

NORM AND GLENDA'S BIG TRIP NEWSLETTER # 5

We hope everyone is well and that those in Canberra are recovering from winter with some lovely spring weather. We heard that 'Floriade' was as good as ever and that Queenie was impressed!

Northern Territory (cont'd)

Litchfield National Park – we stayed at the Caravan Park at Batchelor and travelled into Litchfield on day trips, visiting Buley Rockhole, Florence Falls, Wangi Falls and the Magnetic Termite Mounds. I really do like waterfalls and I was so disappointed in Kakadu that none of the falls there had water because it was the dry season – funny, in all the advertising for Kakadu they show the falls in all their splendour, but don't tell you it does not happen all year round! I wonder what our international visitors think about that after they have paid a bucket load of money to come here. Back to Litchfield:



Termite Mounds



Magnetic Termite Mounds

Buley Rockholes - very slippery. Nice and cool on the feet though.



Florence Falls - beautiful spot and the swimmers were having a great time. It was a long way down though and, whilst we would like to have done the walk we did not think our knees would have made it there and back. Besides I would have only put my feet in anyway.



Wangi Falls – feet in, protected by my crocs!

And then, there are some really dumb people. Before this fellow jumped in he climbed the rocks, with the raft it is not like there is an ambulance on standby in any of these places!

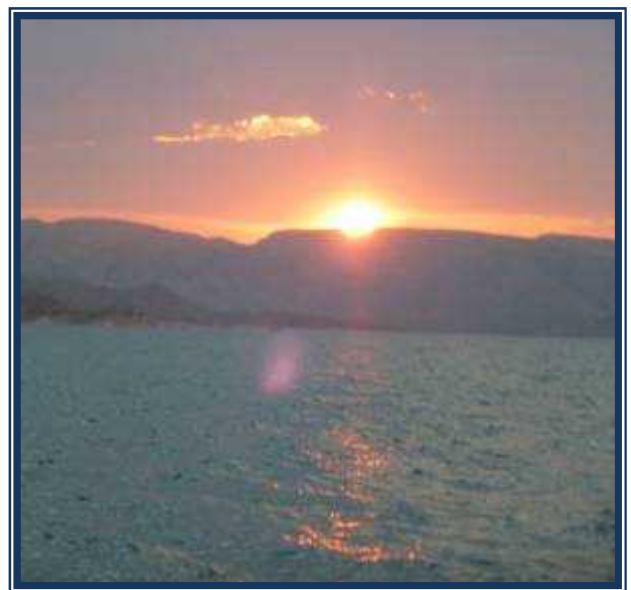
We travelled from Litchfield back to Katherine but only stayed one night – trip to Woolworths to stock up for the next leg of our trip into WA. On the way to WA we were going to stop at one of the roadhouses, still in NT, but it did not look that great so kept on going. Only problem was the vegies/fruit we thought we would eat before we left NT had to be removed so gave them to someone going east. You



cannot even take honey into WA unless it is heat treated, but as this was not indicated on our jar we gave it away. Just as well because when we got to the border we saw a large bin full of honey containers! And yes, Quarantine does go through your car and caravan thoroughly.

Western Australia

Kununurra – Lake Argyle – nice place to visit and of course, the gateway to the big attractions, Lake Argyle and the Bungle Bungles. We stayed here for four days so that we could take a couple of tours in the area. We enjoyed a sunset boat cruise with Triple J tours – this included afternoon tea (home made cakes and tea/coffee), happy hour (cheese/bickies/paté etc and, we stopped for a while so those who wished to could go swimming. Don't ask! There are crocs in that water and despite all the comments that freshwater crocs do not usually enjoy humans as a meal – no way. Besides, none of these lakes, waterholes, falls have a blue line on the bottom! Lake Argyle is massive



and when you are out in the middle it feels like you are in the middle of the ocean. The people who did go swimming said it was beautiful because the water is so fresh. The sunset was pretty good and the cloud activity after was pretty spectacular too.



We also did a flight with Kimberley Air over Lake Argyle, the dam, the Bungle Bungles and, the Argyle Diamond Mine. The plane was a 'float plane' (sea plane) and the tour lasted three and a half hours. It was fantastic and the pilot gave us commentary for everything! Towards the end of our flight, we landed next to an island where we were provided with morning tea – home made cakes, tea and coffee! Our pilot let us in on who the major shareholder is of Argyle Diamonds – Queenie, with 51%! Norm sat up front with the pilot (benefit of his size – or maybe not – isn't it the front that hits first on impact!) and at one point the pilot was giving Norm a bit of a flying lesson. There

were dual controls and I was a bit worried for a while that he might give Norm control of the plane but I don't really think Kimberley Air's insurance policy covered that – whew! I was ready to bale out but then thought about the crocs I took heaps of pictures but unfortunately, I can only put in a few.



Bungle Bungles



Argyle Mine



Ord River

We did a day trip to Wyndham from Kununurra following the Ord River 4WD track and returned via the highway. We had lunch at the pub at the port – barra and chips – very nice. To date we have done a few 4WD trips with a number of river crossings. Now, the rule is, before entering the

water either the driver or the passenger must go and check the depth of the water, the lay of the creek etc before crossing. So far, neither of us has been willing to do this because the signs at each of these river crossings warn that crocodiles inhabit the area – so with heart in mouth and fingers crossed and throwing caution to the wind, we moved forth. Obviously, so far we have been successful but maybe we should not push our luck too often! In Wyndham we went up to the Five Rivers Lookout – spectacular views of the area for miles. Wyndham is also home to The Big Croc.

Five Rivers L/O



Big Croc

Quick as a flash - on the way to Wyndham there was not a flame in sight. A couple of hours later it was a different story!

Bush fire –both sides of road!

From Kununurra to Broome we stopped at two overnight stops – Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing. In Halls Creek we experienced our first tropical storm – thunder that shook the van, lightning, and then, the downpour which lasted a few hours. By the time we got up the next morning you would not even know it had happened – dry as a bone!

We did drive out to Geike Gorge and we were



going to do the boat trip up the gorge, however, it was blistering hot and none of the boats had any shade so we decided against it.

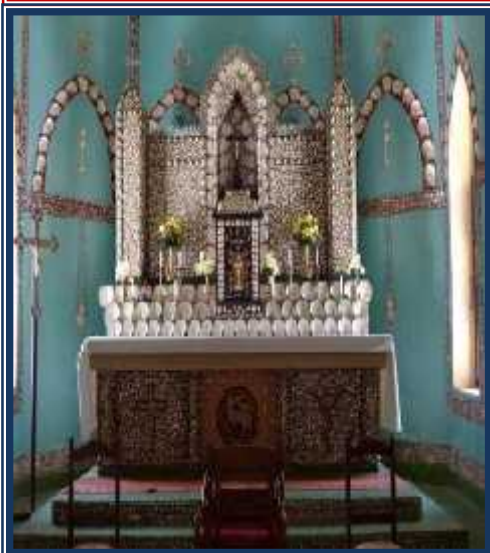
Broome – or Broomee as I call it – we were here about 15 years ago for a holiday. What a change. My memory was of about three streets in town, a small residential area and one resort, Cable Beach. Broome now has a heap of resorts, caravan parks, new residential areas, Coles and Woolies, two shopping centres and, can't forget, the light industrial area. It is still a very laid back lifestyle and everything is on Broome time. We stayed at the Cable Beach CP which is right behind the Cable Beach Resort. The Sunset Bar is still there and the pizzas are still delicious, albeit they have gone from \$10 to \$24-26. Since we were here last time the Cable Beach Resort has had a facelift and the colours have gone back to the original red and green, thank goodness. Some of it was purple and yellow when we were here last! The resort is closing down for a month in February 2012 when it will be completely renovated again. Now is the wrong time of year for the Stairway to the Moon but the sunset is still pretty good and the camels still trek along the beach in front of Cable Beach Resort.

There is a lot of building going on in Broome and the population is expected to increase if they go ahead with the liquid natural gas installation that is currently being considered (and demonstrated against). House prices here are around \$750,000 for a three bedroom/two bathroom house and go up to around 2.5 million.



Cable beach sunset

We had two tours booked for Broome – one to Cape Leveque (4WD) and a flight over the horizontal falls. Unfortunately, the flight was cancelled – this tour was a full day with two or three landings, lunch at a station etc. The day before we were to go on the flight, the rangers closed one of the landing strips due to water over the runway. A week or two earlier and it would have been fine. The Cape Leveque tour was very good but it is a long day and approximately 75% of the driving is on corrugated dirt road – the skeletal frame



gets a good shake up and I have since had a massage to put everything back in the right place!
We went to Beagle Bay and saw the pearl church:

We also went to Cygnet Bay Pearl Farm where we saw a demo on pearl farming and we had a beautiful salad lunch.

Cygnet Bay



And, we went to an aquaculture farm where you could hand feed the fish and give the turtles a tickle.

Green turtles

Another day we went to ECO Beach Resort which is about an hour's drive south on the highway and then 11 kms on dirt road. It is the most beautiful resort and it does not cost

anything to day visit – of course, they know after travelling all that way you are going to buy lunch and have a drink! They have an infinity pool and shaded platforms on the beach and a variety of accommodation from safari tents to air-conditioned units. If you ever want to go on a quiet romantic holiday this is the place – no telephone reception, no TV, just lots of relaxing. If you are interested go to www.ecobeach.com.au .

The Cygnet Bay Pearl farm has a shop in Broome. This is also the home of the world's largest first quality round pearl – it is priceless.



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One thing that has not changed in Broome – the airport landing strip begins at the end of one of the main streets in town. If you are having coffee at the 'Dragonfly' cafe, the planes fly right past it to the landing strip. Some of the bigger planes are so low you can wave to the passengers as they fly by!



Airport runway

Our 19th wedding anniversary was on 29 October and we went out for dinner to celebrate. No jewellery box is complete without pearls – Norm gave me a lovely Cygnet Bay pearl pendant and also two pearl beads for my Pandora bracelet. Did I mention earlier that my Pandora bracelet also has four new opal charms? We did look at

Argyle pink diamonds in Kununurra but decided we did not want to mortgage the house to do it!

We extended our stay in Broome to two weeks as we felt we needed to rest up a bit from the sightseeing etc and we needed to be somewhere long enough to receive our mail. It was very easy to drift into Broome time and culture – sun, sand, happy hour and sleep!

For ladies only! I have managed to keep my nails going through our travels, so far. Whilst some technicians have been 'ho hum' I have not had to resort to self mutilation (removal)! Prices have ranged from \$25 to \$55 for infils with the most expensive being in Broome – she was the only one I could find. Haircuts – usually I go for a 'Just Cuts' variety but, if not, I have to resort to a salon which costs me about \$10 to \$15 more for the same thing – the female variety of short back and sides! However, in Alice Springs I went to a pseudo 'Just Cuts' and it only cost me \$20 for the best hair cut I have ever had. Go figure!

Lesson: Crocs (rubber – Rivers brand) shrink in the sun! I give all my crocs a tub once a week and my black ones shrank after I put them in the sun to dry – admittedly it was 44 degrees but hey, I didn't know rubber shrank! Well, they were only \$3.99.

For those planning a trip such as this – we started planning about 12 months before we left. We organised all our accounts (household, insurance, private health fund, house rates) to be direct debit and, we arranged for email notification where we could. We have been using Landbase Australia as our mail forwarder (thank you to Paddy and Margaret for recommending them!) and it has been working great. All of our mail from our P O Box is forwarded to Landbase in Gosford – we have been notifying Landbase about once a month to forward our mail. We work out where we are going to be to get mail and then we notify Landbase who package up what they are holding and put it in the mail on the same day or the day after. We also advise the park where it is being sent to that mail is coming and request they hold it if it gets there before us. Note: we also advised Aussie Post before we left that we did not want any junk mail forwarded!

We are leaving Broome tomorrow (rather sadly) as 'Broom time' is lovely and very addictive.

However, itchy feet get the nod and we are off to eighty mile beach.

TTFN and cheers to all and, Happy Halloween!

Glenda and Norm