



SCOTTSDALE TOURS

GULF SAVANNAH 2008

Another lovely group of people on this trip. We were a bit unsure how they would go initially as they seemed a bit quiet but by day two they were all getting along famously and it was a laugh a minute most of the way. Even when we were navigating the most challenging roads most of us have ever been on, there was



no shortage of entertainment, amusing comments and laughter. This was also our first experience of 'road trains', the trucks with three or four trailers on behind. We would have to wait while the clouds of dust cleared so we could see the road again. It was certainly a trip of new experiences.

We arrived in tropical Cairns on a warm balmy day and were greeted by blue skies and palm trees, it was a welcome sight. Our flight was two hours late taking off from Auckland due to a 'technical fault' so we were late getting to Sydney for our connecting flight. But Qantas did well, they bussed us over to the domestic terminal and got us on our plane which was sitting on the tarmac with engines running. Alas our luggage was not treated with the same respect. We arrived at the motel at around 5.30pm, our luggage did not arrive until after midnight. However, that was the only hiccup on the tour so no complaints.

After a tour of Cairns the next day, we headed off to Chillagoe for our first night out in the wops. We visited the Royal Arch caves and the smelter ruins before settling in for a sumptuous meal and an early night.



Next day we headed off down another dusty road. Little did we know just how dusty it was going to get. We managed to find the well sign-posted toilets at Almaden. The sign post was clear enough, actually finding the toilets was not. We eventually discovered them in a small hall behind a fence which looked like private property. At least we'll know next time. We traveled along the Savannah Way for a couple of hours before reaching Camp Surprise for lunch. It was good to be back on tarseal for a while. Then Ross decided that the road less traveled to Einasleigh might be good option.

Unfortunately the road hadn't seen a grader for quite some time and was very dusty and corrugated. So, after a 45 minute bone rattling journey through fabulous outback country, we arrived at the Einasleigh pub for a well earned break. Then it was back on the bus and off to Forsayth and the Cobbold Gorge. It was a bit of a shock to open the luggage trailer when we got there and be greeted with a layer of thick fine red bulldust all over the cases. What a mess. It appeared the trailer was more of a vacuum cleaner than a protector of the luggage. Next day the luggage traveled INSIDE the bus with us.



What a magnificent place the Cobbold Gorge is. The scenery, hospitality, meals and activities were just wonderful, a real highlight on this trip.

Where else but on Scottsdale Tours would you be taken to a large cattle station to watch cattle being tested for pregnancy – the old fashioned way – you know, long gloves and all that.

Day 5 and we are off to Karumba via Georgetown, Croydon for lunch, Normanton and our last excursion for the day, a visit to the local barramundi centre. We were treated to a wonderful sunset in the evening, out on the boat.

Day 6 and we hit the road setting the compass for Cloncurry. After more long dusty roads and fascinating scenery we eventually arrived at the Burke and Wills Roadhouse for lunch. A welcome oasis out in the middle of nowhere.



We were treated to a ride on the old Gulflander train from Normanton to Critter's Creek where Ross picked us up and off we went to Cloncurry. Cloncurry was an unexpected surprise. There is a lot more to this place than meets the eye and we were disappointed not to be staying another night. The John Flynn Flying Doctor's museum was well worth the visit too.

Richmond was our next day's target and we arrived there in time to visit the amazing Kronasaurus Museum. The ancient history of this area of Australia is truly fantastic, quite an eye opener. We had lovely accommodation and sumptuous meals once again, ready for the next day's adventure.

And that adventure was to be the Undara Lava Lodge and Caves. Another historic marvel. We slept in old railway carriages, quite a novelty. We dined in carriages in the evening then walked out into the bush next morning for a bush breakfast, another new experience for most of us and a very entertaining one at that. One of the ladies had her bacon stolen right off her breakfast plate by a cheeky Kookaburra.



Next day we packed up and headed for Atherton Tablelands after stopping along the way at Ravenshoe and Lake Barrine for a cruise around the lake.

The days were flying by and it was now time to complete the loop and head back to Cairns. We came in by sky rail over the vast rain forests, what a magnificent sight from the gondolas hovering way above the tree tops. We ended the day with an hilarious visit to the Tjakupai Aboriginal Park. We were highly entertained by a wonderful host who delighted in painting our faces for us. The looks we got on the way home in the bus had us in fits of laughter and I am sure the hotel was not amused at the state of their nice white face cloths next day with black face paint all over them.



We completed our tour with a trip up the coast and a visit to the renowned Hartley's crocodile park. Very entertaining.



In all it was a fabulous trip, made all the more enjoyable by the company we traveled with.
For those who were on the trip, I guess we will never forget the shaving cream, the dunny brush and the suitcase incident without laughing, will we!!!

Kind regards to all, Ross & Susy

