

5W post tour trip to Cairns

On Monday the 28th September 16 of us left Brisbane in a small bus driven by Des - another ex Principal, would you believe. There were 4 locals, and the rest visitors. By this time most of us knew each reasonably well from the Gathering, so we were a happy bunch.

Our first day was spent driving to Australia Zoo where we were able to see the usual show at the Crocusaureum, and enjoy the animals and the beautiful gardens. This was followed by the long drive to Hervey Bay and the ferry across to Fraser Island, arriving in time for a late dinner.

The following day we were able to do a full day tour of the island in a 4x4 bus over the bumpy sand roads, and the smooth sand on the beach. We saw the remains of the old ship the Maheno on the beach and the coloured sands before a stop at beautiful Eli Creek. Lunch was at the Eurong Resort. Then it was more rough roads before a rainforest walk from Central Station, before heading to Lake Mckenzie. The water was cold so I don't think any of us braved a swim, but paddling was definitely on the agenda. Unfortunately no dingos crossed our path for the visitors to admire.

On Wednesday we were back on an early ferry for the short trip to Hervey Bay, and then the drive to Rockhampton. Thursday we drove to Airlie Beach and then on to the ferry to Day Dream Island, arriving in time for the Seafood Buffet. The previous night Marie and I had taught Outi to peel a prawn, so she was very happy to put this new skill to great use!

We all enjoyed our rest day on the island. We walked, swam, and just relaxed which is what we all needed. There were wallabies on the lawn of the resort at night, and bush curlews invading the dining areas. Lots of noisy cockatoos as well.

From here, it was back on the ferry and then to Townsville for lunch on the Strand. By this time it had become very windy, and it stayed that way for the rest of our holiday. It was very dry and we drove through clouds of dust for some time. We arrived at a beautiful resort at Mission Beach in time for a walk on the beach before a very nice dinner.

Leaving the next morning we headed for the Atherton Tablelands. Unfortunately we only had time to drive the Waterfall route before heading to Kuranda. After lunch it was on to the Skyrail, and even those who didn't like heights, enjoyed the trip through the rainforest and down to the coast. That night we enjoyed an Aboriginal Cultural show and dinner at their specially built facility.

Our last day was a trip to the reef. With the wind still blowing hard, it was a rough voyage, but we all made it. We spent some hours on the pontoon seeing the reef from a glass bottom boat, and a semi submersible. Some of us snorkelled as well, but not for long as the conditions were quite unpleasant.

We enjoyed a last dinner all together, toasted each other and Frances Alexander whose foresight had brought us all together. We said goodbye to Renee and Deeane who left for Tasmania early the next morning. The rest of us went up to Port Douglas, stopping at beautiful Palm Cove on the way. Sadly our trip officially finished at the Airport after lunch. We said our goodbyes and went our separate ways, all keen to attend another Gathering somewhere in the world.

Suzanne (Brisbane)