

CAIRNS AND THE GULF COUNTRY

17 DAYS DEPARTING FRIDAY 13TH JULY TO SUNDAY 29TH JULY 2012

MOTEL ACCOMMODATION – SAFARI STYLE & RESTAURANT MEALS



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HIGHLIGHTS

<i>Green Island</i>	<i>Port Douglas</i>
<i>Barrier Reef</i>	<i>Daintree River Cruise</i>
<i>Atherton Tableland</i>	<i>Kuranda Train & Skyrail</i>
<i>Breakfast with the Birds at the Habitat Port Douglas</i>	
<i>Undara Lava Tubes</i>	<i>Georgetown</i>
<i>Karumba</i>	<i>Gulf of Carpentaria</i>
<i>Croydon</i>	<i>Normanton</i>
<i>Burketown</i>	<i>Mt Isa</i>
<i>Birdsville</i>	<i>Flinders Ranges</i>

DAY 1: FRIDAY 13TH JULY

HOME TO CAIRNS

After your home pick up we travel to Tullamarine for your flight to Cairns, known as the capital of the tropical far north. The city's terraces, foreshore, parks and spectacular gardens boast colourful blooms and a myriad of tropical plants and trees. Cairns commands an enviable position with the Great Barrier Reef to the east, mountain rainforests and plains of the Atherton Tableland to the west and exquisite palm fringed beaches to the north and south. Check into our hotel, home for the next four nights.

Accom: Rydges Tradewinds

Ph: 07 4044 9000

DAY 2: SATURDAY 14TH JULY

CAIRNS-GREEN ISLAND-BARRIER REEF B.L.

We cruise today to Green Island which is a beautiful 6000 year old coral cay located in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The island is the only coral cay on the Great Barrier Reef with a rainforest growing on it and is home to 126 native plant species, colourful birdlife, surrounded by

magnificent coral gardens. Stroll through magical rainforest, laze on the white coral sands and enjoy a glass bottom boat ride to view an amazing display of tropical fish and coral gardens. Return to Cairns for lunch along the harbour esplanade.

DAY 3: SUNDAY 15TH JULY

PORT DOUGLAS & DAINTREE RIVER CRUISE B.

An early rise this morning before heading north to indulge ourselves for the ultimate "Breakfast with the Birds" at the Rainforest Habitat at Port Douglas. In this wildlife park of the future, visitors can wander through three different and unique environments that depict numerous species of the surrounding rainforest, wetlands, and grasslands. Boardwalks overlook lagoons where both Estuarine and Freshwater crocodiles lurk beneath murky waters or bask on the sunlit banks. Leaving this extraordinary habitat we travel the short distance to the international tourist destination of Port Douglas situated in a tropical tree covered mountain setting. One of the oldest towns in Queensland, it is surrounded by lush vegetation and pristine rainforests. See Little St Mary's Church by the sea and take a stroll on four mile beach before continuing north to Mossman. This small picturesque town referred to as the "sugar town of the north" is set amid the scenic splendour of green cane fields, and rainforest clad mountains. Further on to Daintree where the Daintree region is a nature-lover's paradise. It abounds with tropical birds, butterflies, reptiles and countless species of wildlife, not to mention 3000 plant species from 210 families, which are found in the Wet Tropics. This afternoon we enjoy our boat cruise on the Daintree River followed by a special afternoon tea at the Daintree Village.

DAY 4: MONDAY 16TH JULY

B.

KURANDA SCENIC TRAIN & SKYRAIL

A trip to Cairns would not be complete without taking the amazing scenic Kuranda train ride. We travel by bus to Central Station to take the train to Kuranda. Enjoy the natural beauty reflecting on the effort that was taken to construct the rail line over the mountain. There are many outstanding chances to get that perfect photo, and the train actually stops on a trestle bridge to give you the perfect picture location. In Kuranda the village in the rainforest, you are free to explore the markets and craft shops in the village, have a quiet coffee and soak up the atmosphere or take a look at the Butterfly House. On the return trip, we take the exciting Sky Rail, with its fabulous panoramic views and breathtaking scenery across the top of rainforest.

DAY 5: TUESDAY 17TH JULY

CAIRNS TO UNDARA

B.L.D.

Leaving early this morning we travel via the Atherton Tableland, the fertile plateau that forms part of the Great Dividing Range in Queensland. Joining the Kennedy Highway and travelling south/west to Undara where the

Undara Volcanoes National Park is a fascinating and unforgettable experience. The main attraction of the park is undoubtedly the lava tube systems, which were formed 190,000 years when a major volcano in the McBride volcanic province erupted, its molten lava flowing down a dry riverbed. Recognised as the longest and largest lava tubes in the world we will enjoy a guided tour of the lava tubes before dinner tonight, which will be supplied by the Undara Lodge.

Accom: Undara Lava Lodge Ph: 07 4097 1411

**DAY 6: WEDNESDAY 18TH JULY
UNDARA TO KARUMBA**

B.L.D.

Continuing further west to Georgetown on the Gulf Developmental Road to Croydon. The area is noted for its gemstones, especially agate and onyx. Georgetown is also a trans-shipping centre for beef road trains. Further on to Croydon where restoration work within the Croydon Historic Precinct is transforming the surviving town into a showpiece. Of interest are the old gaol, butchers shop, general store and hospital. Gaslights still stand on footpaths and the old courthouse and mining warden's office still have their original furnishings. This afternoon we travel to Normanton, which is the central town of the whole Gulf Savannah. Situated on a high gravel ridge on the edge of the savannah grasslands that extend to the west and the wetlands that extend to the north. Later we journey further west to Karumba, situated at the mouth of the Norman River and the centre of the prawning industry in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Karumba is surrounded by flat wetlands, the habitat of saltwater crocodiles and many species of birds including brolgas and cranes. A barramundi fishing industry operates out of Karumba

Accom: End of the Road Motel Ph: 07 4745 9599

**DAY 7: THURSDAY 19TH JULY
KARUMBA**

B.L.D.

Today we will be in true Australian Gulf country at Kurumba and what better way to see it than on the water. On the Croc and Crab 10m fully shaded high-powered luxury vessel we enjoy an exciting outback by the sea adventure. Live crab pot lifting, live crab handling, crab tying, croc spotting and bird spotting are all part of this Gulf experience. All included on this great cruise is freshly served Gulf cooked mud crabs and prawns and a tropical fruit platter. Yet another highlight this evening will be our cruise on the Norman River to experience a beautiful Gulf sunset.

**DAY 8: FRIDAY 20TH JULY
KARUMBA TO BURKETOWN**

B.L.D.

Returning to Normanton this morning we visit the corrugated iron railway station, which dates back to 1891, and home of the famous Gulflander Rail motor. Join the historic Gulflander Rail motor and travel to Critters Camp where our coach meets you and continues back to Normanton. For the remainder of the morning we enjoy a town tour of Normanton with time to explore the Main Street. Travelling east this afternoon along the Burketown Road, passing Camp 119, the last camp of Burke & Wills during their expedition, we arrive in Burketown. The town was actually named in honour of ill-fated explorer Burke following the overland expedition in 1861. Burketown will be our home for the next two nights and is the centre of rich beef country and just 25km from the Gulf of Carpentaria. The gulf is accessible by boat from Burketown, which sits on the Albert River and on the east-west dividing line between the wetlands to the north

and the beginning the Gulf Savannah grass plains to the south.

Accom: Burketown Caravan Park Ph: 07 4745 5118

**DAY 9: SATURDAY 21ST JULY
BURKETOWN SIGHTSEEING**

B.L.D.

This is a day to discover Burketown and the surrounding area, which is steeped in both recent European pioneering history and the culture of the traditional Aboriginal people. We see the hundred year old town bore which still issues boiling water and creates a billabong where birdlife gathers. We visit the original Burketown Post Office over 100 years old and now the town's information centre, the original Gulf Meatworks, the Burketown to Normanton telegraph line, and the cemetery which offers an insight into the town's historic past. The Nicholson River, some 17 km to the west, is perennial fresh water and the wetlands and surrounds in summer are the breeding grounds of crocodiles, barramundi, prawns and birds. Burke Shire is a showcase of the beauty of the Australian outback and the magical charm of many of Australia's special remote places.

**DAY 10: SUNDAY 22ND JULY
BURKETOWN TO MT ISA**

B.L.D.

An early start today as we farewell Burketown and the Gulf of Carpentaria and travel south through the outback where the only sign of civilisation is the Burke and Wills Roadhouse. Travelling through Cloncurry where the first ever flight of the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia took place from on May 15, 1928, we join the Barkly Highway and continue west to Mt Isa, home for the next two nights.

Accom: Inland Oasis Motel Ph: 07 4743 3433

**DAY 11: MONDAY 23RD JULY
MT ISA SIGHTSEEING**

B.L.D.

Mt Isa is described as the Oasis of the Outback - a gleaming mirage on the horizon for travellers from all directions. Mount Isa nestles among the ochre-red Selwyn Ranges, on the banks of the Leichardt River and is the most important commercial and administrative centre in North West Queensland. Our city tour today will take in the Clock Tower, a memorial to John Campbell Miles whose discovery in 1923 of rich silver and lead ore initiated the settlement of Mt Isa. The city lookout offers panoramic views of the city and mine area and we visit the National Trust Tent House. This afternoon you will enjoy an extensive guided tour of the Mt Isa mine complex. Return to our motel in time to freshen up before dinner.

**DAY 12: TUESDAY 24TH JULY
MT ISA TO BIRDSVILLE**

B.L.D.

This morning we leave Mt Isa and continue south through Dajarra to Boulia, the capital of the Channel Country. It is the home of the mysterious Min Min Light, reportedly first sighted near the ruins of the Min Min Hotel. Boulia is the centre of a prosperous beef and wool industry with cattle generally grazed in the western and northern areas and sheep properties to the east. Travelling further south through Bedourie to Birdsville which is home for the next two nights. Birdsville is a small outback town situated on the banks of the Diamantina River between the sands of the Simpson Desert and the gibbers of Sturts Stony Desert. The area is steeped in history, from aboriginal meeting places to European settlement in the late 1870s and beyond. The

famous Birdsville Track starts here on its long path into and across South Australia.

Accom: Birdsville Hotel/Motel Ph: 07 4656 3244

**DAY 13: WEDNESDAY 25TH JULY
BIRDSVILLE SIGHTSEEING**

B.L.D.

Birdsville is Australia's must visit Outback town. Always noted for its wild country and isolation, Birdsville is best known for its famous pub and the annual race meeting when the population grows from 120 to 6,000 in two days. This morning we will visit the Birdsville cemetery, the famous Birdsville racetrack and the Birdsville Information Centre later we travel the short distance out to the Big Red Sand Dune. Big Red is the first and highest of 1100 dunes in the Simpson Desert, which run north-south for hundreds of kilometres. There will be time for you to experience the legendary Birdsville Pub and to have a drink at one of the real icons in the Australian outback.

**DAY 14: THURSDAY 26TH JULY
BIRDSVILLE TO MARREE**

B.L.D.

Today we commence our journey along The Birdsville Track which is one of the most notable outback roads in Australia. The 517 km track runs from Marree in northern South Australia, north across the Tirari Desert and Sturt's Stony Desert, ending in Birdsville in south western Queensland. In former years the track was of a very poor quality and suitable only for high-clearance four-wheel drive vehicles, but it has been upgraded to a full-scale dirt road and is now a popular tourist route. It is also used by stock trucks carrying livestock. Our path traverses the driest part of the country with less than an average 100 mm of rainfall annually. The area is extremely barren, dry and isolated but it is true outback country and a highlight of the trip. Artesian bores line the route, pouring out sixty-four million litres of boiling salty water every day. We pass Lake Harry ruins, en route to Marree, an outback town 645km north of Adelaide at the junction of the infamous Birdsville Track and the rugged road to Oodnadatta.

Accom: Marree Hotel Ph: 08 8675 8344

**DAY 15: FRIDAY 27TH JULY
MARREE TO FLINDERS RANGES**

B.L.D.

Depart Marree this morning and continue our journey further south through Lyndhurst before arriving in Leigh Creek, a small coal mining township situated in the North Flinders Ranges. During a brief stop here, we visit the viewing area at the Leigh Creek coalfields. From Leigh Creek we continue our journey south turning east and at Parachilna we travel through the magnificent Parachilna Gorge. The creek has carved out a steep and rocky gorge through the mountains with Parachilna Gorge one of the largest in the chain. The stark red rocks of the gorge light up in the early morning or late afternoon sun and make excellent photographic subjects. On to Blinman for a short visit to the old pub before arriving at Wilpena Pound for our overnight stop. There will be time for a walk to Wilpena Homestead before dinner should you wish.

Accom: Wilpena Pound Resort Ph: 08 8648 0004

**DAY 16: SATURDAY 28TH JULY
WILPENNA POUND TO RENMARK**

B.L.D.

Leaving the Flinders Ranges we make our way south through Hawker to one of Australia's oldest copper mining towns, Burra. Today the town continues as a centre for its surrounding farming communities, and being one of the best

preserved towns of the Victorian era in Australia is an historic walk back in time. If time permits, we will do a tour of this most interesting town taking in the Welsh miner's underground homes in the walls of Burra Creek. Continue on to Renmark for our last night away.

Accom: Renmark Golf & Country Club: 08 8586 8200

**DAY 17: SUNDAY 29TH JULY
RENMARK TO HOME**

B.

Departing Renmark this morning, we make our way via Ouyen, Warracknabeal and Horsham for the final leg of our journey home after a memorable seventeen days away.

Accommodation for the above tour is motel on a twin share basis except for the following: Undara Lava Lodge is a bush lodge in refurbished railway carriages (all linen supplied). At Marree, 1 bedroom luxury cabins, (all linen supplied).

Meals as per the itinerary are prepared outdoors by our specially trained tour cook out of our fully equipped safari kitchen with onboard fridge/freezer which ensures an abundant supply of fresh food is always available. You will be surprised at the quality of the meals. The day begins with a cooked breakfast, picnic lunches with fresh salads, dinner is always a three course meal and supper is always available. Enjoy the camaraderie and fun social atmosphere of dining together outdoors (weather permitting) or you may take your meal to your own room if you feel like some privacy.

PLEASE NOTE: Lunches and Dinners have not been included while in Cairns as there are approximately one hundred restaurants nearby and this allows you the flexibility of using your free time in Cairns to try different eating places without being restricted to tour times. Breakfast in Cairns is supplied by the motel.

At Undara, Dinner and Breakfast is provided by the Undara Lodge.

Breakfasts and dinners at Birdsville will be provided by the Birdsville Hotel.

- **PRICE:** \$6520.00 Per Person
- **SINGLE SUP:** \$1280.00
- **Price includes GST**

- **PRICE INCLUDES:**
- **Luxury Coach Travel**
- **Accommodation - Twin Share**
- **All Cruises & Admissions as specified.**
- **All Meals as specified:**
- **B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner**
- **Air fare Melbourne to Cairns**

Pick up & return to your home.

Travel Insurance is highly recommended and is the responsibility of each passenger