

PREPARE YOURSELF FOR A HOLIDAY OF FUN AND ADVENTURE THAT IS... TAGALONGTOURS OF AUSTRALIA

Newsletter November 2009

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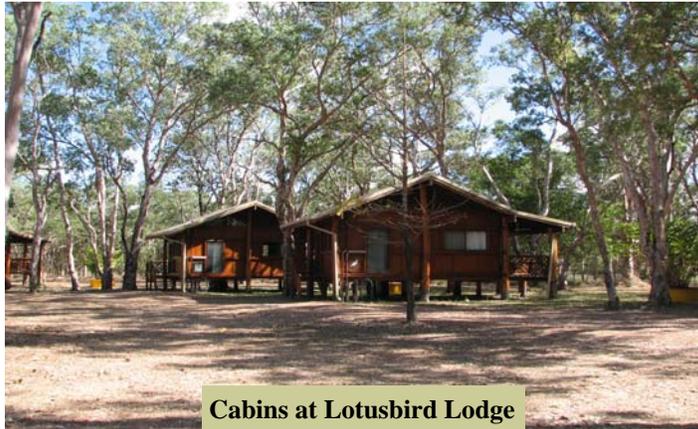
Cape York

G'day folks,

I have recently returned from my latest trip up to the Cape. It was a Private Charter this time, with my 3 guests travelling in my vehicle for the 12 day journey. As well as that, all of our stopovers were in accommodation, no swag curled up on the ground this time. My guests were all Melbournians, visiting Far North Queensland for the very first time.

On day one we headed north through the cane fields to the Daintree & had lunch at the beautiful Cape Tribulation. Then it was on to the legendary 4WD Bloomfield Track through the wet tropical rainforest, which is listed as a World Heritage Area. At the causeway at Wujal Wujal we were taken on a Kuku Yalanji Rainforest tour by the traditional owners, the Walker Family. In the afternoon we stopped at the historic Lions Den Hotel & had a beer to wash down the dust, & then on to Cooktown. We were booked into the Shadows of Mt Cook, a delightful B&B, with a very pleasant licensed restaurant & comfortable rooms.

The following morning we joined Nugal-warra elder Willie Gordon, who took us on the amazing Rainbow Serpent Tour of his ancestral land high in the hills above Hopevale. We were privileged to



Cabins at Lotusbird Lodge

be in the company of this special man, listening to his life philosophies & thought provoking messages. After an enjoyable picnic lunch on the shady waters edge at Elim Beach, we were entertained by a pair of spectacular Jabiru, dancing & catching fish in the shallows near the beautiful coloured sands.

Next morning we spent a couple of lazy hours browsing through the historic Cooktown Museum before heading off to Laura, where we visited the Quinkan Cultural Centre. Our afternoon was spent touring the Lakefield National Park, where we stopped & enjoyed the many beautiful lily covered billabongs dotted throughout the Park.

We arrived at our accommodation late in the afternoon at Lotusbird Lodge. Here we enjoyed very comfortable safari style wooden cabins surrounded by hundreds of

paper barks. Dinner was served in a large open air dining room overlooking a lagoon filled with thousands of waterbirds & surrounded by wallabies. It was also home for their "pet" crocodile.

We headed off next morning & after passing through Musgrave & Coen, we stopped for a famous Archer River burger at the Roadhouse. Soon after we were then heading west towards the mining town of Weipa.

We stayed the night in cabins at Merluna Cattle Station where our timing was perfect as they were having a huge outdoor BBQ that evening.

Next day we had a brief tour of Weipa, followed by a delightful meal at the pub overlooking Albatross Bay. After lunch we set off for Mapoon & after a couple of hours we met our guide for the 14 km trip down the beach to Turtle Camp. This facility was established to conduct research into the species of turtles that make the western cape their nesting ground.

The camp sits along Janie Creek, & it has comfortable canvas safari style tents, open air showers & toilet blocks, a large shed which doubles as a kitchen, lounge & dining room, & the whole area is surrounded by a crocodile proof steel mesh fence; a constant reminder that this is a place where you need to keep your wits about you.

After dinner we travelled by 4WD vehicles up the 24km stretch of Flinders Beach, searching for nesting turtles, to count & weigh the eggs before returning them back to their nests. This research has identified certain valuable biological characteristics of the Ridley & Flatback Turtles. Our 2 nights here were unforgettable.

The next part of our journey saw us travel back east on to the Telegraph Road & head for the Wenlock River. Here we camped again in comfortable tent accommodation at Moreton Telegraph Station. We enjoyed a relaxing walk along the river bank before a bush style roast dinner. This rounded off another interesting day. The next morning we set off for Bramwell Junction where the road forks & our journey took us along the Old Telegraph Track.

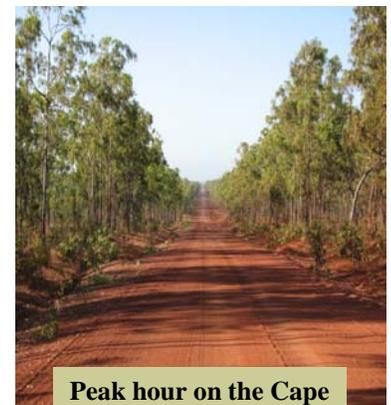


Flatback Turtle Flinders Beach

This is the true 4WD adventure of a Cape York trip as we crossed several creeks & rivers on our way north. It was interesting trying to spot the last remaining telegraph poles along the OTT. We also had to assist a couple of other vehicles across Cockatoo Creek, with my guests walking the crossing



Dancing Jabiru at Elim Beach



Peak hour on the Cape

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first & giving instructions via a hand held UHF radio.

We arrived at the Jardine River ferry late in the afternoon & crossed over for the last leg of the trip. Unfortunately a couple of bolts had managed to escape from the front left hand radius arm on the Toyota, no doubt from the many thousands of corrugations along the way. My satellite phone came in handy as I was able to arrange for a tow truck from Bamaga to come out the 40kms to pick up the vehicle. Meanwhile my 3 guests were taken into Loyalty



Campsite at Moreton Telegraph Station

Beach Campground by another tour operator, so it turned out to be a minor delay.

That night there were a few relaxing drinks all round, once we were all reunited again at our destination. Dinner was a hearty meal overlooking the beach. Repairs were finalized by 0900 next morning so we were soon underway on the last part of our journey on the mainland of



Relaxing at Loyalty Beach

Australia, the conquest of the Cape. After the walk to the very tip, one of the guests produced a bottle of champagne & we all toasted our success in making it to the top. Of course the customary photos followed & we all took in the spectacular views across to the islands of Torres Strait. It was named after the Spanish explorer who sailed through here in 1606.

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"NO OTHER TOUR COMPANY OFFERS YOU THIS MUCH OF CAPE YORK FOR THE PRICE"



Frangipani Beach Cape York

We enjoyed a relaxing picnic lunch on the beach below the Somerset Ruins. This is the site of the historic homestead of Frank Jardine & his Samoan Princess wife, Sana. We visited their lonely graves under the palm trees on the beach before heading back to Seisia. We had to be at the jetty to meet the Thursday Island Ferry, where my guests & I were to part company.



Cape York conquered at last !

Their accommodation for the next 2 nights on T.I. was at the Federal Hotel overlooking beautiful Torres Strait. Their stay on the island included a personally guided tour of the historic sites, including Green Hill Fort & the historic cemetery containing the graves of many Japanese divers who perished in the early days of the pearling industry.

Another feature on the island is the Gab Titui Cultural Centre, which has captured the soul & spirit of the 20 communities of Torres Strait. It has several unique displays explaining the history & culture of the Torres Strait Islanders. This includes an artifacts gallery, workshop areas for local artists & a meeting venue for local educational groups & community events.



Fly-eating Pitcher Plant

I had also arranged a tour of the World War II museum on Horn Island for my guests. This tour is called "In Their Steps". It is an historic display of the valuable contribution that Horn Island & its population made during the Japanese assault of the north during the Second World War.



Termite mounds at Heathlands

It is not widely known but the Japanese bombed the island 8 times & flew constant surveillance missions over the area.

My 3 guests then took their flights south from Horn Island while I had to drive the 950kms back home to Cairns.

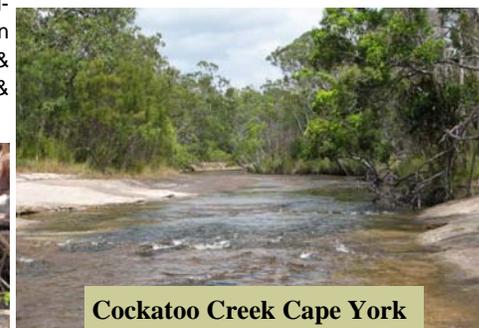
As I stated earlier, this tour was an all accommodated private charter. Along the way we visited some exciting new places where I had never been before. I think it will be hard for me to go back to my swag as I have been spoiled with a comfortable bed each night during this trip.

I never get tired of Cape York & its many spectacular features that continue to attract adventurers & lovers of the outdoors. Next year there will be other opportunities for 4WDers to plan their assault on the Old Telegraph Track & toast their conquest at the very Tip.

I hope in 2010 we can be part of your holiday to this fascinating part of Australia. Please give us a call.

Till next time,
cheers

Paul.



Cockatoo Creek Cape York

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