



Alfisti Autumn Tour 2024

aka Post Alfesta Tour

(Lakes Entrance to Canberra)



Monday 1st April to Friday 5th April 2024



The 2024 Tour sticker!

Words: Peter Atkinson & Leon Cottle | Photos: Leon Cottle (VIC), Aidan Daly (WA), Jenny Truesdale (QLD) & Peter Atkinson (ACT)

The 2024 [Alfisti Autumn Tour](#) (aka the *Post Alfesta Tour*) ran from **Lakes Entrance** on Monday 1st April and arrived in **Canberra** on Friday 5th April. It travelled through the Victorian Alps to Albury and then through the Snowy Mountains to Canberra. The Tour was jointly organised by the [Alpine Alfisti Association of Australia](#) and [AROCA Victoria](#).

The Tour linked two national Alfisti events with a five day Alfisti Tour between them: **Alfesta** (AROCA's annual national meeting) which was held in Lakes Entrance over Easter, and **Auto Italia** (an annual event displaying Italian automotive excellence) held on Sunday 7th April in Queanbeyan.

The Tour group comprised, predominantly Alfesta participants, but also included three additional Alfisti from Victoria and another eight from the ACT. The "extras" had made their way to Lakes Entrance on Sunday to join the Tour.



The [Ken Behrenses](#) in Cooma, en-route to Lakes Entrance

Altogether the Tour boasted 49 Alfisti (ACT:10, QLD:6, VIC:24, WA:9, but nil from SA or NSW) in 26 Alfas ranging from a Giulietta Ti to a Stelvio QV with two Maseratis and an unmentionable, masquerading behind an Alfa Romeo scudetto!

For the record, the Alfa stats were: 1x101; 5x105s; 1x116; 3x916s; 1x932; 2x937s; 3x939s; 2x940s; 2x949s and 6x952s representing seven decades of Alfa Romeo excellence and a veritable quorum of Alfisti passion!

The Tour was blessed with excellent weather: clear, fine days with ambient temperatures in the low 20s with puffy white clouds and blue skies for the duration of the event – until the last day when we encountered some bizarre "Melbourne weather" at Charlotte Pass and again as we headed in to Canberra. Not enough to dampen our spirits though!



Day 1 | Monday 1st April | Lakes Entrance to Bright: Into the mountains and over the top!
After a mid-morning start from Lakes Entrance, the Tour followed the Great Alpine Rd, stopping first at Swifts Creek Bakery for coffee & cake and an opportunity to stretch the legs before tackling Mt Hotham.



Alfisti line-up in Swifts Creek

From Swifts Creek the Tour headed through Omeo (but no stopping here today as it was the tail end of the Omeo Rodeo and the town was still a rather busy!) and on to Hotham Heights for lunch at The General.



Alfisti @ Hotham Heights

and the same scene, but a different perspective ...





After a filling lunch we saddled up and continued over Mt Hotham, the highest part of our Tour, to Danny's Lookout on the north west flank of Hotham. While it was an overcast day, visibility and hence the scenery was quite good!



Ground level view @ Danny's Lookout



The 2024 Alfisti Autumn Tour participants at Danny's Lookout



Alfisti Autumn Tour 2024



Danny's Lookout from Aidan's drone

But some chose not to venture across the road to the Danny's Lookout "car park"!



From Hotham, it was pretty much all downhill along a tight and twisty road to Harrietville, then on to Bright for our first night's stop-over.

Spiderlings at rest





We arrived in Bright mid afternoon. So, after checking in to respective accommodation venues, some took the opportunity to have a look around before dinner. The road out to Wandiligong, which follows Morses Creek – a former alluvial goldfield in the 1800s and later a location for quartz reef mining - was a popular choice. Unfortunately, we missed seeing this historic Chinese Bridge ...



photo: www.victoriashighcountry.com.au

Monday night's dinner was in The BrewHouse @ Bright Brewery



A couple of Ken Behrenses: Sue Davis & Grahame Crocket and their Alfetta GTV



Day 2 | Tuesday 2nd April | Bright to Albury



Some of the Alfas below the Riverdeck Kitchen in Bright

After gathering for breaky at the Riverdeck Kitchen in Bright - a popular venue on many a recent Tour - we headed back east towards Mt Beauty, over Tawonga Gap and then joined the Kiewa Valley Highway heading north. We followed the Kiewa River before doubling back along the normally aptly named Happy Valley Road to Myrtleford. This road is windy and undulating, travelling through a mix of farming country and native forest, taking you back to the Ovens Valley where we rejoin the Great Alpine Road westward to Myrtleford. When you have the road to yourself, Happy Valley Road is a very pleasant drive – even for the navigator.

Despite the challenges posed by another apparently entitled road user on Happy Valley Road, we all arrived safely in Beechworth, following a scenic detour via Lake Sambell. Then everyone scattered! *Much like the action of spiderlings (the eight legged variety) caught hitching a ride on Mum's (or is it Dad's?) back, when the whole entourage is physically threatened ... !*
But I digress!

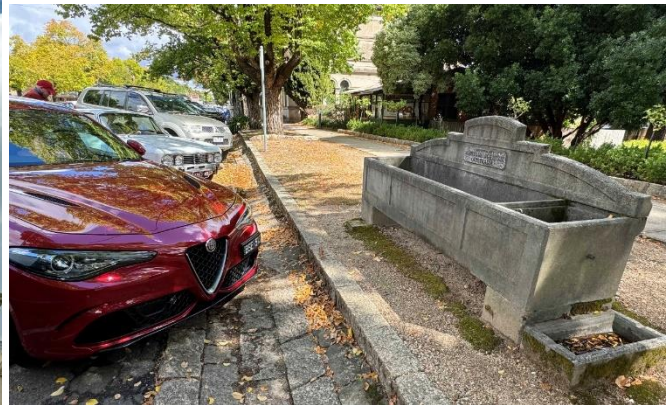
The Tour group, now sans chariots, had headed off on foot to explore Beechworth. Many initially chose the famous Beechworth Bakery to partake in a pie, cake and coffee or other delectable culinary delight. Others wandered, visiting the many and varied shops in the main street, or just taking in the sights of this wonderful old and historic town.

And this one does have it all:

- **A very secure old bank vault** that was used to store gold from the diggings - until the next stage coach arrived to whisk it off to Melbourne. It is now part of a jewellery shop!
 - **A gaol**, in case any miscreants should take a shine to all that gold or someone else's gold mine! It now hosts evening Ghost Tours! They would have you believe that some of the original inmates are still resident too!
 - **An Asylum**, up on the hill. Now this one provides more than its share of scary stories! Oh, it's an upmarket resort now too! *Anyone interested in a room? Singles only, all fully padded, secure, but with no fittings ... ?*
 - **And the gutters!** Made from locally sourced granite flags (blocks) assembled in the manner of the exquisite drystone walls in Europe. The gutters look fantastic - but that may just be a latent geologist exposing his predilections. As a driver of Alfa Romeos though, you do need to be very careful parking in the main street - the gutters are steep, deep and high and very very hard! If your Alfa has an encounter with a gutter, it probably won't do too much damage to the undertray, but it might leave an indelible mark on the bumper or the lights!
 - And then there is the nearby **Woolshed Falls!** The natural beauty is just exquisite!
-



Like many regional Victorian towns, this one was also built off the profits of goldmining back in the 1800s.



Clockwise: the Beechworth Post Office; Giulia QV vs a Beechworth gutter; the Beechworth Briefing

After lunch, the revellers met at the Monument adjacent to the roundabout in the main street of Beechworth at a pre-appointed time – for yet another briefing. This time it was for the group to decide on the route to take that afternoon.

They were offered a number of alternative routes to pursue that afternoon, either separately or together. Regardless which they chose, the plan was for everyone to find their way to Albury for the Gala Dinner - cum Farewell to the WA crowd - that evening. The options presented were:

- Spend the afternoon discovering more of Beechworth;
- Drive to the King Valley to discover the delights of this Italian inspired region - especially its wines;
- Drive to the renowned Rutherglen wine region - as an alternative to the King Valley;
- Drive to Chiltern, then up to Howlong and follow the Murray back to Albury – a better route to Albury than via the Hume or one that treks through downtown urban Wodonga!
- OR visit the Chocolate & Whiskey Factory in an old flour mill in Corowa ... ?

We need not have provided options! The decision was unanimous: **CHOCOLATE** was what they wanted!

The entire Tour group then headed out of Beechworth along the narrow winding road to Chiltern – a nice “driver’s” road but one which offers little or no opportunities for safe passing. Unfortunately, just ahead of us as we left Beechworth, was large, oversized, black (yes, in this case the colour seems important!) BMW SUV, with either an extremely timid, or a very incompetent, driver who wallowed around corners and veered from side to side, all at between 50% and 70% of the posted speed limit – a l l - t h e - w a y to Chiltern, about 25km away! Even when it should have been safe to pass – it definitely was not! So being law abiding and safety conscious drivers, we followed line astern behind the wallowing SUV! What a pity that we didn’t take the opportunity to visit the Woolshed Falls – it might have alleviated some of the pain!



From Chiltern, it was plain sailing - gentle, controlled cruising, and well under the speed limit! As the route was to take us through Rutherglen for a short stop, we paused on the outskirts of the town to decide whether or not we should stop in Rutherglen at all. The town looked very busy, if not congested. Several Tour members elected to head back to Brown Plains to visit Leon's favourite winery, Morris', famous for their Muscats! The "Muskateers" would meet us in Corowa. The rest elected to forego Rutherglen this time and to continue on, directly to Corowa - and the CHOCOLATE factory. As we passed along the main street of Rutherglen it was obvious that finding even one parking spot in this town at this time would have been a major challenge!

The [Corowa Whisky & Chocolate Factory](https://corowadistilling.com.au) aka Corowa Distilling, used to be a Flour Mill, but changes in agricultural practices and the methods of handling agricultural produce saw the Flour Mill fall into disuse.



source: <https://corowadistilling.com.au>

What to do with a large, abandoned, Flour Mill? Well, repurpose it as a whisky and chocolate factory of course! And business is booming! The whisky is unique! They don't have a QV, but the Bosque Verde is their whisky equivalent! And the chocolates are, as they say, "to die for!" They must be, as they are very popular with all of their visitors.

From Corowa, we followed the Riverina Highway back to Albury and prepared for the Gala Dinner to be held in the Downtown Pizzeria that evening. The gourmet pizza was good, but the pasta was even better, it was also varied and plentiful! Many patrons commented on how much they liked the pastas – all of them!

There was also much debate over dinner about the name of the location depicted on the wall inside the Pizzeria ...



Can you pick the location ... ?



Day 3 | Wednesday 3rd April | Albury to Tumut

The Tour group met for breakfast, or just a coffee, in Noreuil Park adjacent to the Murray River in the south west corner of Albury.

Following the daily Drivers' briefing, held in the park, we headed off towards Lake Hume and the iconic Iron Bridge. Having crossed the bridge, we passed by Bellbridge and then followed the mighty Murray along the Murray River Road to Jingellic. This road always seems to evoke the spirits for an Alfa driver! While narrow, it is a terrific road, and as long as it is treated with respect, it is a very pleasurable drive – for both the driver AND the navigator.

We detoured into Jingellic for a brief break at the recreation reserve adjacent to the Furies' Memorial.



From Jingellic we returned to, and continued along, the Murray River Road to Tintaldra before heading north via Tooma to Tumbarumba. As we approached Tumbarumba, we paused at the Southern Cloud Memorial Lookout - dedicated to the airliner Southern Cloud, a three-engine aeroplane which disappeared with all occupants and without a trace in March 1931 while on a flight from Sydney to Melbourne. It was another 27 years before the wreckage was finally located.





After a brief stop at the Southern Cloud Memorial – we were running late! – we bundled ourselves back into our chariots and headed for Courabyra, a beautiful little winery/restaurant just north of Tumbarumba.



Some of the Tourists at Courabyra ...



On leaving our very pleasant lunch stop, we took a detour enroute to Tumut, to visit the historic Adelong Falls Gold Mill Ruins.



The Adelong Falls Historic Gold Mill Ruins were of interest to all ...



From Adelong Falls we made our way into Tumut. After checking in to our respective accommodation, we visited Tumut Brewing for a dinner of gourmet pizza and locally produced beverages of beers or wines as preferences dictated.



Day 4 | Thursday 4th April | Tumut to Jindabyne

Breakfast – for those that needed it – was at Tumut's Coffee Pedaler. The breakfast was very good and the coffee was excellent! The adjacent street slowly filled with Alfasi and Alfisti, ready for another day of Touring ...



From Tumut we followed the Snowy Mountains Highway – the coolest road in the country – travelling via Talbingo and Kiandra (the location of the first ski club in Australia!) and then on to Adaminaby.



We had several appointments in Adaminaby!

The first was with the Great Tin Trout – you just can't go past Adaminaby! You have to stop for a selfie with the fish! But we did better than a selfie, as we had brought Leon! His job was to get a Tour Group Photo – with The Fish!



Obligations addressed, we then headed back across the highway to the Snowy Scheme Museum where Tim provided an educational talk and a video on the people and early life on the Snowy Mountains Hydro Project. The hardship that they endured, men, women and children, and the mateship and sense of community that resulted are truly astounding. Some of the mechanical exhibits displayed in the museum are awe inspiring! But not just awe, but full on fear too! The unprotected machinery that was operated by hand would have been truly frightening to use! You cannot imagine that it would ever be allowed to be used these days!

(btw: If you have a look online now you should find that the Big Trout has had its colours redone!)

The highlight for many would have been the Snowy Scheme Museum in Adaminaby!



Our visit to the Museum was followed by a picnic lunch (sandwiches, slices and fruit with an obligatory cuppa tea) provided by the Adaminaby CWA. A comment overheard from one of our group was, "Now, this is a proper lunch!"

From Adaminaby we headed south to Jindabyne - along a road that can only be described as sensational (apart from some occasional roadworks due to the ongoing Snowy 2 project).



Day 5 | Friday 5th April | Jindabyne to Canberra

The early risers headed out to Charlotte Pass to take in the wonders of the Snowy Mountains scenery and Mt Kosciuszko in particular. It was a two hour return trip, but while the road was very good, unfortunately the scenery was shrouded in heavy fog/cloud.



But hey, we went, and even if we didn't "see" much, we still conquered it!



On return to Jindabyne, the valiant adventurers found most of the rest of the Group in a nice warm bakery – surprise, surprise! After a welcome coffee, we all repaired to the car park for our final “drivers’ briefing” for the Tour.

Then we embarked on a back roads route via Dalgety (which could have been the location of the Nation’s Capital – but obviously it wasn’t to be!) and on to the Travellers Rest – our lunch spot - just south of Cooma.



Alfisti paying homage to the deity in Dalgety



Alfisti at Travellers Rest and an errant Alfiste who *forgot* to bring an Alfa – any of them!



After lunch we visited the Cooma Car Club's magnificent museum, dedicated to classic cars and memorabilia.



From Cooma, we headed for Canberra, an hour and a bit away.
The focus then for most of the Tour participants that had made it this far was preparation for *Auto Italia* on Sunday.



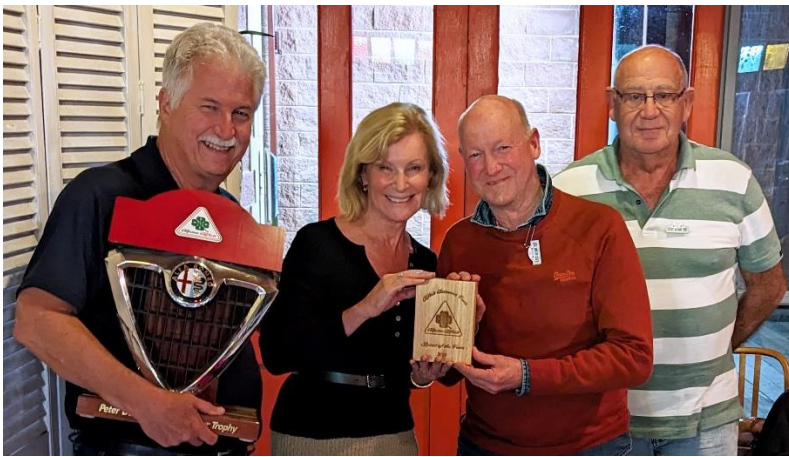
The **Spirit of the Tour** perpetual trophy

It is a tradition of the Alpine Alfisti, that during the Alfisti Autumn Tour the “**Spirit of the Tour**” perpetual trophy – a memorial to Peter Doig, a founder of the original Alpine Tours from which the Alfisti Autumn Tour has evolved - is awarded to the crew that was deemed to have contributed most to the general enjoyment of all participants on the Tour.

The award selection panel comprises the current custodian of the award (Bruce Fowler – SotT23) and the Tour Directors (Peter & Leon).



The 2024 **Spirit of the Tour** presented by Leon & Bruce to **Des Smith and Karen Mansell** driving a 105 GTV.



Des & Karen assisting Andrew & the stricken sibling.

AROCA Victoria's **Post Alfesta Tour** trophy

Best Alfa on Tour

Awarded by **Graeme Peake** (AROCA Vic Committee) to **Lawrie & Josie Westcott** driving a Monty Green Stelvio QV



Unfortunately the actual trophy could not be presented while on Tour, as it had been left in Melbourne!

This **Alfisti Autumn Tour 2024** report can be found on the [Alpine Alfisti](#) web site.
