

## Alfisti Autumn Tour 2025

**Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> – Friday 7<sup>th</sup> March**

*Words: Clyde Hay | Photos: Barb Hay, Leon Cottle, Doug Anstess & Peter Atkinson*

The 2025 Alfisti Autumn Tour started in Benalla on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> March. Our meeting point and lunch destination was The Merchant Cafe in Benalla; a lovely Café, serving a nice variety of fare to suit our needs. After lunch was done, it was time to follow Graeme Peake who reputedly knew “a better way” to get to Bright, which allowed us to avoid more of the Hume Fwy and much of the Snow Road. True to his word, he took us along some beautiful Alfa-friendly roads. For this stage of the Tour though, the group was not yet quite complete as there were still a few attendees that would be joining us in Bright that evening or next morning.

Dinner on our first night was at the very spacious Bright Brewery, where we had a couple of tables on the deck overlooking the Ovens River. Great conversation and food was enjoyed during a very pleasant and balmy night.

Wednesday dawned quite warm and a hot day had been forecast. By the time the first of the daily briefings was held – down in the park by the river - all participants had joined us. All up there were 21 Alfisti sharing 13 Alfas including a 156, GT, 147 GTA, several Giulias and Giuliettas, Brera, 939 Spider, and a Stelvio, and for one day each, a 105 GTV, a 75TS and a Giulia QV. The group came from all over, 11 from Melbourne, 3 from Canberra, 3 from Ballarat and one from Benalla. Amongst our group were also two first timers, James and Bernadette, who hale from nearby Wangaratta - they were only able to join us for the day as James obviously enjoys driving his 75.



This day was the longest day of the tour, a circumnavigation of the Alps - from Bright we travelled via Falls Creek, Omeo, Hotham Heights and back to Bright. We headed out through Tawonga Gap - but we didn't stop there this time, too many unfortunate incidents have occurred there in the past! On to Mt Beauty and up to Falls Creek for a first opportunity to stretch the legs – and grab a coffee.





From Falls we headed across Rocky Valley along the Bogong High Plains Rd towards our planned lunch spot at the Blue Duck Inn at Anglers Rest.



Sadly, the day before we were to dine at the iconic Blue Duck Inn, we received advice that due to a lack of staff our booking had to be cancelled. However, the good news was, that road workers were replacing the timbers on the deck of the bridge that crosses the Mitta Mitta River in front of the Blue Duck - if you've ever driven over that bridge then you'll understand that it was becoming essential. Had the Blue Duck had the staff, there possibly would not have been room to park a dozen Alfas anyway, as it was already pretty crowded with the road crews. So onward we proceeded with a new plan for a grazing lunch in Omeo. Plenty of bakeries, and the cafes abound, so the group all managed to find suitable venues to dine.



From Omeo we climbed up to Hotham Heights - this part of the drive is always popular with long sweeping bends whilst enjoying some stunning scenery, that's for the navigators of course. Then it was time to find a spot for a group photo. Dannys Lookout would have to do!



For those who've been on one of these Tours before, you'll know that Mr Photographer, aka Leon, is quite specific with the location and positioning of the group in his photos. Set up can take a few distracting minutes, but we follow his instructions – often with lots of good-humoured grumbling too ...



As for the 'rock stars', they were nowhere to be seen! But Leon is also a master of PhotoShop, so even they got included in the 'snap on the mountain' – despite the fact that their photo was taken a day later and about 100km away. The end result you can see above.

Following the photo-shoot we headed down the mountain through Harrietville and to Bright. Dinner was at the Italian restaurant Sole e Luna, an institution in Bright! We weren't disappointed, lovely Italian food, local wines and lively conversation - a perfect night to end an amazing day in the Alps.



Thursday turned on another fantastic day for our run via Yackandandah then on to Tallangatta for morning tea – where more than a couple were seen to be checking out the Op Shop – no doubt looking for elusive Alfisti trinkets! From there it was on to Mitta Mitta and the Laurel Hotel (aka Mitta Pub) for lunch. A beautiful spot beside the river which proved popular with the camera buffs.

After a nice lunch, the suggestion was made for a side trip to Dartmouth Dam. As usual with a late decision like this, a few decided to head directly back to Bright, but those remaining were eager for more!



The side trip took a little longer than was originally planned, but all agreed it was worth it as Dartmouth Dam is impressive.

Leaving Dartmouth Dam, we headed north back along the Omeo Hwy until we turned left onto Lockhart Gap Rd which is a nice shortcut to connect with the Kiewa Valley Hwy.





Shortly after it was time to make a right onto to the Happy Valley Rd, another favourite from past tours as we drive around the hillside and then tour down into the valley. This brought us into Myrtleford and then we continued onto Bright. Our dinner choice for tonight was the Chop Chop Asian Kitchen, the group took over half the restaurant, it was nice to experience some lovely Asian food sharing stories from the trip so far.

Friday was our last day and started with another split group: some headed up to the Chalet at the top of Mt Buffalo for the view, while the rest explored the offerings in Myrtleford and Milawa; but all arranged to meet in Whitfield for morning tea.



From Whitfield it was a final fling along the windy roads up and out of the King Valley, past Tolmie and on to our lunch destination at the Delatite Hotel Bistro in Mansfield.





The initial Alpine Tour 'Le Tour de North East' was held in 2010. In 2015 the Alpine Alfisti assumed responsibility for hosting and organising these popular tours, of which there are now two each year, Autumn and Spring. Quite a number of AROCA Vic members are also members of the AAAA which provides both groups a useful opportunity to share knowledge and activities for Alfa enthusiasts.

For each Tour there is a perpetual trophy presented to the crew deemed to have provided significant contribution to the general enjoyment of the event. The Autumn Tour has the *Spirit to the Tour* trophy whilst the Spring Tour has the *Alfisti Spring Tour* trophy.



This year's awardee was to Doug Anstess, who was the ever-faithful Tale End Charlie making sure all participants didn't stray away from the group – and on occasion, doubling back to round up supposedly lost members! A very worthy winner and it was wonderful that Karen & Des, the then custodians of the trophy, were there to present the trophy to its next custodian, Doug.

From all reports, the tour was a great success and staying in the one location such as Bright proved to be successful. A special thanks to Peter Atkinson for his brilliant organising skills yet again, wonderful choice of roads through diverse countryside and choice of great venues

And thanks to Clyde from Peter, for being available to discuss ideas about locations to visit, the routes to take and for his and Barb's selection of all of the dinner venues in Bright. (So many phone calls and texts!) And then to have to do it all again when other things got in the way of the latest Plan. Like a bike ride called the Peaks Challenge, which would have closed all of *our roads* in the Alps, just when we had planned to be driving them! So, we shifted the timing of the Tour and started the planning again ...

Many thanks also, to all those that attended and I hope to see you, and other interested members, along for the next Alfisti Tour in Spring.

'til then, take care, drive safe and enjoy your Alfas.

Ciao

Clyde Hay, AROCA Vic SUV Register Captain