

Norm and Glenda's Big Trip Newsletter #6

Hi to all!

Note: I deliberately make the pictures smaller to fit – if you want to enlarge just click on the picture and drag the perimeters.

We had two wonderful weeks in Broome and did a lot of relaxing to build ourselves up for the next leg of our journey.

Broome – cont'd - Just a couple more pictures – one to prove we did drive on Cable Beach:



The Mighty Pathfinder on Cable Beach

Whilst driving on this beach you go through the area that is for nude sunbathing – (OMG! Do these people not own a mirror?). It is not a pretty sight – why is it that the only ones who nude sunbathe have a huge amount of excess flab?

Something that we thought was rather amusing – the following sign appears all along the fence of the Broome prison:



Broome Prison

I know Broome is a lovely place but hey, I did not know the prison was also a resort and, that the focus was on keeping people out rather than in! We have been told that the prison is built next to an embankment and it is relatively easy for people to get out and in – apparently the biggest problem is with the aborigines – their families

all hop the fence to visit them!

Now, a few people have commented on the amount of food we seem to be consuming on our trip. Please consider the following: the job of sightseeing, shopping, walking up and down to/from those best photograph spots, packing up, setting up etc requires a lot of sustenance! Talking also uses a lot of energy/calories – do you know how many muscles are activated by talking, not to mention all the muscles in the arms that are used to paint the picture or add emphasis! It is my belief that caravanners are experts at talkfest! Every fellow that tows (it does not matter what it is) is an expert on torque, kwts, fuel consumption, towing capacity, tyre pressure etc and this subject is usually the opener to any conversation in a caravan park. Now the women are not slack either. The opening conversations here are whether or not they should even get involved in the men's topics, the logistics of doing the washing, getting that red coloured sand out of the caravan, recipes (easy ones that fit in between happy hour and bedtime), what to do with a hairdo that has gone feral (Moroccan Oil is fantastic) and, how to make tea taste better when using bore water. Then there are the various ways of backing the caravan in, setting it up, pulling it down etc. Now, a lot of these topics are covered in a very civilized setting such as happy hour. Eating during this time is polite – it gives someone else a chance to get a word in and dinner gives everyone a chance to retreat to their caravan and stock up on energy for the next session! I do admit, however, that by the end of this trip we are probably going to require some serious rehabilitation.

Port Hedland – as most of you know I previously had a career in the Public Service with Immigration. For a period of about 18 months (1994-1995) I travelled regularly to Port Hedland to work at the Detention Centre. At that time, Port Hedland/South Hedland was nobody's idea of a holiday spot, despite the beach! At that time it was all about mining, fishing and a large part of the 'community' was fly in/fly out. I have been absolutely amazed at the changes here and the amount of development and construction happening. Any tradesperson can get a job up here. New houses are going up everywhere – a lot are being bought as investment properties because the weekly rental rate is about \$2,000 to 2,500!

We stayed at the Cooke Point Caravan Park which is now a Big4. It is a lovely park and has had a huge facelift since I was here last – previously this park was a dump with a lot of permanents and more humpies than tents or caravans and, the police were called out regularly for fights etc. It now has huge cement slabs for caravan, annex and car, modern clean amenities and the park is very clean and tidy. There are some semi-permanents here now but there are obviously some strict rules about what they can and can't do (somebody told us the parks here have to allow 30% as semi permanent). The day we arrived it was quite windy and a big storm front had moved through the previous night. On the advice of the park management we purchased a cyclone chain kit for the caravan – just in case.

The mining industry (iron ore and salt) is just so big over here and the light show at night is quite spectacular.



Salt Hills



Evening skyline

We did find what used to be the Immigration Detention Centre (previously BHP single men's quarters) which has now been upgraded (a lot!) and expanded as beachside accommodation:



Front entrance (guard block of old detention centre)



Perimeter cameras

As you can see the cameras are still in place – only the front fence and gate are missing. I was talking to one of the staff there and he told me that Immigration was considering reopening it as a detention centre – it is still owned by Immigration and the lease currently in place is due to expire! And, there appears to be a number of boats arriving lately

While we were here I discovered the mobile seafood truck – 3 freshly cooked mud crabs for \$18 – Norm was not interested so I had them all to myself for lunch. And, the mobile butcher comes too, with lovely Black Angus steaks – yum!



When I was here before there was an eagle's nest on top of one of the cyclone towers within the centre grounds – as you can see, an eagle is still making a nest there and, if you look close, you can just see the eagle's head.

Eagle's nest



On our way to Point Samson we planned to stop at Whim Creek Pub for a refresher – no such luck as it had closed down the week before and, the mining company that now owns it is doing a feasibility study on the pub's future. What a shame – such an icon in this area's history.

Whim Creek Pub

Point Samson – previously this was a tiny fishing village with a few holiday shacks and a fish and chip shop that was renowned. It is still a lovely fishing village but much bigger and the new homes here are worth about \$1 Million. Sadly, the fish and chip shop is gone but the pub does a pretty good dish anyway – they do a seafood platter that you would not be able to jump over. We stayed at the beautiful Cove Caravan Park which is fairly new – the amenities were terrific and everything is sparkling clean. We stayed three nights and we had a lovely reunion with some people we have previously met on our travels. The caravan park is right next to Honeymoon Bay – this fact did not even register with Norm but hey, I do now have Broome pearls and more Coober Pedy opals! Now, that Argyle diamond

While in Point Samson we visited Roebourne, Cossack and Wickam:



Old gaol –
Roebourne



Old court house –
Cossack



Wickam outdoor movie theatre

Wickam is the local service centre for the area because it has a Woolies shop in the small shopping centre . There is a coffee shop in the centre as well but despite three visits it was never open when we were there.

Karratha – is 45 kms down the road from Point Samson and we decided we would stop here for a few days (big trip after all) – Karratha is now the major shopping centre for the region with a large shopping centre and a number of chain stores represented. On my previous visits here, the trip to Karratha was 250 kms down the road to a bigger and better Coles/K Mart! Karratha has developed into quite a large town – there is still a substantial fly in/fly out community here and the mining companies are in the process of building their own residential villages (transportables) for staff as there is no available accommodation for them. Again, the prices of houses and the rental rates are the same as other areas in this particular region – great investment so long as you get out before the mining boom finishes. We decided to extend our stay here to a week – that long drive getting here required some serious R&R.

We drove to Dampier for a day trip (20 kms from Karratha) – of course we had lunch there – the biggest schnitzel burger I have seen in a long time and, yummy chips (happy hour will work it off)! Dampier is the home of 'Red Dog' – the star of a movie that is now showing in the theatres – due for release on DVD shortly. Red Dog (or the Pilbara Wanderer) has a memorial statue at the entrance to Dampier in his honour:



The film is apparently very good and we have tried to get to see it a couple of times on our trip, but we have not been in the right place at the right time – we will end up with the DVD I think.

We visited the mining visitor centre in Dampier which was very interesting and we watched a couple of videos which gave an overview of the history and operation – it is huge and still growing. We booked on a mine tour but it was cancelled because there were not enough people booked for it.



The only thing I like about mining are the BIG TRUCKS – I have been trying to find somewhere that will let me have a go, but so far no luck. They want me to have all the tickets/licences/security passes etc – I only want a little go, I don't want a job!

The truck below is on display in Dampier but the sign next to it said I could not even climb on it (@#!*%*!):

BIG TRUCK!

We stayed at the Pilbara Holiday Park (Aspen Parks) in Karratha and they have the resident 'dunny frogs' there. I am beginning to look a little neurotic these days – going to the toilet involves going into each cubicle in turn and flushing until you find one that is not occupied by one of those green, slimy things. I love frogs but they have a place and it is not the toilet, at least not the one I want to use!

Since we have been in this part of the country Norm has been feeling a little down and depressed and left out. Most of his male counterparts here are dressed in PPE (Personal Protection Equipment) such as orange shirts and blue trousers with reflective stripes, work boots, safety helmet and all their vehicles have a pole with an orange flag and flashing light and, a reversing beeper. I was going to pacify him and buy him an orange flag for his car but thought better of it because he might have gone out and got a job – can't have that happen!

Exmouth/Cape Range National Park/Ningaloo Reef – what a spectacular piece of coastline! The National Park and the Reef have recently been world heritage listed which means no mining will ever be done in this area – this is good because the mining industry is taking over in a lot of places. Exmouth is not as big as we expected it to be but it is lovely and, they have a couple of good coffee shops.



Norm decided to take up snorkelling again (he has not done it for 30 years) and he was like a kid – he could not get enough of it.

Guess who!

We stayed at the Exmouth Cape Holiday Park which is quite nice and, no dunny frogs!



They do, however, have resident emus. It is quite entertaining to watch the reaction of our international visitors, when they do not know to put their happy hour away when you see them coming!

Uninvited Emu attending happy hour and invited guest trying to chase it away!



We also saw the following family trekking through another caravan park on the cape.

Emu family



There are a number of gorges in the park. The next picture was taken at one of the highest point of the road that goes around the ridge of the Shothole Gorge:

Shothole Gorge



We also did a boat cruise up the Yardie Creek to the gorge – it is only small in comparison to other gorges but still beautiful. It is the only gorge in the park that has water in it all year round as it is fed by both spring water and sea water.



Yardie River/Gorge

Big News! Norm seemed to be having so much fun snorkelling and I was feeling a little left out so, I have converted. I am still a little concerned that there is no blue/black line on the bottom but the coral and sea life down there takes my mind off it. So far I have only seen things that are smaller than me – I am not sure what I will do when I see something as big, or bigger, than me!

Coral Bay/Ningaloo Reef – words cannot describe this part of the WA coast – it is more than spectacular. This is our ‘front yard’:



And, these are some of our ‘neighbours’:

We have now made some plans for Xmas and we will be staying at the Coogee Beach Holiday Park in Perth. We had force ourselves to set some sort of plan as places were starting to get booked out – we apparently took the last spot at Coogee Beach! We have seen the same people over and over as we have travelled and a lot are heading to Perth for Xmas – we were hoping to all get into the same park but no such luck – so will have to visit for happy hour. Anyway, as the saying goes ‘There are no strangers, just friends you have not met yet’.

Carnarvon – still on that part of the coast that is the Ningaloo Reef. As with Exmouth we thought Carnarvon would be bigger as it services a large area. It is rather small and not a particularly pretty place except for the park area along the marina. It does have a Woolies store though and we were seriously in need of some grocery shopping there. Since Karratha we have only had local IGAs and general stores – the prices were particularly high so we went through most of what we had. At Coral Bay I paid \$2.75 for a ½ Lebanese cucumber!

We did a day trip to the blowholes and to Quobba Station and enjoyed a picnic watching the blowholes.



Blowholes

One of the
station locals



The weather in Carnarvon is about 10 degrees cooler than where we have been and there has bit some strong winds – hope I don't have to get the doona out again!

Our next port of call is Denham/Monkey Mia to feed, and maybe swim with, the dolphins!

Cheers

Glenda and Norm