

Across the Top Darwin to Cairns

11 May 2011
14 Days
or 29 July
(Cairns to Darwin)

\$3696ppts
\$994s/s
+ Flights

Highlights

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



Day 5: The Lost City (BD)

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 and eroded it in a process called "**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 .

Day 6 : Cape Crawford—Barkley Homestead (BLD)

Today we will pass through some of the worlds largest cattle stations such as Brunette Downs owned by the Australian Agriculture Company. At 1.2million hectares carrying 66,000 Santa Gertrudis cattle, on our way to **Barkley Homestead**.
Barkley Homestead 08 89644549

Day 1 : Home—Darwin

We will make our way to the Airport via the Hunter, Tuggerah and Hornsby for our Qantas flight to Darwin with airline meals included.

84 In Darwin we will meet any passengers who have taken the option of catching the Ghan to Darwin (please call for a quote).

Mirambeena Tourist Resort 08 8946 0111 (2 nights)

Day 2: 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 3: Darwin—Mataranka (BLD)

We head south from Darwin with our first stop at Adelaide River which played an important part in the second World War and today is home to the very moving **War Cemetery**. Our lunch will be the old gold mining town of **Pine Creek**. From here it is through to Katherine for an afternoon icecream. Then 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 4: Mataranka—Cape Crawford (BLD)

Continue down the Stuart Highway to Larrimah and from there onto **Historic Daly Waters** for morning tea before we head east along the Carpentaria Highway. Lunch will be in the rest area of **October Creek**. This afternoon we will take a short break in one of the last outposts of Australia, **Cape Crawford**. We will then travel further north to the our overnight accommodation at Borroloola.

Accommodation TBA (2 nights)

Day 7: Barkley Homestead—Mt Isa (BLD)

We continue east crossing the border into Camooweal before arriving into Mt Isa, the world's largest producer of silver, lead and zinc. A local guide will give us a tour of this mining city, we will also visit the **National Trust Tent House**, whose buildings were designed to be unique to Mt Isa and are perfectly preserved. This afternoon we will have a guided lab tour of the **Riversleigh Fossil centre**, the beginning of the fossils that we will be chasing through Queensland. After dinner at a local restaurant we will have a short drive through the town highlighting the backdrop of the mine to the town.

All Seasons Outback 074743 2311



Day 8 Mt Isa—Richmond (BLD)

This morning we travel to Cloncurry where we will visit the **John Flynn Museum**, named after the pioneer of the Royal Flying Doctor Service. After our lunch stop at Julia Creek we will arrive in Richmond in time to enjoy a guided tour of the **Kronosaurus Museum**, located here due to the local discovery of a pliosaur on a property, Marathon Station, near Richmond in 1989. The 100 million-year old pliosaur was recognised by palaeontologists as the prime example of its type of vertebrae 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.

Ammorite Inn 07 47413932

Day 9: Richmond—Charters Towers (BLD)

Our first stop today will be **The Flinders Discovery Centre** in Hughenden with its skeletal life-size replica of the **Muttaburrasaurus 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"**, situated on the Kennedy Developmental Road 63 kms north of Hughenden, boasting absolutely amazing views from lookouts placed at Porcupine Gorge and the Pyramid. We arrive in Charters Towers mid afternoon.

Cattlemans Rest 07 4787 3555

Day 10: Charters Towers—Cobbold Gorge (BLD)

We stop this morning at the old nickel mining town of Greenvale now made famous by Stan Coster's song "**Three Rivers Hotel**". From here we head west towards Einasleigh for lunch and only a short run into **Cobbold Gorge**. Cobbold Gorge 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 11: Cobbold Gorge—Atherton (BLD)

We will explore Cobbold Gorge, from the comfort and silence of our electric boat as we meander along the **Robertson River**. As well as having an abundance of fossils and twisted rock formations this area was also once an old mining outpost. We will hear of the stories surrounding the early days of bushrangers, cattle duffers and fearsome weather. After a BBQ Lunch we make our way to Georgetown on the mighty **Etheridge River**, mostly sandy but a raging torrent in the wet season. From here we head to the tablelands in particular Mount Garnet and Ravenshoe. As well as being home to some of the tastiest pasties in QLD, this area was also an important staging post for the army during the war. Once 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.

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Atherton Rainforest Motel 07 4095 4141

Day 12: Atherton—Cairns (BLD)

The **Chillagoe Caves** are better known for the water that has percolated over the years through the limestone walls from long caverns which have now been opened up to the public. Our tours are along well formed tracks but do bring some flat walking shoes and be ready to experience fossilised vertebrae. After lunch we board the **Savannahlander** for our chartered ride from **Almaden to Mareeba**. This train ride takes in some of Queensland's roughest country on this narrow gauge line. From woodlands to termite nests it is a very interesting afternoon in Mareeba. Our coach will be waiting to transfer us down the range to Cairns.

Acacia Court 07 4051 5011 (2 nights)

Day 13: Cairns Free Day (B)

Today is a free day for you to enjoy. You may choose to talk to our office about some of the many options that you can experience today or just chill out and enjoy the warmth of the tropical winter sun.

Day 14: Cairns—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. *(Please note itinerary for departure on 29 July is reversed, going from Cairns to Darwin)..*