

Back to Arkaroola - July 2010

What can I say? Arkaroola is a place I can't keep away from, for so many reasons. The landscape is amazing, the people are friendly and the staff, well... I'm like one of the family now.



An amazing landscape on the way to Arkaroola

Off I went again on Tue 20th July. Initially I waited for some weather to pass, then set out on my 3 hour journey. I was able to go over the cloud initially, but then had to come back under as the clouds started to build and I ended up flying under cloud at 2500 ft for about an hour, then back above cloud before coming into Arkaroola. As I made my 10nm call I was greeted by Doug over the radio from Arkaroola Village saying... 'See you soon'.



Sirrus clouds greeted me at Arkaroola

And so, another Arkaroola adventure begins.

I arrived in the afternoon on Tuesday, had enough time to check in, put my bags in my room and grab a coffee before sitting down with Doug to spend the afternoon working with him to prepare for the CASA audit the following afternoon. All that done, I finally got to sit down with Terri and some other staff

members at the bar for a round (or three) of Jam Donuts! Thanks Lisa!!!!

My goodness... what a drink, 3 shots and I could barely remember my name let alone who I was sitting with at the bar.

It was time to eat... curry and rice - I needed something to soak up the alcohol, then a few more shared tales with the staff and time for bed.

Next morning it was an 8am start meeting at Reception for a flight in the Arkaroola Cessna 207 over Lake Eyre and surrounding areas with 3 other guests. Tracie, Peter and Margaret had already met the day before on the Ridge Top Tour so were deep in conversation when I caught up with them and was introduced by Tracie whom I'd met the night before.



Flying low from the pump toward Silcrete Island

All packed into the bus we headed off to the airfield and our flight. What a joy it was. There was a lot of water in the Lake. Unfortunately my phone ran out of memory and battery before we got there so I was unable to get those photos.



Peter and Margaret

There were only about 200 pelicans on Silcrete Island, a sharp decline in numbers from previous years. Doug says they have many other locations to choose from now and therein lies the reason for the decrease in numbers. Previously the coverage of the birds on the island was such you could barely see the island itself for the density coverage of pelicans.

The flight was certainly the highlight of my Wed morning, then back to the airfield, back to the village, then hello CASA. We met with Stephen and Bruce who were there to conduct the audit. Another coffee in hand, some lunch for all of us, then... let the audit begin.

About 4 hours later and the audit was complete. There were a few things to review, but overall a pretty good result and a very relieved Doug. The only thing to consider next, was an evening meal.

Just before lunch I bumped into a colleague from my IT training days Mike and his wife Lea. So we had a group of us for dinner with much chatter and catching up.

Thursday morning was a slow and relaxed start, then a walk to reception to see who was around and what everyone was up to. Doug was off on another flight so I decided I would go for a fly in my Jabi over Lake Frome. Tracie decided to join me, so off we went.



Tracie on our the Lake Frome flight

Lake Frome had a lot more water in it than when I was here in Nov 2009. So I flew down to the south end, around the little islands then around and up to the top end before heading back to the Ark - 1.5 hrs and our job was done. Incredible how quickly the time goes.

Back to the village, an afternoon kip, then dinner. Seems a landscaping student was having a chat with Margie so we all ended up eating together as well. There were no Jam Donuts but I did indulge in a piccolo of champagne.

The following day Terri and I had an opportunity to catch up for coffee whilst she was on a break. I said "Do you want to come for a fly?" To which she replied, "I never get to go, so I'd love to come." With that, it was off to the airfield again... and another flight over Lake Frome. Conditions were perfect, calm as silk and a big smile on Terri's face. It was a great opportunity to chat and enjoy.



Terri and I having some 'girl time'

Then it was back to the village, a bite to eat then I promised Lisa I would take her for a fly. So after she finished her shift we were getting ready to go to the airfield again when I had the opportunity to meet Paul. Paul just happens to be the helicopter pilot of [Helivista](#) who had flown in that afternoon and was doing scenic flights over Arkaroola. "Would you like a lift to the airfield?" he asked. "Oh yeah" I said absolutely elated to be invited to partake in such an opportunity.



Paul at YARK before our flight back



Flying to the airfield in the R44

So Lisa and I jumped into the R44 and Paul piloted us off to the airfield, along the hillside at a very low altitude. It was very different to flying in the Jabiru or the Auster. We were able to get very close to the hilltops and Paul explained if the engine were to fail, there was always a potential landing spot directly underneath us. It was very comforting.

We alighted from the helicopter and left Paul to read Lisa's health magazine, well to look at the girlie pictures probably, although once we got back he did actually inform us about a number of interesting articles within the magazine, so he was definitely a quick reader.

But I am off track.



Lisa's first flight in a Jabiru

I prep the plane and put Lisa in the pilot's seat, belt her in and close the door. Off we go - slight cross wind on 21 however not enough to deter us. Rolling call made, we are off.

We flew south up the valley toward Balcanoona airstrip. An overfly to check out the airfield, and then east toward Lake Frome. A quick play

with the controls, and Lisa is flying! She is amazed how easy it is and how subtle the controls are. There is not a lot of input required to get the baby to turn and respond.



Back to the village via the road

Flight time over and back to YARK. Full stop, drop off Lisa and Paul wants to experience flight in the Jabiru as he hasn't had the opportunity to do so before. I am pleased to be able to offer him a fly in return. So a quick take off, a circuit complete and he says he will stick to flying helicopters... I guess that's how it goes sometimes! Well another day over and time to think about going home.



Flying home - before the heavy cloud

Sat morning weather check and it's not looking too flash - a bit of low cloud over Mt Gee and the North of Arkaroola. Need to give it time to clear. In 2-3 hours time the weather is clear enough so it's time to go.

Aircraft refuelled, rolling 21 and home to Murray Bridge (YMBD) I go. It was a great flight, albeit cold and mostly at 2500ft due to low cloud, but uneventful, safe, fun and another flying journey over.... until the next time.