

The 4WD Guy's Newsletter

Experience the Wilderness - Braidwood & Beyond

www.4wdtrips.com.au

Email: the4wdguy@4wdtrips.com.au

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The Gossip

I have had a very rewarding professional life and now this 4WD tour operator business operating from the heritage listed town of Braidwood is my "tree change".

We first came to Braidwood about three years ago and purchased a cottage within walking distance of the coffee shops and town centre. Even though we were "blow-ins" the towns folk have welcomed us into their community - some admitting to be blow-ins themselves. Braidwood is renowned for the artists, crafts people and others it attracts.

When I set up my business, I became known as "The 4WD Guy" - "you know, the one with the Land Rover". Well there are others in town who have more Land Rovers (and older) than I do, and I believe there are many more vintage models on the farms in the district.

Ever since moving here, I have wandered off and explored the numerous fire trails and forest roads so have a pretty good local knowledge. Hence the term "Braidwood & Beyond" has become part of my branding. Many of the planned trips travel the fire trails on the edge of declared wilderness which explains the "Experience the Wilderness" phrase.

To top things off, I found that the number plate 4WDGUY was available and it has been put onto the second Land Rover - a 2002 Discovery (TD5). The Defender was a demo with the ONE 10X number plate already in place. This means something to Land Rover nuts - the model Defender is a 110 Extreme and the 110 is the wheel base (in inches since they have been around for yonks).

The domain name 4wdtrips.com.au wasn't being used - most seem to promote the idea of "tours" rather than trips.



The Trips

Braidwood is blessed with interesting forests and National Parks that contain some of the most interesting 4WD trips in the state. There are many possibilities for short trips which do not involve overnight camping. There is also a range of forest roads and some fire trails which go through wonderful scenery but which can be enjoyed by beginner off-road drivers, and even for vehicles that are not the serious full 4WD types.

In the peak holiday seasons like Christmas, Easter, some long weekends and the summer school holidays, the favorite camping destinations are becoming quite crowded. This has been a reason to offer half or full day trips where people could return home, or stay locally. I am keen on the idea of mid week day trips from Braidwood as I am sure this would suit many who perhaps don't want to rough it.

There is also some demand for harder trips to cater for experienced 4WD drivers. There are a number of quite serious trips in the area. Participants on these trips will need to be able to convince me of their skill levels and vehicle capabilities and equipment.

I will also offer Basic 4WD Driver Course where we will meet formally for a few hours on a Saturday morning and discuss a range of topics before moving out after lunch onto some easy trails for hands-on work. Optionally a full day "medium" standard of trip can be tackled on the Sunday to complete the basic course.

More details will be placed on the website as dates firm up - but please send an email if Driver Training is of interest to you. Pencil in December 13-14 at the National Theatre.

Drivers unfamiliar with off road conditions will find a lot of information on the [FAQ] page of the website. The soft roads and full 4WD vehicles are very capable of doing most trips we undertake with little or no modification. Gaining the confidence as a driver is perhaps best done by doing the Basic Driver Training followed by a few "easy" trips then "medium" graded trips. Otherwise it is mainly a matter of sensible driving and adapting to the conditions.

What's On in Oct-Nov Trip Notes

Braidwood is quite a busy place in October and November.

The local markets are held generally on the fourth Saturday of each month and 4WD Trips plans to have a stand on October 25 in Ryrie Park followed by an Easy trip in the afternoon to the Monga National Park.

The next week, I am running a conference in Melbourne (part of my former life as a structural engineer). The next local event is to have a stand at the Caravan & Camping Supershow at Batemans Bay on November 7-9.

The Annual "Music at the Creek" weekend at Majors Creek is a great event for music lovers - November 15-16. Braidwood has the now famous "The Quilt Event" weekend on November 22-23.

4WD Trips will conduct half day "easy" trips on both Saturday and Sundays of these weekends to different locations in the morning and afternoon. These will be suitable for limited passenger numbers as well as tag along (soft roaders are okay). Details will be posted on the website shortly.

I am currently developing the Driver Training material and hope to run the first course on December 13-14th.

Specialty Trips

A "specialty trip" might be one where there is a group of either or both passengers and/or tag along vehicles with a special interest such as going to certain locations, or camping, photography, history or bushwalking (being dropped at the start and picked up at their destination).

Enquire as to minimum numbers to enable your group's trip to be accommodated.



Night driving on freshly regraded fire trails with water diversion humps

October 22 2008 was a recce trip to revisit sections of fire trails that would be part of two different "hard" trips and to check on the status of the Oulla Creek Fire trail.

There were significant bushfires in the northern part of the Burra Oulla Wilderness area in the 2002-3 season. The regrowth of wattle trees has made the Oulla Creek FT impassable without destroying the paintwork of your vehicle. I understand it is due for regrading in the near future.

Sections of the Firebreak FT and Quart Pot have just been regraded - I might have been one of the first to use them after the dozer. I will post a date soon for a "hard" full day trip in this area. Some sections have extremely steep hills and tight hairpins as well. The Defender needed the brakes as well as Low range 1st gear to descent slowly. (See pic.)

On the way back, after dark, I walked along a locked off management trail (also freshly regraded) to see how long it would take to reach the start of an historic bridle track built in 1860. Alas it was too dark to find the location which may well now be obscured by the road works. Another visit is planned as this would be a new bushwalk that is currently undocumented. Watch this space.



Steep & tight hairpins, rocky surface needing tough off-road tyres (above). Parts of the Oulla Creek FT were overgrown with regrowth after this point (below)

