



'Grampians Gallivant' Tour Report - 2023



Friday 27th - Monday 30th October

By Leon Cottle

During the last weekend in October, a cheerful group of 25 Alfisti spent four fantastic days touring the Grampians and Western Victoria in their Alfa Romeos. The *Grampians Gallivant* is an annual event organised by the Goldfields Chapter of AROCA (Vic).

After last year's mammoth 13-day Spring Alfa Tour covering parts of SA as well as Victoria, this year's tour seemed quite short by comparison. Yet it was still a lot of fun with a great bunch of keen Alfisti, enjoying the wonderful country scenery, driving many delightful backroads, and dining at several fine restaurants in the region. A nice way to spend a few days. It was also a welcome change to have fine sunny weather all tour after last year's extremely heavy rain closed many planned routes.

The 2023 touring party included a few interstate participants: Greg & Penelope drove all the way from Perth - an impressive 3,500km cruise, just to start our *Grampians Gallivant* Tour. Then we had Graham & Carole, and Jim & Christine joining us from South Australia. The rest of the group were from various points around Victoria.

The convoy consisted of 14 Alfas plus one 'contrary' 2012 Black Porsche 911 Carrera S. Among the Alfas was the 'well known' 1961 Blue 101 Series Giulietta ti that is owned by Marie & Vin. Also attending were a few nice 105 series coupés, plus some early 2000s GTs, a 159 2.4 Diesel, a Giulietta, a 147 GTA, and the 156 GTA from WA, together with a recent Giulia Veloce through to three 'sparkly & sedate' late model Giulia QV's.



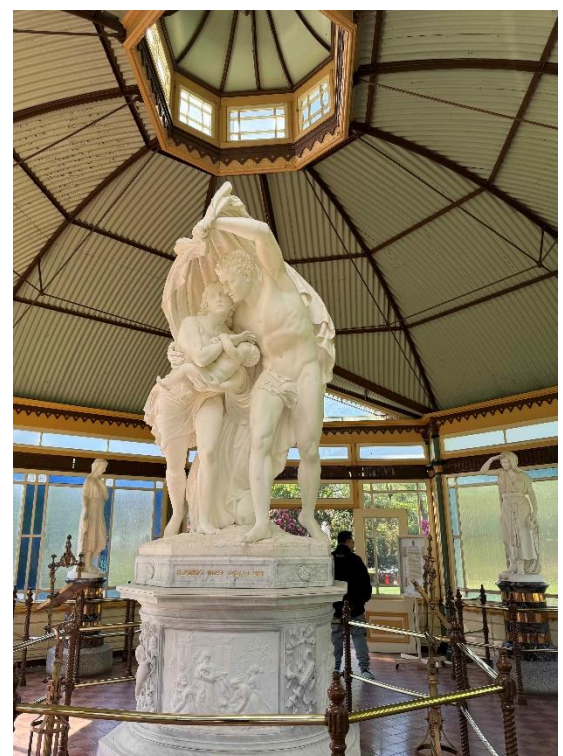
The complete 'Grampians Gallivant' Convoy at Lake Bellfield – 14 Alfas & that Porsche.

Thursday: A few travellers arrived in Ballarat on Thursday afternoon and had a 'Pre-Tour' dinner at the Oscars Hotel to catch up.

Day 1 Friday: The Tour started in earnest with breakfast at The Turret Café, before this initial convoy of seven Alfas did a lap of Lake Wendouree and stopped for a quick stroll through the Ballarat Botanical Gardens. Then it was onto a visit of the iconic 'Arch of Victory' and the 'Grieving Mother' memorial statue before heading off towards the West, driving along the historic treelined 'Avenue of Honour'. This is a memorial for every Ballarat Soldier who enlisted in WW1 consisting of 3,912 trees and extends for over 22 kilometres).



Alfas at The Turret Café - Ballarat



Ballarat Botanical Gardens





The Arch & Avenue of Honour – Ballarat



The 'Grieving Mother' Statue

The selected route to Beaufort for morning tea and then onto Ararat for lunch went via a few nice backroads (all of which had been closed to the 2022 tour group due to last year's floods!).

In Ararat the group was joined by 3 more Alfas, for the lunch in 'Sicilians Italian Restaurant' before driving to the 'Pomonal Estate Winery' for afternoon tea. Then it was just a short, beautiful drive towards Halls Gap with the many large gum trees along the roadside and the rocky cliff face of the Grampians emerging before us as we approached.



Alfas lined up at Pomonal Estate Winery



Andrew eyeing off Kat's Cake



Three 'sparkly' QV bonnets

By the time this group arrived in Halls Gap, the remaining members of our touring party had also arrived, and we all dined at the 'Kookaburra Restaurant' for a great meal. There was certainly quite a lot of chatter that evening, catching up with many old Alfisti friends from around Australia.

Day 2 - Saturday: A tour of the Northern Grampians region, visiting the 'Boroka Lookout', which overlooks Halls Gap, before the convoy made the delightful drive along a tour favourite, 'Roses Gap Road'. Then all cars headed northwards towards Murtoa for a snack lunch and a viewing of the Silo Art in Murtoa.



Alfisti at Boroka Lookout – “But Where’s Wally?” (Brett was AWOL)



Halls Gap from Boroka Lookout



Silo Art – Murtoa



Always a lot of 'Fanfare' around the gorgeous Alfa GT - Murtoa

Our only 'disaster' for the entire tour occurred this morning, with Denis & Marita's Red GT blowing a tyre. Thankfully he had a spare in the boot (GTs only come with a can of goo and small compressor which are no help for a blown tyre like this!!). With 'rear gunner' Grant's assistance, the Red GT was soon back on the road, and they were able to meet us for lunch in Murtoa.



Denis' blown GT tyre but thankfully he found a replacement at the Ansett Museum.

Photo – D. Marchetti

Following lunch, it was then only a short drive to the impressive and very extensive 'Woods Heritage Museum' in Rupanyup and another example of Silo Art nearby. The many large sheds at this museum contained a vast & varied collection, with so much history displayed.



Alfas at the Rupanyup Museum

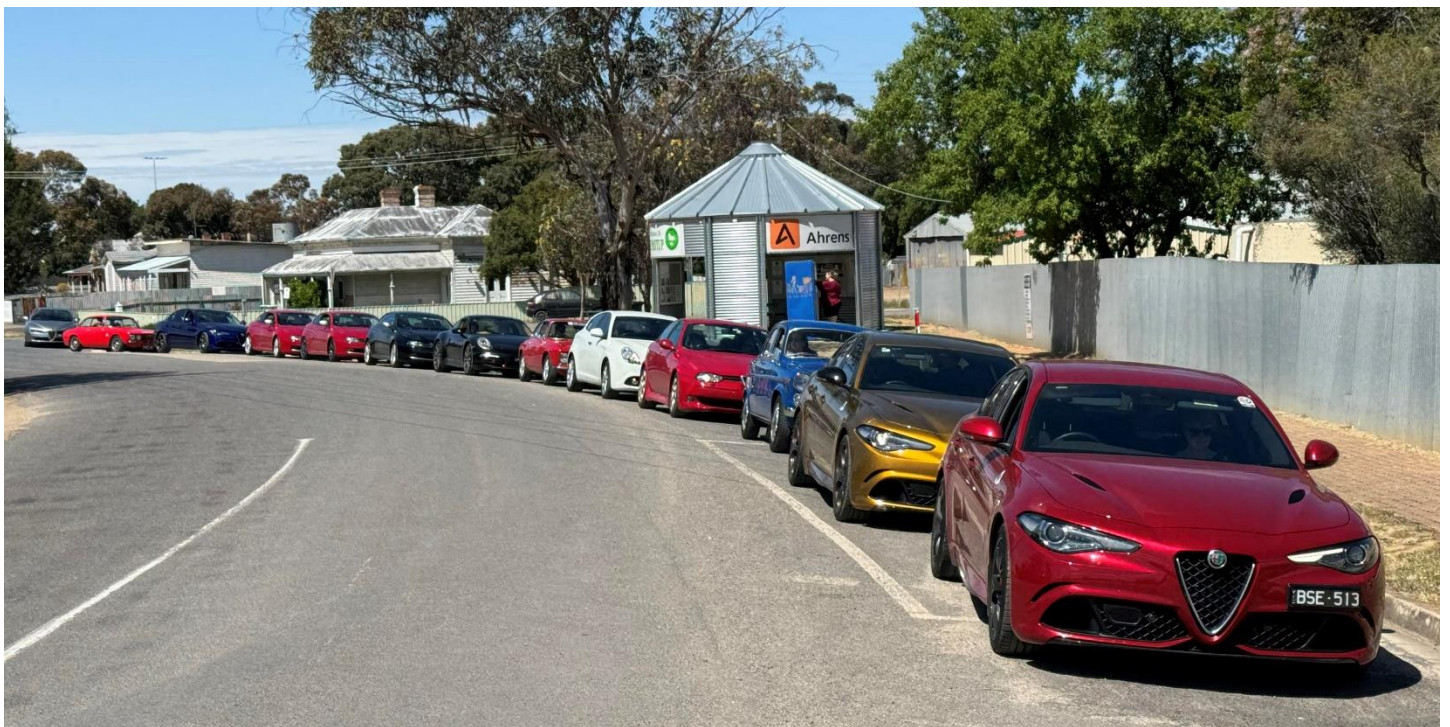
While at the museum, an impromptu 'search & find' exercise was initiated - to locate and photograph the 'supposedly single Alfa related item' in this huge eclectic collection. It turned out that a few 'super sleuths' however were able to actually find not one, not two – but three Alfa items!



The actual item to find was this small 'Redheads' match box depicting a Blue Alfa 105. This was found by Jim, Christine, Kat & Peter. But then Carole & Graham also found a small blue Alfa 156 model car, and then John located one of the special commemorative biscuit tins for Alfa's 100th anniversary depicting Peter Shepherd's RL as well. What a dilemma – so now we needed multiple prizes!



The two other 'surprise' Alfa items



Alfas lined-up near the Rupanyup Silo Art



Silo Art - Rupanyup



Scones at 'Salingers' - Great Western

Then it was southwards again to have a pleasant afternoon tea with a few 'healthy' scones, jam & cream at 'Salingers Café' in Great Western before driving back to Halls Gap for our evening meal at our motel's 'Darcy's Restaurant'.

Just prior to our evening meal, the 'Alpine Alfisti Association of Australia' held its AGM with thirteen members present and a further three members joining us 'on-line' via Zoom.



Greg & Penelope's well-travelled 2002 Alfa 156 GTA from Perth

Day 3 - Sunday: A tour of the Southern Grampians, but only after the Tour Director arranged one of his annoying 'Grampians Tour Group Photo' sessions alongside Lake Bellfield. The convoy then headed south via Mirranatwa Gap & Victoria Valley Road to Cavendish, where we had an amazing 5-course Chef's Banquet at the iconic 'Bunyip Hotel'. What a feast that was! This has become an annual fixture for our Grampians Gallivants Tours. We were also able to hear a few words from James, the Bunyip Hotel's Chef, who created the concept for their regular banquets using all local produce. He grew up on a farm in the area, travelled the world as a Chef, and then returned back to his 'roots' on the farm, before purchasing the Bunyip Hotel and back into hospitality once again.



Alfisti at Lake Bellfield





Hungry Alfisti ready for their 5-course 'Chef's Banquet' at the iconic Bunyip Hotel in Cavendish



Leon interviewing our Chef James

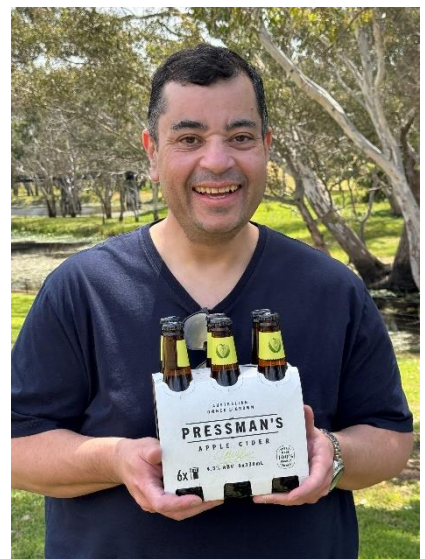
Photo – D. Marchetti

Wannan River behind The Bunyip Hotel

During lunch, Leon presented the prestigious annual "Grampians Gallivant" trophy to Greg & Penelope for their very impressive effort of driving 3,500kms in their Red 156 GTA from Perth to attend this event! That is the sixth time this particular Alfa has travelled across the Nullarbor. Recognition was also made of Grant's assistance replacing that blown GT tyre.



Grampians Gallivant Trophy winners Greg & Penelope



Grant's 'Good Samaritan' Award

After a very filling lunch, the convoy drove to Hamilton for a visit to that city's interesting 'Ansett Museum'. This is housed in the company's first aircraft hangar, and it is dedicated to transport and tourism pioneer Sir Reginald Ansett (Denis found a potential replacement for his blown GT tyre here).



The Ansett Museum - Hamilton

The return drive to Halls Gap, included yet another opportunity for a group shot with eight Alfas lined up with the picturesque Mt. Sturgeon in the background. This is the southern tip of the Grampians near Dunkeld. Along the way we saw several wallabies and even an Emu with his chicks crossing the road (apparently it is the male Emu who cares for the chicks – thanks Greg for the correction).

Sunday night's group dinner was held at the 'Flame Brothers Smokehouse' in Halls Gap.



Alfas lined up at Mt. Sturgeon near Dunkeld

Day 4 - Monday: After bidding farewell to some of the touring party, our now smaller convoy of just six Alfas had another brief drive through the Northern Grampians, to inspect 'Reeds Lookout' and a brisk 20-minute walk to see 'The Balconies'. On our arrival it was very cold and initially quite foggy, but eventually it cleared to expose the impressive view.



Alfas & Alfisti at a very foggy Reeds Lookout



The Balconies – The Grampians

Then the convoy were fortunate to have another nice drive back along the Roses Gap Road, eventually reaching Bests Winery near Great Western for an enjoyable tour of their cellars and a wine tasting session (plus a few 'essential' purchases too – just for medicinal purposes of course!).



Bests Winery – Great Western



So many Barrels, So little time!



Wine tasting at Bests Winery – Great Western

Our lunch was back again at 'Salingers Café' in Great Western, before most of the tourists headed back home to Melbourne along the highway. The remaining final three Alfasi of the tour drove back to Ballarat via yet more backroads south of Ararat. It was along this section that we encountered our first rain for the entire 4-days on tour. It literally 'bucketed' down, making visibility difficult at times. A true indication that we must surely be nearing Ballarat!

The final dinner for the tour was held at the 'Ballarat Golf Course Bistro', consisting of just the three remaining 'truly diehard' Grampians Tour Alfasi. Interestingly, it was this same threesome who survived to the very end of the 13-day 2023 Alfa Tour! Hmm...does that indicate a pattern forming?



Leon, Kat & Andrew at the Ballarat Golf Club Bistro - the last three 'tour stragglers'

All too soon, the 4-days 'Grampians Gallivant' was over for another year. Thanks to everyone who participated in this event making it such a success and so very enjoyable.

2024 'Il Grande Giro' Vic/SA Tour - Planning has now started for another possible extended 14-day Vic/SA Spring Alfa Tour, again consisting of 3 stages, along a similar route to the 2022 Tour. However, this time in the opposite direction to add a bit of variety to our last effort. Tentative dates are 14th to 28th of October 2024 – TBC.

Centenary of Alfa Romeo's *Quadrifoglio*

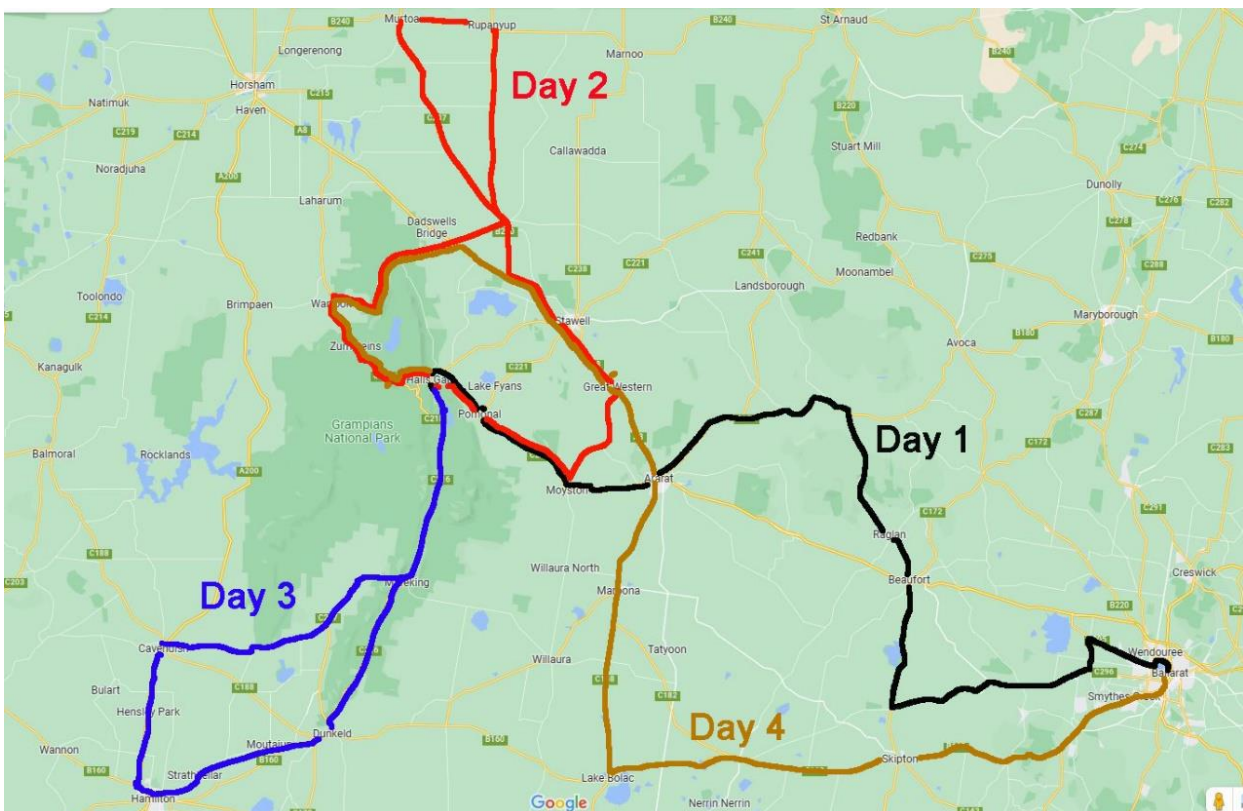
It is one hundred years since Ugo Sivocci, along with Ascari, Campari & Ferrari, first raced with a painted green four-leaf clover (*Quadrifoglio Verde*) on the bonnet of their RLTFs. It was the 1923 Targa Florio race and Sivocci won that race! Since then, performance focussed Alfa Romeos have all been adorned with a *Quadrifoglio Verde* badge, though the design changed from a diamond background to the now common triangular one, after the unfortunate demise of Sivocci at Monza later that same year.



Andrew made the comment that the four stages of the Grampians Gallivant, 'sort of' resembled a *Quadrifoglio* pattern on the map (We like Alfisti that can think outside the square!).

So perhaps this year's event should have instead been named the "*Tour Anniversario del Quadrifoglio*" to honour the 100 years of Alfa's iconic *Quadrifoglio* badge.

With a bit of imagination, can we all see a "*Quadrifoglio*" in the route below?



Map of the 4-day, 924 km, 2023 Grampians Tour