

The Cape to Cape Track



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David Steele

We did the Cape to Cape Track in November 2014 and it was really the walk that hooked us on long-distance walking. We didn't think about documenting it in the same way we did our subsequent Caminos and we took far fewer photos (maybe a blessing!) than we did for those walks. After completing the book documenting our last long walk, the Via Podiensis, during quarantine I decided to try to find our photos and put a book together retrospectively, and here it is!

We decided to do the walk on a bit of a whim one night in Mandurah and, I think, booked online that night, if not very soon after. We got the last weekend before the group we booked with shut their tours down for summer, so we were quite lucky. We quickly started kitting ourselves out: fly nets (which it turned out were absolutely essential that time of year), neck protectors, double socks (which I've used religiously ever since), lightweight towels (for our one swim), backpacks, camelbaks and, of course, our enormous boots. We got really nice ones that will no doubt outlive us but were really more suited to treks on rocky ground than the terrain we walked on and the result was our legs got a lot more tired than might otherwise have been the case. I have to say, though, they influenced our choice of footwear for future walks in a very positive way!

I can't remember any real training other than completing the 7 Bridges Walk in Sydney a couple of weekends before so we were not very well prepared other than buying some hydrolyte to help recovery each night, which seemed to work pretty well!

With that behind us we set off on Friday 7th of November to the Bunker Bay Resort, where we were told we could leave our car until our return a week later, caught a taxi back into Dunsborough and waited for the bus for Augusta. My memory is that we got in mid-afternoon had a bit of a walk around and headed to the pub for dinner, which we repeated for all three of the nights we were there (although I think we did try to go to the local Chinese on Sunday night only to find it was closed).

The accommodation in Augusta was an apartment and the owners left a fantastic breakfast spread for the three mornings we had there, although we had to get our lunch from the bakery. All other stays were in hotels and all meals were provided, which was great. We even got insulated bags for our lunches, which we handed to the kitchen each night wherever we were staying and got them back the next morning filled with goodies!

As you'll see, we finished on Friday the 14th and by Saturday were on our way back to Perth tired but very happy!

In all respects, the walk was a complete success and, as I said, was the first step in a journey that led us to the Camino del Norte, the Via Podiensis and hopefully many more when the COVID-19 pandemic is over.

Dave

December 2020



8 November 2014

Day 1- Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse to Cosy Corner Road (21.5km/21.5km)

An early start to the day today to pick up some lunch from the Augusta bakery and then return to our apartment to wait for the taxi to take us to the lighthouse at 8:30am to start our walk.

The lighthouse folk were nice enough to let us go up to the lighthouse without paying the normal fee to get our photos and then we were off for the day.

We were back at the Water Wheel to head of the road at about 9:00am to officially start the Cape to Cape Track!

The first section of track took us inland past Skippy Rock, after a brief walk on the beach at Quarry Bay, along the cliffs north of Augusta to the start of Deepdene Beach. Mostly easy walking although at times the track was very narrow (snakes!).

From there 4.5km of sandy beach - our boots were not really the best footwear for these conditions and you can see from the photos that we left pretty big footprints in the sand.

We had lunch near the Deepdene Campsite turnoff and then continued on the beach before turning off and walking on a variety of 4WD tracks, rocky outcrops and beach to round Cape Hamelin. The last 4WD track to Cosy Corner Road to meet our taxi was a bit of a struggle but by 4:30pm we were headed back to Augusta for the night.

Dinner tonight at the Augusta pub, as it was last night!

The two of us at Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse ready to head north.

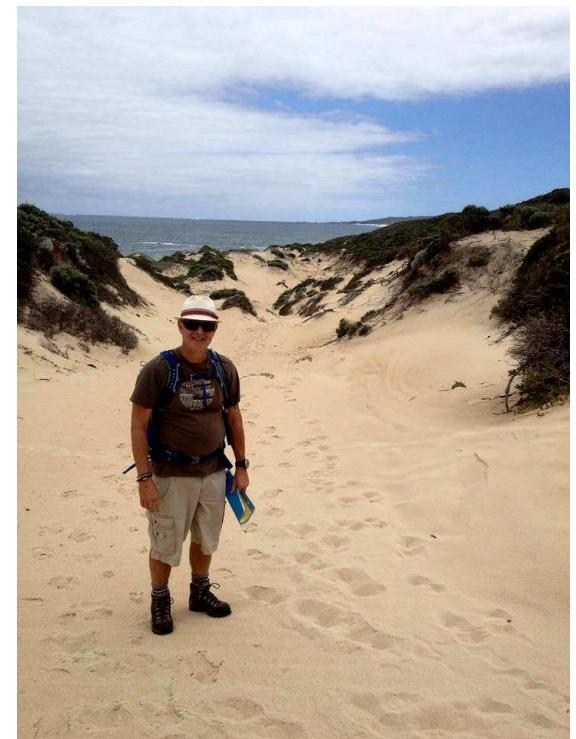


Alison at the Waterwheel with Quarry Bay, Skippy Rock and Augusta Cliffs in the background.

Alison and me along the top of the Augusta Cliffs, Alison climbing up the sand dunes at the northern end of Augusta Cliffs and me with the track heading north towards Deepdene beach in the background.

At the bottom, a sandal that had obviously spent a long time in the water!

In this section we met a group on their last day heading south - they thought the idea of walking north was much better, having walked into the southerly the whole trip!





Alison at the southern end of Deepdene beach. There was a fair bit of beach walking, which our big boots were not particularly suited to.



A late lunch towards the northern end of Deepdene beach, just before the turn-off to the Deepdene campsite.

Our final shot of the day as we left Deepdene beach behind us to round Cape Hamelin . We thought we were nearly out our destination at that time but there was still quite a walk along a fairly rocky ridge before climbing out of Deepdene to Cosy Corner Rd, where our taxi arrived shortly after we did.





Both of us at the start of the day at Cosy Corner Rd and, below, me with Foul Bay, Hamelin Island, White Cliff Point and Boranup Beach to the north.



9 November 2014

Day 2 - Cosy Corner Road to Boranup Drive (23.5km/45.0km)

Back in the taxi at 8:30am again today for a short drive to Cosy Corner Road - it is a bit depressing how short the distance is to drive when you've taken all day to walk it!

Anyway, we were off just before 9:00am for a day that was one of the highlights of the walk!

The first part of the walk is still slightly inland past Foul Bay Lighthouse but from there we were treated to beautiful views, first from the cliff tops before Foul Bay and then Foul Bay beach before arriving at Hamelin Bay caravan park, where you can see we treated ourselves to ice creams!

It was one of those beautiful days with a light offshore breeze so the beach looked just sensational. We had our bathers and we were tempted to have a swim near the caravan park but we decided to wait until we were at the end of the beach.

The walk along Boranup Beach was really nice and, being a weekend, there were heaps of people taking advantage of the weather by setting up their 4WDs on the sand for the day.

It took us a good couple of hours to walk the 6.5km along the beach but I don't remember it being too arduous. We stopped at the northern end for a swim and must have had lunch where we swum. the sea-breeze had come in by then but the beach was still fantastic!

From there we were into the equally picturesque Karri forest where we spent about 3 hours in dappled sunlight, including a detour to the Boranup Hill lookout where we rested for quite a while before meeting our taxi on Boranup Drive at 4:30pm once again.

Back to the pub again for dinner!

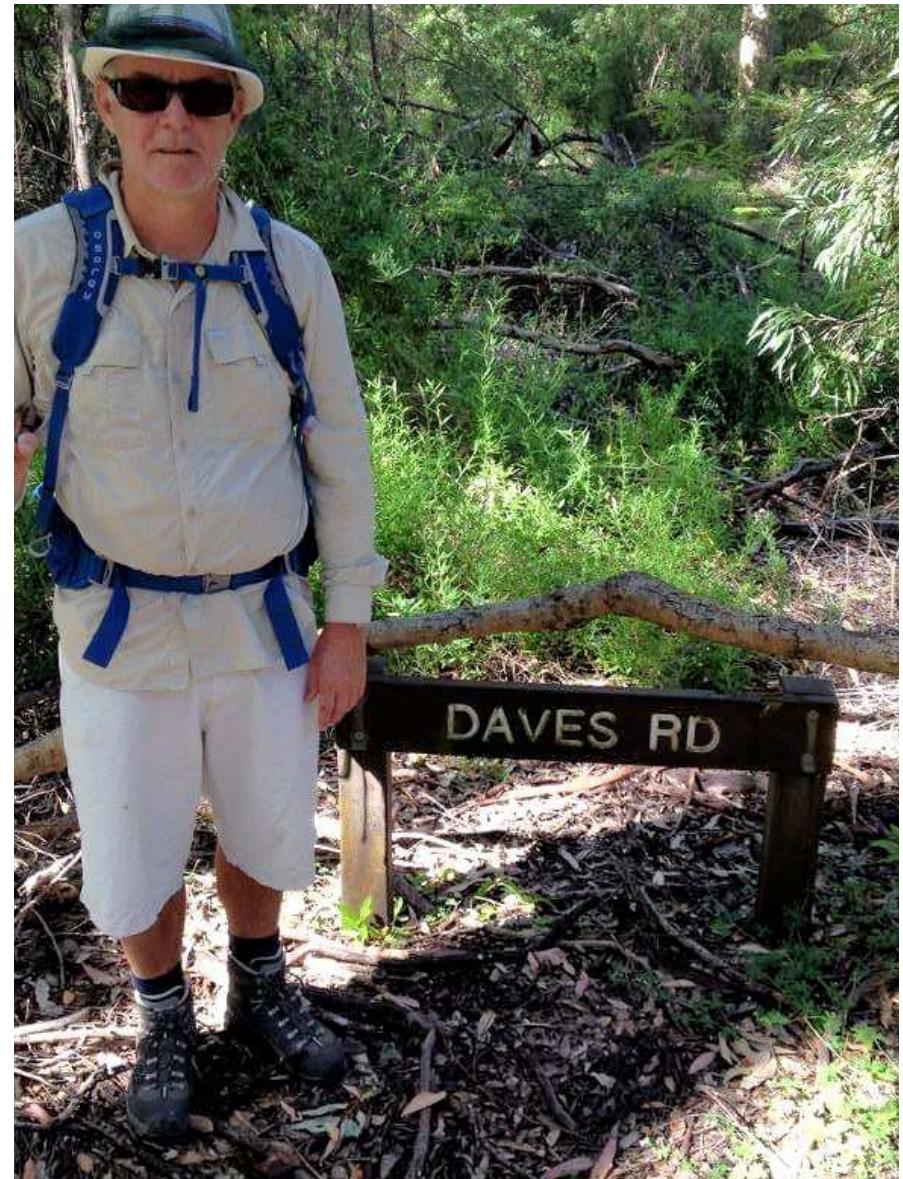


Ice creams at Hamelin Bay Caravan Park, above. My family used to camp here during school holidays while I was in high school!

Left, me at the northern end of Boranup. We've had many a nice surf at Boranup but today had to make do with a swim at the northern end before heading into the Karri forest.



Alison as we left Boranup Beach - the breeze was well and truly in by this time but the easterly was blowing for most of our walk along the beach and the water looked stunning.



Above, me also leaving Boranup, resting on the Boranup Hill lookout, and me in the Karri forest about an hour before the end of the day.



10 November 2014

Day 3 - Boranup Drive to Gnarabup (18km/63km)

Today was our first time walking into our accommodation rather than catching a taxi and I have to say it is much more satisfying and really helped encourage us to do the Caminos - but more of that later!

Again, the taxi picked us up at 8:30am and again we were underway by about 9:00am. Today the taxi would continue on to drop our luggage at Margaret's Beach Resort in Gnarabup.

After a quick re-trace to get from Boranup Drive back to the Cape to Cape it was more dappled sunlight and Karri forest for the first 5km or so. We passed through Point Road campsite and then emerged from the forest at Conto's campsite before heading towards the coast and walking along the cliff tops to Bob's Hollow.

From Bob's Hollow it was mostly 4WD tracks until a small section on the beach just before we reached Redgate Beach car park. The section along Redgate Beach to Boodjidup Brook was very tough due to the soft sand - we'd done just over 13kms by the time we started on the beach - and we were happy to reach the brook and turn inland. The happiness didn't last long though - we started hearing what we thought were wild pigs so our progress was a bit tentative.

After a few kms the sand dunes give way to an almost tropical valley which in turn leads to the Boodjidup Bridge. By now we were hearing a lot of noises and Alison was quite worried. My re-collection is we had the briefest of rests at the Brook before climbing the 350 steps up from the valley. By now we were very tired and we really struggled the last hour and a bit into Gnarabup, so much so that within a block or so of the resort, Alison just conked out and had to sit down for while.

Anyway, we eventually made the 18km journey and reached the resort where we rested before what I remember to be a very nice meal!



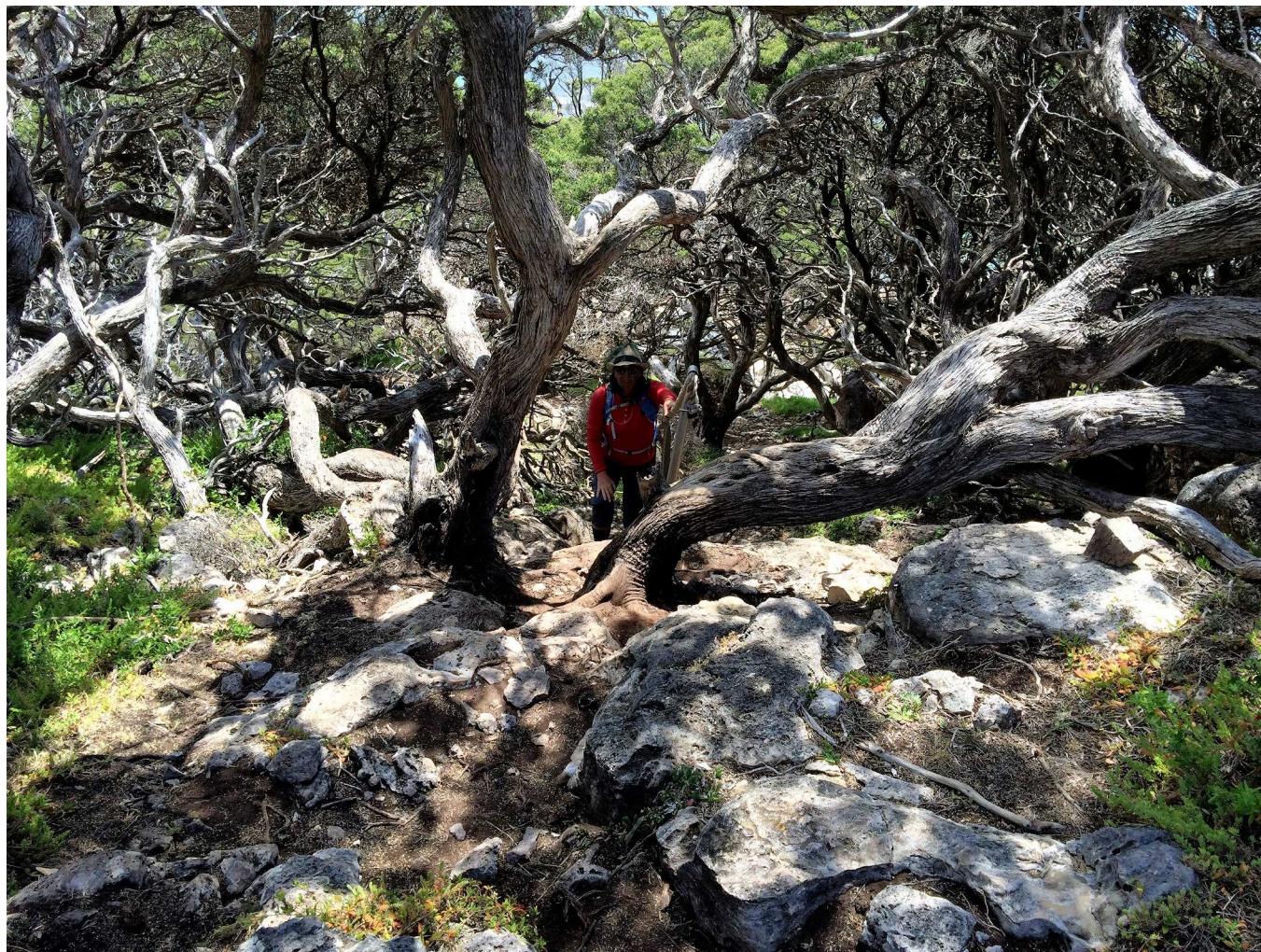
Alison and I at the start of the day, still in the Karri forest, and Alison at Point Rd car park. there were a lot of sandy tracks between this photo and the next as we walked toward the coast!



Alison near Conto's spring after having walked through Conto's campground and to the coast. In the background, heading north, Bob's Hollow, the Ledges, Redgate Beach and, I think, Cape Mentelle in the far distance.



Both of us just before and then in Bob's Hollow Grotto.



Alison climbing back to the top of the ridge above Bob's Hollow and a fellow traveller on the track. Below left, Alison about to cross Boodjidup Brook after a long walk along Redgate and Boodjidup beaches from Bob's Hollow. After the bridge there were 350 steps up to the ridge and still a fairly tough walk to the resort.



11 November 2014

Day 4 - Gnarabup to Ellensbrook (13.7km/76.7km)

We got away a bit later today, expecting a shorter day today along some very familiar coastline. Although we walked out, our luggage was picked up and taken to Margaret River and we got a pre-packed picnic lunch!

Just before 9:30am we passed the holiday house my parents had owned and in which we had many good times up until the late nineties when we moved to Sydney. From there we walked through the rest of Prevelly Park, past Surfers Point (we always just called it Margaret River!) to the mouth of the river. We were told to check we could cross but we didn't so we were quite happy to find it was passable, albeit deeper than we expected requiring the removal of a bit of clothing!

From there we climbed up and around Cape Mentelle and then along Kilcarnup Beach (which was quite firm) to Joey's Nose. From there we turn inland, with some very long and sandy tracks, before finding a better track and eventually a boardwalk past Meekadarabee Cave and waterfall to Ellensbrook Homestead.

The taxi was due to pick us up at 4:30pm but we'd made great time and didn't want to wait a couple of hours for it to turn up - only problem was, no reception at the homestead! I trekked up Ellensbrook Rd to get reception and we got to our accommodation, Bridgefield Guest House, in time for some shopping in Margaret River before a lovely dinner at La Scarpetta at the guest house.

Alison and me in front of our family's old holiday house in Prevelly Park and Alison crossing the Margaret River. The alternative to crossing here is to walk about 10kms into and back out from Caves Rd.





Both of us having got our gear back on after the river crossing, with the southern bank of the river mouth in the background, me just on Kilcarnup Beach having climbed and around Cape Mentelle, and then looking north along the beach.





Looking south from around the middle of Kilcarnup Beach. We used to take Mum's 4-wheel drive around these tracks and called the beach "Kilcardup" - there weren't as many signs in those days!

Across, the undulating, sandy tracks between Joey's Nose and Ellensbrook Homestead, me at the Meekadarabee Cave, near the homestead, and a beautiful native flower.



12 November 2014

Day 5 - Ellensbrook Homestead to Wilyabrup Sea Cliffs Car Park (17.5km/ 94.2km)

Another taxi ride this morning, after a lovely breakfast at the guest house, and we were greeted by wind and rain on arrival at the homestead. We waited until we thought the rain had stopped to leave the homestead but the rain hit us as we got to Ellensbrook beach and pretty well stuck with us until we left Left Handers car park. Once the rain cleared we could see there was a pretty good swell around as we walked past the three surf breaks at Cowaramup Bay - South Point, Huzzawouie and North Point. Just past Cowaramup we could see the "Cow Bombie" breaking - a rare event only seen in big swells.

With the wind behind us we made pretty good time past Guillotine and Gallows, surf breaks that I'd never surfed but had driven out to from Caves Rd, to Wilyabrup Cliffs. Again we were a bit early but instead of calling the taxi, we just sat and watched the swell from the rocks.

Back to Margaret River for the night but instead of eating in the guest house we met my sister, Anne and her partner, Stuart, at the Settlers Tavern for dinner.



Alison and I hiding from the rain at Ellensbrook Homestead.





Left top and bottom, hiding from the rain again at Left Handers car park. Above and below, Cowaramup Bay South Point and Huzzawouie surf breaks.





Cowaramup Bay North Point.





The Cow Bombie, left, the shore breaks near Wilyabrup Cliffs and another beautiful native flower Alison spotted.





Looking south past Cullen's beach, Guillotine, North Point and finally Cowaramup Point.



Both of us at Wilyabrup Cliffs with Wilyabrup Beach to the north. We sat on the rocks for quite a while waiting for our taxi to pick us up and were treated not only to the spectacular swell but a group of school kids abseiling on the cliffs!





13 November 2014

Day 6 - Wilyabrup Sea Cliffs Car Park to Yallingup (24.8km/119km)

Second last day and another walk-in to our hotel tonight, albeit after the longest day of the walk!

By 9:30am, we were back at Wilyabrup and heading north. A lot of beaches today: Wilyabrup, Quininup, the very long Indjidup beach and finally, almost as long, Smiths Beach leading into Yallingup. In between lots of dunes but plenty of firmer tracks along the cliff tops as well as we passed some iconic surf breaks, Moses Rock, Indjidup Point, Indjidup Carpark, Smiths Beach and Supertubes. Indjidup Point was my favourite west coast break, a long rolling left-hander that was easy to paddle around to get out. In those days you either braved the sand dunes in a 4WD or had a long walk along the beach but there's a road out there now.

Apart from the section crossing Cape Clairault, we had views all day which made the kms go quicker but we were pretty well out on our feet by the time we got to Canal Rocks resort, where we stopped for a beer. We took travellers for the last 3km trek along Smiths Beach which must have discombobulated us a bit - we got lost near the hotel and just sort of climbed through the bush to get to Caves House/Seashells Yallingup. We left the resort just before 5pm, so it must have been close to 6pm by the time we finally arrived - a big day on the track!

I can't remember much of the evening except it was very nice to have a few beers at the bar!

Alison and me starting again at Wilyabrup Cliffs, and looking north from the start of Wilyabrup Beach.



Alison crossing Wilyabrup Brook, me just after doing the same and both of us climbing up towards Moses Rock campsite.





A mob of kangaroos between Moses Rock lookout and Moses Rock North car park.



Alison crossing Quininup Brook and a couple of hours later on Indjidup Beach heading east and slightly north with Cape Clairault in the background.

Above, a fellow traveller Al spotted.



An interesting bit of rock before Cape Clairault, me on the north end of Indjidup Beach, both of us having climbed up from the beach near Mitchell Rocks and looking north past me to Canal Rocks.





Canal Rocks and Cape Clairault in the background, looking south.



Me between Canal Rocks and Smiths Beach, AI
having a beer at Canal Rocks resort, and our travellers
for the last 3km to Yallingup.
Below right, another native flower.





The sun's getting lower as we approach Yallingup, with Smith's Beach and Canal Rocks in the background.



14 November 2014

Day 7 - Yallingup to Cape Naturaliste Lighthouse (14.5km/133.5km)

A much shorter walk today, but a bit of a walk after completing the Cape to Cape: 2.5kms from the lighthouse down to Bunker Bay Resort.

There was a big crowd at breakfast so things moved a bit slowly and we didn't get away until about 9:30am. We had a short walk along Yallingup Beach and had just climbed into the dunes to head north when we saw a very big dugite! Alison had walked past it without noticing but I spotted it and made sure I got well past before letting Al know it was there before going back and taking some photos. Alison had been worried about snakes the whole way and we'd seen a few but this was the biggest by far.

Today's walking was very different to yesterday - great views but mostly good tracks on the cliffs rather than long walks along the beach.

Once again we were treated to some good surf, especially at Three Bears (Mama, Papa and Baby bear, of course!) where we had a great walk along the beach.

Just past Sugarloaf Rock, the track turns inland towards the lighthouse and it got quite hot as we neared the Cape Naturaliste lighthouse. We arrived just before 2:30pm and once again they allowed Cape to Cape walkers free access to the lighthouse to get a picture.

After getting our certificates and having a look around, we made the walk down to the resort, feeling pretty happy and also pretty tired. I snuck a swim in before a drink and another lovely dinner and, suddenly, the walk was over!

Starting the day at Yallingup and a couple of pictures of a slithery dugite. Alison usually is the best spotter but she walked straight past this fellow!





Alison with the main break at Yallingup and Smiths Beach in the background



Alison on the fairly dusty walk north of Yallingup, both of us with Yallingup to the south just before we reached Three Bears and looking north past Alison to Three Bears itself. We had a great walk along the beach watching surfers at all three breaks!



Three Bears to the south after a great walk along the beach.



Alison on the "must stop at" bench
north of Three Bears and both of us
on the walk from the coast in towards
the Cape Naturaliste lighthouse.
Right, almost there!





The Cape Naturaliste Lighthouse - we felt very good about making the distance!





Our celebration dinner at the Bunker Bay Resort. We walked a further 2.5 km from the lighthouse past Shelly Beach to Bunker Bay, so we were ready to relax by the time we got there!

