

CJ7 THE LUMP – MELBOURNE TO BRISBANE ADVENTURE

BY KYLE BASSETT



It is starting to get exciting now. Sunday morning my awesome son Sky Bassett and I fly to Melbourne to pick this lump up and drive it home. Thanks to my brother-in-law, Iain Cox for buying himself an awesome Jeep and letting us bring it up for him and thanks to my beloved Leanne Bassett for suggesting the drive and supporting me.

Our plan is to run straight up the centre, through the Kidman Way then across from Bourke to Brisbane.

We flew into Melbourne Airport where the vendor picked us up and took us to the Jeep. Formalities done, the little 350 Chev fired first go and rumbled nastily and our driving adventure began. Sky did a bunch of driving, there was a lot of scenery and lots of rocks to look at and the Jeep ran beautifully.

We cruised to Deniliquin and stayed the night there.

We woke up and checked the Jeep over and headed north through the NSW countryside. We were having a great day with the roof folded down then late in the arvo there was a cloud of smoke around and in the Jeep so we decided to take a break for half an hour. The Holden auto spat out a bunch of fluid and sprayed it on the exhaust and everything else.

We fired the mighty 350 back up. The tranny would only make second gear so we rumbled into Mt Hope pub at sunset to see if they had a bed for the night. No room at the inn (the rooms were occupied by a team doing soil samples for mining), but we did have a good country pub counter meal while we worked out what to do next.

We phoned ahead and booked a room at the Great Western Hotel, Cobar and after dinner and a coffee it was onwards about 160km to Cobar in second gear, slow but steady.

We fired up the big chrome spotties. They light the bonnet up beautifully but sadly, you cannot see the road past the shiny bonnet, so we left them off. We arrived at Cobar nineish for a bourbon, a shower and a sleep.

We spent Tuesday at Cobar trying to find somebody to fix the auto or someone who would truck the car to Brisbane for a reasonable price.

A word to the wise, Auto Club Ultra cover, does not apply when you are running on an unregistered vehicle permit. Live and learn.

By Wednesday morning Todd Avers at Seven Slot Off Road in Queensland had lined up Carl Flannery in Tamworth to babysit the little Jeep if we could get her to Tamworth. So we hunted down a hire tow car and trailer. The only hassle was we had to return them both to Cobar, so we arranged to do that.



By 2:00pm the trailer wiring on the hire Cruiser was finally working, we had loaded the CJ7 aboard and headed off on the 520km trip to Tamworth, towing the Jeep behind a Cruiser ute. Only used \$190 in diesel. I thought the V8 Jeep was thirsty!

Part way to Tamworth Carl called and said there was a truck leaving that night if we wanted to send the CJ home. Decent price too. Sold, thanks again Carl, testimony to the generosity of Jeep people.

About 9:00pm Carl met us on the road and led us into the transport yard and helped us unload. By then the truck was almost ready to load the CJ and head off.

Wednesday night at about 10:00pm we said goodbye to the CJ7 in Tamworth and thought about what to do next. If we got the Cruiser back by lunch on Thursday, we would not have to pay another \$200 hire fee for it and \$80 for the trailer.

Too wide awake to sleep, so we

headed back 200km to Coonabarabran arranging a motel on the way.

Thursday morning, back in the Cruiser, now with a sadly empty car trailer and 389km back to Cobar by 11:00am to return the Cruiser and trailer then find a way home.

By mid afternoon we found a car. It may have been the only car in Cobar available for one way hire, a mighty Pulsar. Back through Coonabarabran and northward as far as Moree. After this 609km adventure, I was ready to enter the scene from the film 'Cocoon' and soak in the mineral pools with the people who were even older than me, but looked to be in a lot better nick that night.

Friday morning up early again, we dragged ourselves the last 451km to home.

To anyone in a Jeep between Warwick and Ipswich or Bellbowrie who got a Jeep wave from a red Pulsar, sorry for the

confusion. I was missing Jeeps by then.

It became a little more challenging after Cobar. My co-driver was too young so he wasn't able to share the driving in the hire cars. It made the 3,142km Melbourne to Brisbane a bit longer, and less interesting for him. Thanks mate for the navigating.

That is the story to date, my first visit was to see the mighty CJ7 at Seven Slot Off Road where Todd Avers was taking great care of her, making her feel a lot better and continues to do so.