

Trip to Cape York





Cairns to Cape York to Cairns 2010

Alistair, Raeleene, Alex, Ben & Tim Organ – 80 series Landcruiser

Ben, Gis, Conner & Zoe Sweetnam – Nissan GQ Patrol

Lachlan, Bronwyn, James & Elissa Michie – Hilux Dual cab

Carl & Colleen Bleazard – 80 series Landcruiser

Stan & Noelene Kynoch – Land rover Defender

Friday 2nd July – Sunday 18th July

2nd

It is always warm in Cairns, what a perfect way begin a trip to The Tropical Far North of Queensland. We headed out around 9.15am following our trusty leader Alistair. First stop Mossman Gorge. This is a beautiful spot just short of the Daintree. There is a short boardwalk to view the gorge or a 2km walk to discover the whole gorge, some did and most did not do the entire walk. After a brief morning tea it was on the Daintree Village for lunch – well that is what it ended up being when we discovered that the Creb Track was really closed. The Bloomfield track it was decided was the way to go, via Cape Tribulation. What a beautiful part of Queensland, the road we travelled was right on the edge of the coast! As this is tropical North Queensland the road soon turned towards the west and we were heading into the tropical rainforest – more beauty. Cape Tribulation offered steep slopes and deep gullies finally winding our way onto the Bloomfield Track. Reaching Wujal Wujal (Bloomfield) we travelled a short distance further to a small town called Ayton, here we discovered our first camp – Hayley's Camping & Cabins. What a place – with a fleeting glance it had an avenue of palm trees, lush grass, an awesome camp kitchen & licensed restaurant. We met some very nice people here and we met them again and again along the track to the top.

3rd

It is always good to talk to people, everyone has a story to tell and some of them lead to very nice and seldom known spots. The people we had enjoyed camp kitchen conversation with in the morning had directed us back to the falls at Wujal Wujal, on the Bloomfield River. This was the first of many beautiful waterfalls that littered the Tropical Far north. Right off we go, on to the Lion's Den Hotel. This is an historic Hotel with quite a few stories to tell for itself. Just a short distance from the Lion's Den Hotel Alistair's aerial fell of the car and was run over by a few pesky vehicles that seem to be following us! Lucky we were close to Cooktown for repairs, refuel & repacking food. After lunch and repacking we headed out towards Lakefield National park. Driving along the track we came across a beautiful waterfall "Isabella falls" this was a ford crossing and therefore one we had to cross. Just over the falls and into Lakefield National park we set up camp rather nervously at Horseshoe Lagoon. Tents, happy hour, dinner, star gazing. And we begin to relax.

4th

During our pack up in the morning we met one rather ugly yet friendly beast – one that we would be sure to encounter again and again – the Cane Toad! After inquisitive followings and yucks all around we were off again, this time heading for Old Laura and then New Laura. The first an old cattle station, kept in original state for the passes by to wonder how people lived like that in the heat & isolation, the second was the ranger station. Interestingly we discovered that in the QLD National Parks you use booking white boards & an honesty system for campsites at the popular spots (probably in case a crock gets you they know who was there!) provided at different locations around the parks. We carried on to Cat Fish water hole for morning tea. This proved a nervous stop as there was new sign displayed here. One that read "Recent Crocodile sighting", a metal sign, a sandwich type sign – one that can be moved easily, like a crock tracker! Only a short stop and then we moved on in search of the White Lily Lagoon, funny only white lilies grew there then on to Red Lily Lagoon, hey only red lotus lilies grew there! Pushing on to Hann River Crossing – camp 1, we had a leisurely lunch and decided to stay for dinner and sleep. During the afternoon Colleen, Carl, the Organs & Conner headed to the crossing for a paddle in the river rapids what fun was had.

5th

Rain. Pack up was slow. Today we left Lakefield National Park and headed for the Telegraph Track/Development Road. Refuelling at Musgrave Roadhouse, cars and ice creams and still raining we pushed on to Coen. A curious Hotel can be found there, "The Sex Change Hotel". Still the beer was cold and the people nice and chatty. Again following leads from strangers we headed down to Charlies Mine '4 U 2 C' to camp the night. Hot showers and grassy grounds, this was a very nice spot to camp. And Charlie – what can be said about Charlie – He is an eccentric character with the tallest of stories to be told (ask him to tell you about the red button in the ladies room).

6th

Talking and finding out information from travellers heading south about the roads north is important and can ruin your day if you don't. Today we wanted to travel to Cape Weymouth on the East Coast of the Cape but discovered that road was closed so we ended up travelling to Weipa on the Gulf side of the Cape! This is town run by Rio Tinto/Comalco Bauxite Mine. Everything for the tourist is run out of the camping grounds, including mine tours. The Organs were quick to book and enjoy the mine tour. The rest of our group had a relax afternoon, refuelling vehicles and themselves, washing and drying clothes & cars. We had a big happy hour which ended up being dinner too! The kids enjoyed the technology Lachlan

& Ben packed and watched a movie, projected onto a screen; well they watched all but the last 15mins of the movie as the battery ran flat!!!!

7th

The Shopping Centre at Weipa has a great coffee shop and a 4x4/hardware shop, not to mention a bakery, bottle shop & Woollies! Reload and head off to Bramwell Junction for hamburgers and some early warnings about the Old Telegraph Track. The plan for today was to camp the night at Dulhunty River, but with anticipation at a high this was not to be. We started along the OTL (Old Telegraph Line) only 1½ Km along Lachlan decided not to take the chicken track. Much to his demise he was stuck! And had to be snatched out by Carl. Quickly and with a laugh we moved on to Palm Creek. This was to be our first encounter of "Hummer Man" (Dirt & Dust 4x4 Club, Blacktown). First one through the creek was Lachlan – no problem, then Carl, he was stuck and had to be snatched out. Then Alistair – no problem, followed by Stan, he also needed to be snatched, finally Ben – all good. We pushed on to the next crossing Ducie Creek. We met some Victorian students walking the track/creek; this was good other people to discuss strategies with. Again Lachlan moved through quickly followed by Carl. Unfortunately Carl took not a very good line and was stuck - well! After some discussion and consultation with all other drivers Carl was winched out and they began panel beating! We left the side step there – a momento for others to admire, they bent the guard back out and removed a few other parts that were just hanging in there. With a scare like this it was decided that we camp here for the night. We had a chill out night and again enjoyed the technology, this time it was one of Ruthie's wonderful trips to the Cape with Milo!

8th

With two snatches and a winch under our belt we began slowly and with more confidence that today we would be ready for anything! The first creek crossing was North Alice, easy! Then we arrived at the Dulhunty River, this was beautiful and would have been an awesome place to camp and swim in the river – never mind, next time.... Then it was on to Bertie creek, Raeleene marked the holes on the creek floor as they could have had some cars sunk! Just a short distance from here we left the main track and travelled along the Heathlands past the ranger station and around the ominous Gunshot Creek. We drove back to Gunshot and to our disappointment the boys thought that they could have done the crossing – as I say next time.... After a bit of time watching other vehicles tackle the crossing we moved on to follow the OTL to Twin Falls on Elliott Creek. Pushing on to Cockatoo Creek this was also beautiful. We met the Nepean District 4x4 Club here and a tour bus so we didn't hang around for long. Everybody got out and walked the crossing (except Carl, who following his true English heritage did not get his feet wet!) Elissa, half way across lost her crock! Amid much screaming all vehicles travelled easily over the creek and Bronwyn moving as fast as she could travelled downstream to retrieve the crock from a friendly fisherman around the bend! Two more creek crossings Sailor & Scrubby Creek, the children were not allowed out of the cars! We decided not to camp at the falls as the campsites were not suitable for groups and there were BATS! We camped just 1km further on at Canal Creek. Just perfect our own private creek with waterfall. We set up here for two nights.

9th

26° at 8.30am warrants a morning swim, and so it was. We headed down to the Twin Falls for morning tea. These are wonderful, great fun for everyone from 1 to 100 years. Everyone was having fun. We then moved around to Fruit Bat Falls for lunch. These falls were spectacular! Back to our own



Canal Creek for afternoon tea what a great day. At night we had a fire – our first one! Marshmallows and food scraps made the flames jump. Stan, helping the kids burn everything they were allowed offered what he thought was a mouldy/green loaf of bread, much to Noelene's disappointment at lunch the following day – it was the fresh loaf Stan gave the children!!! Totally relaxed and funny enough very tired Colleen serenaded us with her guitar & singing. It was early to bed for everyone.

10th

With an early morning swim we headed along the OTL with the first crossing our own Canal Creek, this was to be the first of seven creek crossings today. Al and his boys walked all of the crossings as Al was the leader, the boys loved it. Sam, Mistake, Cannibal & Cypress Creeks, Logan's waterhole and Nolan's Brook, Logan's was deep but Nolan's required the 'car bra'. Here we met up with 'Hummer Man' again (nice bloke). After crossing, it was here that Raeleene displayed her dancing talents.... it was the "Dance of the Mud Wasp" She thought it was a march fly until it flew up her shorts leg and got her – on the inner thy! A display of "I love Australia" undies and some quick sting goes from Bronwyn, not many of the children were that affected! Unfortunately I cannot speak for the adults! So, we could not have morning tea here and pushed on hungry and thirsty to enjoy lunch at Jardine River. The men all confident after crossing Nolan's Brook had some discussion about crossing the Jardine? Luckily there are women on these trips and we travelled via the ferry. That took no time at all and we were back on the road heading for Seisa. We drove on through Bamaga and Seisa and stopped at Loyalty Beach. As we pulled up the sign read "Welcome to Paradise", I think we found it.



11th

After totally winding down and enjoying the sun going down in the evening and the sun rising in the morning we were ready to make the journey to the top, the tip, the furthestmost northern point of Australia. We were excited! We drove the 4x4 road stopping briefly at the 'Crock Tent' to pick up some souvenirs. As this was going to be a big day we took it slowly and had lunch on our way at the picturesque Wroonga Point. We made Frangipani Beach early afternoon and began our pilgrimage to the top. This was a surprisingly peaceful journey, everyone walking at their own pace almost in silence! Then there we were, all 17 of us standing at the very tip of Australia. WOW!

Back to Frangipani Beach and as it was low tide, Al, Ben & Lachlan did a quick trip along to the end of the beach and back for a celebratory beer! How Aussie we all are!

We took our time driving back to camp, searching for points of interest that had long been stolen! After happy hour sunset gazing some of the group headed off to the bar to celebrate.

12th

Today we split up. Carl, Colleen, Raeleene & Gis went to Thursday Island for the day. Noelene & Stan headed to Thursday Island for the night – relative visiting. The four of us did an Island Tour with a private group reLAX tours. This is the one I would recommend especially as the young Tiger Woods (Dirk) was our guide, and willing to share all the secrets of the Island. The rest of the group discovered the four beaches run on the eastern side of the cape via Somerset Rd. Alistair & his boys vanished from Fly Point around Rough Rock Point to the sandstone bluff, up and over to see the Aboriginal rock art. Tim was horrified as he thought the art had been graffiti, because all the people had doodles!!

Everyone had a lovely and relaxing day. This evening Carl, Colleen, Raeleene & Alistair took advantage of the wonderful childminding skills offered by Ben & Gis and headed into the Loyalty Beach Fishing Lodge Restaurant/Bar for dinner. In a word – YUM! (Thanks again Ben)

13th

Another day split. Today Alistair, Ben, Carl & Wes (?) headed off on a fishing charter. The boys were up at 6am and gone by 6.30 heading to Jacky Jacky River with Mick and his tinny. The Mitchie family took off on a trip to the tip via Helicopter. And the rest of us just relaxed. Mid morning after the Mitchies came back to earth they headed out to visit the WWII wrecks & memorials with the remaining Sweetnams. Late in the afternoon Stan & Noelene returned tired and with many stories of family, vowing to return to Thursday Island via air next time. Our trusty hunter and gatherers returned soon after, to hungry and salivating families! For them only to be disappointed... You know you plan a trip to Fraser Island by the tides? Well you plan a fishing trip to the cape by the moon! Unfortunately when we were there it was a new moon and any good fisherman will tell you – new moon, no fish! They did not however return empty handed – a River Cod, a Trevally and a Mud Crab & photos of a close encounter with a crocodile! Happy hour panfried fresh fish and pot cooked mud crab! YUM! Then Bronwyn & Lachlan headed into the Loyalty Beach Fishing Lodge Restaurant/Bar for a romantic sunset dinner, trusting Ben with their children. (Thanks twice Ben)

14th

Even paradise has its not so good days, as we packed up in the rain. Al had a flat tyre. Someone didn't want us to go! All fixed up and on the dirt again we drove straight down the development road to the famous Bramwell Station for lunch and a cold beer. What a welcome a gorgeous bar maid and

an old bushie on a quad bike carrying puppies to all the children's delight. We made it to Archer River Roadhouse by late afternoon, set up and settle into happy hour.

15th

With the roads east open we headed for Cape Weymouth today. This was a pleasant drive, along the winding roads through the rainforest and the Iron Range. This was beautiful and a great future camping spot. Chillie beach was beautiful, picturesque and filthy! The wind doesn't stop so all the crap people throw overboard from their boats/ships/yachts washes up on this beautiful beach. But just around the corner at Portland Roads they call this UTOPIA! Hey, they have it in one. This was a lovely haven from the wind with a delightful Cafe to sit and enjoy the view. 'Out of the Blue' served a wonderful lunch & I believe a spectacular dinner by some very friendly people. After coffee and cake we were snap, back into reality and onto the dusty road. We trundled along reminiscing of lunch until we got to the Frenchman's Track. Here Carl & Stan left us and travelled back the same way to camp, Al, Ben & Lachlan travelled a road unknown! This track was great; the views were the best we had seen, the rivers were the deepest we had crossed, the entry and exits from the rivers were the most difficult we had done. This was the most exciting track with sand, dirt, rocks, hills, steps, rivers, creeks, pebbles, bogs, bumps, people & challenges' – WOW – this is what the cape is all about. I loved it! Reaching the Development Road just on dusk we travelled back to camp in darkness. Ben had some troubles 15kms down the road and was towed back around 75kms by the Toyota Hilux, driven by Lachlan.

This was a disappointing end to one of the best days on the trip.

16th

Hunter & Gatherers turned their hands to vehicle repairs. RACQ gave Ben the option to go to Weipa on a truck and the mechanic could have a look at the problem, or Lachlan could talk to Ben's mechanic in Sydney and fix it themselves. Ben wearing a white T-shirt chose the latter. So it was decided Archer River Roadhouse kindly allowed the boys to tow the Nissan to the workshop and work on it there. Alistair did a lot of under car work, not knowing at this stage what was wrong with the car, tapping the fuel tank decided Ben had just ran out of fuel! They added 20lt of fuel to the tank only to discover that was not the problem. Alistair then had to drain the 20lt of

fuel out of the tank and the 50lt still in the empty tank! 3pm all fixed – Beers & Burgers all around!

17th

All eyes on Ben today as we travelled to Laura. Stopping at each Roadhouse to check on fuel consumption, reaching Hann River Roadhouse we decided to have lunch and pat the very friendly emu! We arrived in Laura early afternoon and headed out to the Quinkan Cultural Centre. Here we discovered a self guided tour at split rock and many other tours. Gis and Raeleene chose the Quinkan Gallery tour, a 2½hr tour to do Sunday. The rest of group choose the self guided tour at split rock. Camping tonight was at the pub. Noelene & Stan fitted in their romantic dinner at the pub. Carl & Colleen chose to go bush and the rest of us had a cook up and movie night. So as not to let the children down by technology again all but the last 15mins was shown!!!

18th

The tour began at 8.30am from the Quinkan Galleries. Gis & Raeleene were up early to meet their Aboriginal guide Joseph. He took us out to the galleries in his 4x4, approximately 15kms out of town through a locked gate, a little 4x4ing and pulling up at the most extraordinary display of rock art I have ever seen. There is no wonder these Galleries have been included on the top 10 World Heritage list. The rest of the pub camp packed up and did the Split Rock tour. When we all arrived back from our tours we enjoyed a cappuccino & headed for Cairns.

Stopping briefly for lunch & ice creams at the Palmer River Roadhouse, we continued to Cairns and arrived there around 5pm.

We all went to dinner at the closest pub to the camp ground. Laughs and tall stories all around as we discussed the trip we had just travelled. Plans were made to go back, to see all the things we didn't get time to see and all the places we didn't get time to visit. Till next time.

Thanks for joining our trip; I hope you enjoy your trip to the tip..... ☺

Raeleene Organ

