Wyalkatchem to Gingin: A Map Is Just a Suggestion



Another travel day was on the cards today, little wind, low 20s forecast and bar those pummeled Wheatbelt roads it was looking good.

The plan was a leisurely drive from Wyalkatchem through Dowerin, Calingiri, Bindoon and roll into Gingin; figuring we'd avoid the climb over the range.

Nup.

We needed a chemist and they're few and far between out here so we motored on to Gooma (Goomalling to you), home of the possums — although we've never seen one there. Turns out the name's earned honestly: Goomalling comes from the Noongar word for the silver-grey possum that once thrived along the creeks here, back when explorers Hillman and Lefroy first mapped the spring in 1846 and called the country "rich grassy

land.”

The possums have made themselves scarce since, but the name’s stuck around since the town was gazetted in 1903 when the railway came through.

Hit the apothecary there and it was decision time. Either back out through Wongan Hills and out through Calingiri — although to be fair — there’s bugger all there, and with the price of diesel approaching Albo’s travel bills, we shelved that idea.

Up the range to Toodyay then, with a quick stop and shop at the IGA. Toodyay’s got form as an old convict and bushranger town — Moondyne Joe, WA’s most celebrated horse thief and escape artist, did his branding and his running from the law right through these hills in the 1860s, ducking the law so successfully the locals more or less adopted him as a folk hero.

These days the town’s heritage-listed main street and Connors Mill trade a lot more peacefully on his legend than he ever did.

Off through Dewars Pool to hit the Great Northern Highway and on through Bindoon to Gingin. Bindoon’s known for its orchards — stone fruit country since the 1800s, when settlers found the loamy soils out here suited apples, pears and citrus as well as any district in the state, and the annual Bindoon Bites festival still leans into that fruit-growing pedigree today.

A map is just a suggestion, remember.

Every time you see ‘great’ as a prefix in a highway name you can pretty much bet with total surety — it’s not great. And it isn’t.

Plonked into the all too familiar Gingin and got set up this afternoon and now it’s feet-up

time. Gingin’s one of the older settled districts in the state, dating back to the 1830s, though these days it’s just as well known for looking up as looking back — the Gravity Discovery Centre and its leaning tower sit just out of town, home to Australia’s largest public telescope and a proper dose of dark-sky stargazing once the sun goes down. Didn’t have time for the tower today, but it’s on the list.

A trouble-free and pleasant run, dragging the tin shed without issues.

Big bonus we get to share a coffee and a light late lunch with family, and that’s always worth the effort.