

#5 - Watarrka National Park.... Kings Canyon

Leaving Uluru,
the rig battles the wind
until we turn north west
toward Kings Canyon...
then we are pushed along
easily!

The George Gill range
travels beside us
becoming more and more
rugged.

Hmmm!
Where will we settle?
The campground is
almost empty....

A site with a view
me thinks!
And shade!
The plan of action
decrees that
a short walk
is first... so it's off to the
Kings Creek Walk.

The rock walls,
close up
are stratified --
composed of sandstone
of two types --
Mereenie and Carmichael
though which is which
escapes me so far!
There are caves
which show the colours



and the weathering
of the rock.
The doves here
are as friendly
as those in the campground

but look different,
their colours more vibrant
but they chase each other too!

I continue to follow
the creek bed,
in awe (as usual!)
of the trees,
rocks,
bird life,
some of whom move
too fast for a photo!

Looking up at
the canyon walls
is startling --
the sheerness,
the layers (!!!!)
the colours
and the plants
growing in
impossible places.
Some of the cliff faces
appear polished
in the morning sunlight.
The contrast between
the canyon walls
and the creek bed
with its round, smooth
stones
is marked.



The glint of water beckons through the trees. Some water left after rain not long ago. The river gums, always fascinating, are even more so here for they surround termite mounds, or did, when they lived, and they wrap each other with new growth, as if protecting the dead wood. When walking in the opposite direction, it looks like any of the other trees, its secret hidden around the corner.



The roots of different trees are tenacious appearing to be grounded in solid rock.



A beetle, from prehistoric times wanders nonchalantly,



across the path... There are more plants here that fascinate beside the trees.... The holy grevillea, the native hop and un-named ones that seem to thrive here especially, I guess, after the good rains.



I wander up to the sunset viewing platform because I can! A young German couple who speak very good English chat with me until the cliffs change from their day colours to a burnished, glowing red, Stefan counts down the minutes until sundown.



Kathleen Springs, where cattle used to roam the fences and yards lie rotting.... Now the valley sits serenely between the rock faces and lies silent but for the jabbering of zebra finches and honey eaters,



who dart from tree to tree
 never resting,
 unlike the finches
 who gather frequently
 to count heads (?)
 on dead branches
 before fluttering off
 to drink at the waterhole,
 eat seeds
 or fossick for minerals
 in the sand.



At the waterhole
 supplied by the
 never-ending spring

the tall grasses
 that supplies some of
 the finches' seed
 lays swaying in the wind.
 Tadpoles can be seen
 swimming beneath the surface
 of the murky water.



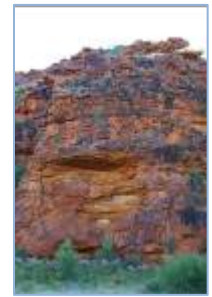
A tree that looks like
 a river red gum,
 sits high on the cliff –
 they usually grow near water
 so I deduce
 that there must be a pool
 way up there.
 Many of the trees
 are tangled and



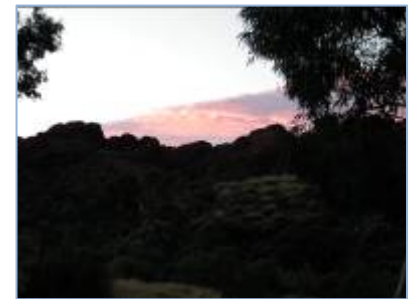
gnarled
 and today's plants
 surprise as much
 as yesterday's did!



There are beetles here too,
 with backs of armour plating
 scurrying away
 from the hot path,
 looking as though
 they were here
 in the age of the dinosaur.



The Kings Canyon Rim walk
 awaits....
 So, in the dark,
 the sky lightening
 to the east
 I arrive in the carpark
 thinking I'd be one
 of the first..
 but no,
 several coaches
 and smaller buses
 have already disgorged
 their loads...
 Never mind,



there'll be some in front
and some behind me,
for safety!

I begin the ascent of
.. some say 500,
others 800,
but I KNOW it's a lot
of steps up
from the carpark.

Resting frequently
becomes a necessity
toward the top-
thank goodness
it's still very cool
and I'm still walking
in the shade!

The wind is fierce though.
The rocks are astounding,
those who've been
will know!

The domes are left
from ancient times
and were once flattish
like block quilted material
before the wind and water
shaped them.

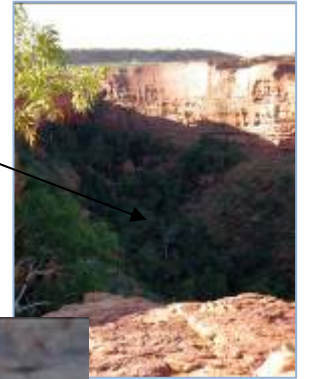
They continue to do so.
The rock becomes the
foundation
to which many of the
trees and other plants
cling tenuously'
their roots exploring
tiny cracks



and help them to grow
larger
while feeding the plant
what it needs.
Over the edge
is a sheer drop
to the creek valley
below
and the wind
wants to help push!
The 'polished' cliff face
is at eye level here!
I see a lizard (gecko?)
head for a rock and freeze-
I 'shoot' the camera -
fuzzy but there,
though not all of him!
I am pleased though
as this is only number 2
for all my walks near here.

The ripple rocks
appear in a valley
between the domes
and along the paths.
The ripples,
frozen in the rocks
eons ago,
look just like
sand ripples
but made of rock.
The top
with craggy domes
as far as
the eye can see.

The root goes from here to way back there!



But, whoa
I've come to the edge
and my stomach
churns
for heights,



I do not like!
I test the steps
and rationalise,
many have come
before,
so the steps
WILL stay strong?
Below lies
the Garden of Eden
hidden amongst
the cliffs
waaaaay down there.
It contains
cycads
as old as 400 years old
and therefore alive
before white man arrived!
I climb down and down
so many steps



but it's worth
every one of them
when I get to the bottom!
There are two pools
one 2 metres below the other
with a wall between them.
I sit between them
and heart breath
for I am alone.



I look around
and cannot believe
what I see down here!
A callistemon!
Tiny red bottle brushes
on a spindly plant
swaying viciously
in the strong wind
whistling between
the cliffs.
And as I sit
in the peace and quiet
I am astonished
to see two
honey eaters
settle nearby...
Who's a very lucky girl then???



More rock isotomes
like Trinidad's I see...

And then....
the BOYS arrive...
two young German men
who scamper
up the rocks
for photos
as though
it was an Olympic Sport.
BUT they shouted
and laughed
and missed
the point



of the solitude!
However,
I laughed with them
and took their photo!
As I start climbing
the stairs
I see a tiny
orangey fruit –
a wild fig (ili)!
And then I'm up
looking downnnnnnn!
and over where I'd been
earlier...



On the homebound stretch now,
though the uphill
haven't finished.
There are more incredible
roots, trees, plants
and cliffs to wonder at.
I meet 'the boys' again
and we take each other's photo..
"It's HOW much further?????"



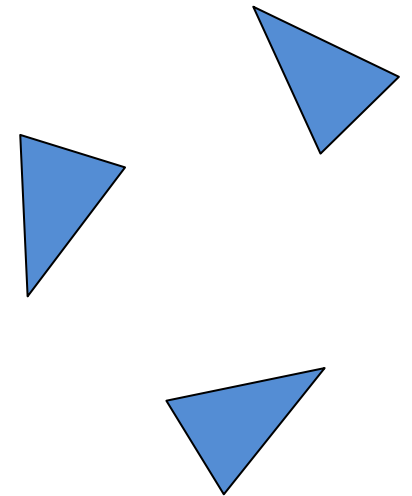
At last
the car park
is in site
just a few hundred
stairs



to negotiate
and then I realise
that up until now,
there have only
been TWO flies
and no fly repellent!
As I get closer and closer
they remember to bug me
though.
And in the carpark
as if to say,
"Welcome back!"
I am greeted by
two little birds
who just sat
in their bush
and watched me
take their photo!



And just a final note
on track markers and
other stuff....
The track markers,
little blue arrows
like these ones,
are confusing
to say the least!
On the Canyon Rim Walk,
I did about another
1 km
'cos the markers
weren't clear
or were missing????



After walking
backwards
and forwards
I decided my
best bet was to
follow a tour group
at a distance.
I am reminded of this
this morning
as I have just done
a short walk (1 hour)
on the ridge
above the Hotel
and its markers
were the same!
I usually have
a good sense of
direction
and am good at
reading maps!
But not at following
markers
It seems!



Just now,
10:45 a.m.,
two dingos
have sauntered
into the campground,
done a lap of
Matilda
and sauntered
back into the bush!

