

across the top cairns to darwin

\$3359ppts
\$994s/s

23 June
2010
14 Days

Highlights

Darwin Sight-seeing, Mataraka Thermal Pools, The Lost City, Fossils, Cape Crawford, Kronosaurus Museum, Cobold Gorge, Atherton Tablelands, Tropical Cairns.



**Includes
Air Fare!**



Day 1 : Home—Cairns(D)

We will make our way to the Airport via the Hunter, Tuggerah and Hornsby for our Qantas flight to Cairns with airline meals included. In Cairns we will meet any passengers who will have returned from their optional Cape York 4WD tour (please call for a quote).

Acacia Court 07 4051 5011 (2 nights)

Day 2: Cairns Free Day (B)

Perhaps visit the outer reef, train or skyrail to Kurrunda or the world famous Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park. We can help you book any of these or many more optionals before you go.

Day 3: Cairns—Atherton (BLD)

Following morning tea at Mareeba we board the *Savannahlander* for our chartered ride from Mareeba to Almaden. This train ride takes in some of Queensland's roughest country on this narrow gauge line. After lunch we will explore the *Chillagoe Caves* which are known for the water that has percolated over the years through the limestone walls from long caverns and the excellent examples of fossilised vertebrates. Our tours are along well formed tracks but do bring some flat walking shoes. We then make our way into Atherton for our overnight stay.

Atherton Rainforest Motel 07 4095 4141

Day 4: Atherton—Cobbold Gorge (BLD)

This morning whilst up in the Tablelands we will visit the *Millaa Millaa Falls and the Curtain Fig Tree*, a must see when in this part of the Hinterlands. From here we head to Mount Garnet and Ravenshoe. As well as being home to some of the tastiest pasties in Queensland, this area was also an important staging post for the army during the war. Lunch at Georgetown and only a short journey then to *Cobbold Gorge* which is one of Australia's few remaining untouched jewels. Cobbold Gorge is unique, hidden away within the rugged sandstone formations of North Queensland. It is extremely narrow, closing to a mere two metres wide in places, with spectacular 30 metre cliffs on either side. The overall length of the Gorge is about six kilometres and consists of a series of water-holes and rock falls, however only the last 500

metres is accessible by flat bottom boat. After settling into our camp and enjoying dinner we will be entertained by the night sky, in particular the endless stars from horizon to horizon.

Cobbold Gorge 07 4062 5470



Day 5: Cobbold Gorge—Charters Towers (BLD)

We explore Cobbold Gorge from the comfort and silence of our *electric boat* as we meander along the *Robertson River*. With an abundance of fossils and twisted rock formations this area was also once an old mining outpost. We will hear about the early days of bushrangers, cattle duffers and fearsome weather. After a *BBQ Lunch* we stop at the old nickel mining town of Greenvale made famous by Stan Coster's song "Three Rivers Hotel". We arrive in Charters Towers late afternoon for our overnight stay.

Cattleman's Rest 07 4787 3555

Day 6 : Charters Towers—Richmond (BLD)

Today we head West to Hughenden where we visit the the *Flinders Discovery Centre* with its skeletal life-size replica of the *Muttaborrasaurus Langdoni*, a dinosaur fossil display including local fossils, and gemstones and fossils from around the world. Other displays include the *Porcupine Gorge Light and Sound Show*, telling the story of the formation of the Gorge over 500 million years, a bioregion exhibition, historical memorabilia and an audiovisual presentation on the development of Hughenden with early settlers. Leaving town we stop in at the spectacular gorge often referred to as *Australia's "little Grand Canyon"*, boasting amazing views from lookouts placed at Porcupine Gorge and the Pyramid. From here we travel on to Richmond.

Ammorite Inn 07 47413932

Day 7: Richmond—Mt Isa (BLD)

We enjoy a guided tour of the **Kronosaurus Museum** in Richmond, just near the the discovery of a pliosaur on a local property, Marathon Station, in 1989. The 100 million-year old pliosaur was recognised by palaeontologists as the prime example of its type of vertebrate fossil in the world. Three months later a rare mini paravertebrae was found nearby. These two fossils have revolutionised the theories of how the world has evolved. In Cloncurry we will visit the **John Flynn Museum**, named after the pioneer of the Royal Flying Doctor Service, continuing into the mining magnet of Mount Isa.

All Season's Outback 07 4743 2311



Day 8 Mt Isa—Barkly Homestead (BLD)

This morning we will have a guided lab tour of the **Riversleigh Fossil centre**, the beginning of the fossils that we will now be chasing through Queensland. Before leaving the city we will visit the **National Trust Tent House**, buildings designed to be unique to Mt Isa and are perfectly preserved. Continuing east we cross the border into Cammoweal for lunch and on to Barkly Homestead.

Barkly Homestead (08) 8964 4549

Day 9: Barkly Homestead—Cape Crawford (BLD)

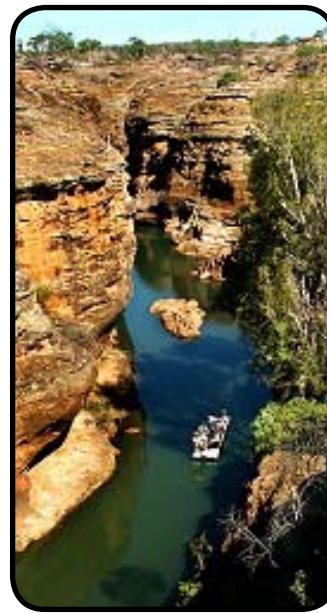
Today we pass through some of the worlds largest cattle stations such as **Brunette Downs** owned by the Australian Agriculture Company, at 1.2 million hectares carrying 66,000 Santa Gertrudis cattle. This afternoon we will arrive in one of the last outposts of Australia, **Cape Crawford**. The Heartbreak Hotel where we are staying is the epicentre of this part of the country, with the hotel also doubling up as the local Roadhouse, Petrol Station, Restaurant, Caravan Park, Pub and meeting place.

Heartbreak Hotel 0889759928 (2 nights)

Day 10: The Lost City (BLD)

Today we will be helicoptered into "**The Lost City**", the only way that this fragile land can be protected for future. The Lost City is on a plateau amongst surprisingly hilly country. It is spread over about 10 square kilometres and is estimated to be 1.4 billion years old (at 600-700 million years old, Uluru is a relative newcomer!). The whole area was once an inland sea. Water penetrated the rock "pseudokarstic weathering", breaking it into columns up to 25m tall, resembling skyscrapers which gave the area its name. Our group will be split into smaller groups as we explore so as to help preserve the tranquillity of the area.

The **10 minute flight** takes us over the Abner Range known for its wildflowers, and the landing point, the centre of Classroom Rock, is quite spectacular as it is a natural amphitheatre, before we walk around the more eroded part of the city. You can enter a cave which goes right



through the rock, and when you emerge, you are on higher ground giving excellent views. The exploring of the lost city will take up most of the day before returning to Cape Crawford to recount our days expedition.

Day 11: Cape Crawford—Mataranka (BLD)

Today we head west along the Carpentaria Highway to join the Stuart Highway at Historic Daly Waters. This afternoon we will be travelling to "We of the Never Never" country and the Elsey Cemetary. Remember to bring your swimmers as there

will be time for a swim in the **Mataranka Thermal Hot Pools**, before dinner.

Territory Manor Motel 08 8975 4516

Day 12: Mataranka—Darwin (BLD)

This morning we are heading north to Darwin with morning tea in Katherine and a stop in the old gold mining town of Pine Creek. Today's lunch stop is at **Adelaide River** which played an important part in the second World War and today is home to the very moving War Cemetery. On arrival in Darwin we have an orientation drive of this growing city before checking into our resort accommodation.

Mirambeena Tourist Resort 08 8946 0111 (2 nights)

Day 13: Darwin Sightseeing (BD)

We start our day with a self guided tour of Darwin's impressive **Parliament House**. From here we continue our touring of the city with time in the **Northern Territory's Museum** as well as free time for lunch in the city. This afternoon we travel out to the bay for a **Sunset Harbour Cruise** before dinner in a seafood restaurant overlooking the water.

Day 14: Darwin—Home (B)

This morning our coach will take us to the airport for our flight home if travelling to Sydney our coach will meet us there for the transfers back to the Hunter.