

Trip Reports:

THE DUSTY CREW - CAPE YORK 2012 (Part 2)

Punsand Bay Resort – the most northerly campsite in Australia – was a great place for a few days relaxing on the edge of the water after the trip north, including a trip to Somerset and a track along the five beaches at the east side of the Tip, but it was soon time to move on. We travelled to Seisa, just past Bamaga to camp at Aloo Beach again for several nights while we spent took a day trip to Thursday Island and Horn Island in the Torres Strait. Naturally we had a beer at the “Top Pub in Australia” to wash down a seafood chilli pie (super hot!), saw the island in an hour by taxi, and on Horn Island visited the fascinating wartime museum. Here and at Bamaga the relics of the war are stark reminders of how vulnerable the northern coastline was to invasion in those days and how close the war came to our front doorstep.

From Seisa we started the southward journey, camping again at Cockatoo Creek – this time on the northern bank adjacent to the magnificent toilet and picnic shelter – before travelling to Weipa where we again had a couple of days to take in the sights. These included a tour of the bauxite mine: the easiest mining operation in Australia – just scrape off the overburden, dig out the bauxite with a loader and transport to the washing facility by way of 200 tonne dump trucks before heading off to the wharf for various destinations locally and overseas.



A visit up the coast to the Pennefather River locality where we lusted after a boat to get out into the fishing opportunities offshore, and a little relaxing again followed before the crew started to split up, one couple heading back while most of us were off to the other side of the Peninsular to Lockart River and a NP campsite at Chilli Beach. On the way in to Chilli Beach, my sharp-eyed navigator noticed a sign to a cafe which intrigued us, so while there we took a side trip to Portland Roads where we indeed found a cafe; so good in fact that after a very good morning coffee we returned for lunch!

Little remains now at this gem of a location to indicate the frenetic activity here during the war in the Pacific. There were about 20,000 troops in the immediate area, a major port facility and other infrastructure, including aerodrome at Lockart River.

Chilli Beach marked the end of the Cape part of our adventure, with a final camp on the Cape at Lakeland before the crew again split, with most heading to Cooktown and then Cairns.



We made it to the top!

Remote as these locations are from Victoria, the feel of civilisation had us hankering after the remoter regions we had enjoyed so much on this trip.

As a 4wding experience, there is much more to offer on Cape York, but of the areas we covered I suspect the Old Coach Road lingers most prominently in most of the group's memories for either the terror or thrills encountered along this track.

Speaking of the Old Telegraph Track...here are some photos of the track and the challenges...we didn't have a go at these but we watched the intrepid adventurer's who did...



Just a bit too rugged...





One for the most adventurous...

Written by David Blore with photos by Terry Dillon and David Blore (End of Part 2).

Simpson Desert - 3 Sept to 20 Sept 2012

Ian & Trish Barry (trip leaders)
Glen & Robyn Norton
Allan & Jeanette Wallace
Irene Jones
John Sullivan
Graeme Martin (tail-end Charlie)

The convoy left Echuca en route to our first camp spot at Hatta-Kulkyne NP. Next day we headed into South Australia, replenished our fruit and vegie supplies at Renmark and lunched in a park overlooking the Murray River.

Night two we camped at Burra Gorge. It was a very windy night. The fly on Allan and Janette's slide-on camper was ripped off, but fortunately found the next morning. No one got a good night's sleep, but it was good to know that roof top tents can withstand gale force winds.

As we drove towards Parachillna Gorge we pushed into strong head winds all day and fuel consumption was high. We drove through the gorge in search of a sheltered spot, which we found by driving a short way up the creek bed. Graeme prepared pre-dinner cocktails for the ladies. Next day was a rest day and the group climbed a nearby hill, which provided great views of the Flinders Ranges. (Photo 1) Roast lamb, pork and vegies were prepared in the camp ovens. There is always something special about camp oven roasts and sharing the meal preparation.