leaving Malaysia we knew how strict Australian Quarantine & Inspection Service (AQIS) rules are, so we proceeded in a thorough cleaning of the car, which kept us busy for three days! Thinking Greek, we contacted AQIS ([www.aqis.gov.au](http://www.aqis.gov.au)) asking for details and for making a report on it. The feedback was clear; "the car should be clean like new". We thought we might have a less rigorous confrontation from them in Fremantle - given we were journalists but when the car was checked, traces of soil and seeds were found into the ladder frame. The car was moved to a special cleaner who worked on it with pressurized water for three hours after which our car passed the test. The process cost us 570 AUD for no more than 100 grams of contagious(?) soil but most importantly, mum's honey should be fumigated. Our press identity didn't make any difference or it did; our shoes were cleaned by the director of AQIS in Perth himself, who gave us an interesting interview. The officer convinced us that quarantine matters for the bovine production and the health of the sensitive Australian ecosystem.



*Greeks spoiling Australia...*



Welcome to Fraser Island, as far as dingoes are concerned they are not so bad but don't feed them please!



You will never see any Aborigines around Uluru, only sacred places of their ancestors.



You should first call Birdsville Hotel before attempting Simpson desert.



Uluru is very touristic but still overwhelming.



“ We decided to head to Birdsville through the famous Oodnadatta tracks. ”

We felt defeated but chose to do the right thing knowing that getting stuck into the desert would mean several days of delays plus 1000 AUD per wheel, for a possible recovery, according to an unwritten Outback law. We would reach Birdsville from the famous Oodnadatta and Birdsville tracks, a 1200km loop through South Australia. "No worries mate!", Vula said to comfort me, "Next time"!

**Cultural shock the other way**

When we arrived in Australia, three weeks before, the sky seemed crispy clear and the prices exorbitantly high in comparison to our former life in SE Asia. We wanted to cross the Outback but which way? Whatever route we chose, we would miss something else. We preferred to do it the long way, driving up to Broome. We would decide what to do next from there...

It was incredible... 50km north of cosmopolitan Perth there was nothing - nothing! - till Geraldton. It was an endless stretch of tarmac with no cell phone or radio signal, no fuel or food for every 400 to 500km, until the next town or the next roadhouse. We were traveling for hours and our dot seemed still on the map screen of our GPS. North of Geraldton we diverted to Shark Bay and Monkey Mia until we got back to the main road, we had 650km added on our odometer. What a huge piece of land! On our route to Broome we passed Carnarvon and Port Headland, of course, but the best part was Karijini National Park. It was like a naturalistic amusement park but so hot, mate! After we drove a bit on the 80-mile beach, we arrived in Broome. We knew it was the most interesting little town in WA but it seemed so depressingly empty that day. At noon you the only people was saw were at the Coles supermarket. In Broome we met an



*In Geraldton it was the only time we saw white and aborigine kids playing together.*



**TRIP ID**

Vehicle: Land Rover Discovery3 TDV6  
Crew: Akis Temperidis, Vula Netou  
Days: 85 (69 driving)  
Total distance: 16.412  
Refuellings: 24  
Litres: 1872  
Lt/100 km.: 11,4

You need to deflate seriously to drive on the sandy path towards Steep point, the westernmost one of Australia.



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**We saluted the Indian Ocean which we had followed from Capetown!**  
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Stockman's Hall of Fame at Longreach (Queensland) is an eye opening experience for anybody interested in Outback's culture.

Australian celebrity, Mr. Malcolm Douglas, an adventurer and cinematographer who runs a serious business with crocodiles. Malcolm still makes adventure documentaries like the ones that made him an Australian institution in the 60's. Like a real star, he was not really interested in meeting with us until we told him we had travelled all the way from Greece to meet him. Finally, he spent all day with us and he told us juicy stories from his life in the Outback and delivered some crocs in front of our eyes. We loved this guy!

From Broome we saluted the Indian Ocean which we had followed from Capetown! And now what? Cross the Kimberley and arrive to Darwin or cross the Tanami desert, the most remote part of the country? As the going gets tough, the tough get going, so – you guessed it – we were probably the first to tackle the muddy track at the southern-most part of Kimberley (from Derby to Fitzroy crossing through Windjana



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National Park) after the rain season, when state signs still prohibited it. After an oil change at Halls Creek we entered the Tanami and crossed it all the way to Alice Springs in two days time. It was an epic driving in an arid environment where we met only two cars and more than forty carcasses in the middle of nowhere. On the way, we visited two Aboriginal villages without a permit. It was worth the risk to see what the flip side of a model country looks like: Well, it looks like delapidated houses, street fires with unemployed youngsters surrounding an old man, rusty cars parked everywhere and lost souls drinking beer all day. We tried to talk with some of them but they were hostile with us. It was the first time on our trip we couldn't establish communication with local people. We don't blame them. Aborigines have experienced the rudest cultural shock and human rights violations than any other tribe in history, by the advanced white man of course. Sorry mates but truth is hard to digest...

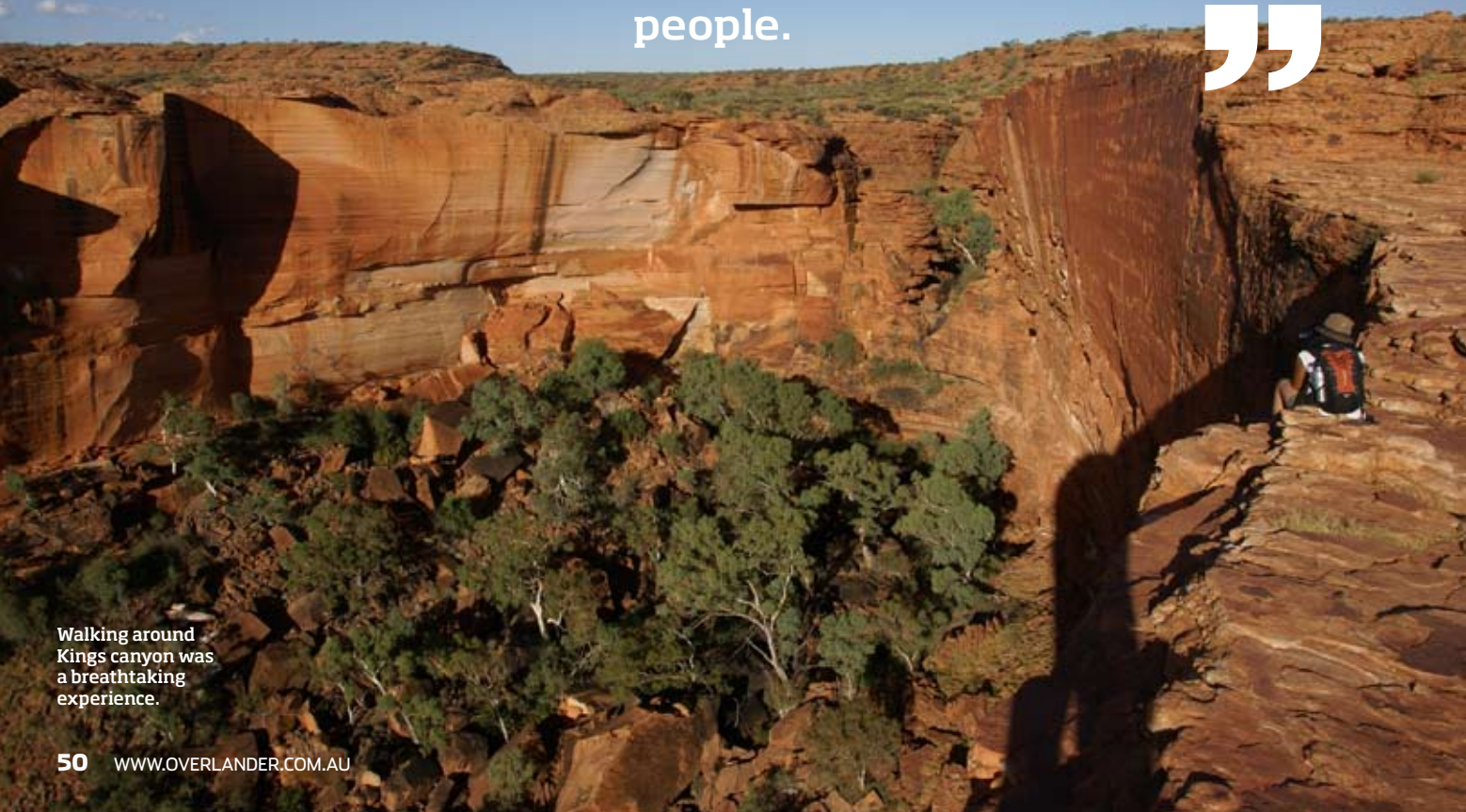
### Roadhouse Country

We were happy to arrive in Alice Springs safe and sound with only some scratches on the tyres. We were confident to consume more of the Outback, and we were actually addicted to the rusty color of the soil and the unique palette of the sky before sunset. The roundtrip to Uluru via Finke Gorge and Kings Canyon was a piece of cake. Back to Alice, we were prepared psychologically for the Simpson Desert. We followed the route to Finke, the same run by the famous Finke Desert Race, along the Ghan, the old train rail that was made by Afghan cameleers. At parts we were driving on the

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Walking around Kings canyon was a breathtaking experience.



## Discovery News

We were in Sumatra when our engine broke down completely. We had just replaced the turbo in Malaysia, the TDV6 had only 102,000km and was running perfectly, so we felt frustrated with this unexpected incident which was judged as 'unique worldwide' by Land Rover. A breakdown is a perfect opportunity for a great adventure on a trip like ours. We needed eight days to pull or carry our car all the way from remote Northern Sumatra back to Kuala Lumpur. Land Rover impressively reacted to our problem. One week after, a brand new TDV6 was shipped by air to Malaysia. Three more weeks were needed to assemble everything back, including the car body which was completely removed according to the LR technical requirements. Why did the engine blow off with no warning? It was probably a domino effect. The engine had run for long time with a broken turbo, from which tiny metal remnants must have entered the engine and stuck in the oil pump. After the pump went off, it was a matter of hours to get the engine 'dry' and blown off. So, in Australia, we tested our new TDV6, which should have cost us around 20,000 AUD. Land Rover of Australia was very generous with us for as well. In Perth we got the driver's door lock replaced under warranty. At Trivett of Parramatta (Sydney) the rear diff and semi axles were replaced as the crown had come loose and we were provided a full service, always for free.



parallel 4WD track, used for the rally, just for fun! For the next four days we met only a handful of people, exclusively at the famous roadhouses on Oadnadatta and Birdsville tracks; Mount Dare, Pink House, William Creek, Mungerania and finally the famous Birdsville Hotel. In the Outback we realized that the roadhouse is the absolute Australian institution, it represents the country better than anything else. Remote but unbelievably organized! We couldn't believe we could find diesel, a mini market, restaurant, bar, pool, memorabilia, even an ATM, all in one and so far away from anything else. We were wondering how the families that run these places can make it. We found out that their kids attend the school of the Air, via radio on a daily basis. Incredible Australia. You can expect anything from a country where cattle has been guided by helicopters for the last 40 years...



**“ We couldn't believe we could find diesel, a mini market, restaurant, bar, pool, memorabilia and even an ATM all in one area, so far away from everything. ”**

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**Back to the Real World**

23 days after we had departed from Perth, we arrived to Longreach, where our Outback epic ended. Two days later, at Rockhampton, we felt as if our trip had ended, exactly where Australia starts for 90 percent of Aussies. We lived more adventures after that, like the off-road driving at Fraser Island, a skydive on the beach south of Sydney and a climb of the iconic Harbor Bridge, but we were missing the Outback which represents the original Australia for us. From Brisbane to Sydney, to Melbourne and back to Sydney, from where we finally shipped our car to the USA, we felt like home thanks to the hospitality of different fellow Greeks and Australians as well. We put on some kilos thanks to greek moussaka, feta cheese and Australian barbecue. Funniest part was when we were asked where we were come from;

"We come from Greece"..

"You shipped your car here? Why didn't you rent one here"?

"We are on a world tour – we crossed Iran, Pakistan, India, SE Asia. We drove from Perth..."

"YOU CROSSED THE OUTBACK? How many kangaroos did you hit? Did any crocodiles attack you? It is full of dingoes there... Many people died there after they ran out of fuel... or water..."

Crazy Australians... The Outback is a far away country more than any other for them. A place reached by few who like to amplify its myth. The beauty is there, same as on photoshopped pictures, but the dangers are hyped. The Outback needs respect but you have nothing to fear there, its always Australia, the most organized country in the world. By the way, we never hit or nearly missed a kangaroo mates! 🐨

**Shark Bay: The westernmost point of Australia feels like the end of the world, which is not so far from truth. Great for camping, fishing and off road driving.**



Overlooking Simpson Desert from an iconic red dune, near Birdsville.



*We kissed Australia goodbye in a classic style, climbing on the Harbor Bridge in Sydney.*



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