



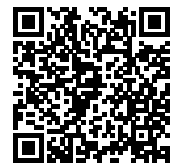
From Shunting Trains to Standing Stones: Muka to Elachbutting



Well, that was a bracing start to the day.

We woke up in Mukinbudin to a wind that meant business, having spent the night serenaded by shunting trains — okay, *one* train, but it made the most of itself, clanking and clattering about until it finally gave up and bugged off into silence around 10:30pm. Peace at last, and a proper night's sleep before an early rise.

First job of the morning, before coffee even, was topping up power stations and batteries. When you're heading back into the scrub for a week, you don't get a second chance at



this — so consider it done.

After a leisurely breakfast we waved off our travelling companions Swoosh (Steve and Wendy to their friends) as they turned west. We're pointed north, so it was hugs, promises to cross paths again down the track, and off we went in opposite directions.

Supplies, sorted

Fuel first, then a full water tank — partly for the obvious reasons, partly as ballast, because today was shaping up to be a genuinely windy one and a bit of low-down weight never hurts. Then it was straight into town for the essentials: a stop at the IGA, a visit to the local butcher, and firewood loaded up for the chilly nights forecast ahead.

Best bit of the morning, though, was a chat with a local shire councillor, who slipped us the good oil on some proper off-the-tourist-map camping spots — the kind tucked away from the crowds and surrounded by wildflowers instead. That's the sort of local knowledge you can't get from any app.

Rocks, windmills, and the odd wrong turn

Late morning we set off in search of more rock formations, swinging past Cleomine, the windmill-powered horse (yes, really — you don't forget that one), along with a few other so-called tourist spots that didn't quite live up to the billing.



Google Maps did its usual trick of sending us the scenic way, kicking up a fair bit of dust as we wound through paddocks of wheat, canola and lupins stretching out in every direction. No complaints, mind you — the roads were good, aside from the odd washaway, and we had them entirely to ourselves.

The crosswinds picked up a notch, but the rig handled it without fuss. Being relatively light for a van, even fully kitted with the off-road pack and tanks brimming, helps more than you'd think.

Elachbutting at last

We rolled into Elachbutting Rock just after lunch, right as the sun found a few gaps in



some very determined cloud cover. Camp's set up for a day or two: firepit stocked, chairs out, insect repellent standing by for duty.



And now, feet up, fire ready to go, we're left wondering what everyone else is up to back at their regular 9-to-5 this afternoon. We think we know who got the better end of this deal.

More rocks, more wildflowers, and hopefully a little less wind tomorrow.