

Queensland Outback Odyssey

Dates: Sunday, 6th September to Wednesday, 23rd September, 2009 (18 days)

Cost: \$3,200

Style: Camping

Start and Finish: Brisbane

Discover a diversity of landscapes, natural ecosystems, history and Aboriginal heritage. Highlights include the Bunya Mountains and Carnarvon Gorge, the Queensland Outback, rich in Anglo Australian cultural heritage, the Stockman's Hall of Fame at Longreach. Camp by "The" billabong of "Waltzing Matilda" fame under the shade of the coolibah trees. Explore the savannah lands of the Gulf Country and the semi-arid lands of the Channel Country. Discover the tracks left by a dinosaur stampede at Lark Quarry. Appreciate some of the many geological forces that have been at work in the Australian landscape and the background to the fascinating Queensland vernacular architecture.

23 safarists plus John Sinclair, Ian Morris and crew will undertake this trip of almost 6,000 kms through outback centres and National Parks in a Coaster bus and one 4WD wagon. There is a lot of shifting camp and time in transit in some semi arid places but it enables safarists to gain an appreciation of Outback Queensland and its rich heritage.

September is a most reliable and benign time to travel in the vast Queensland Outback. The spring flowering will be progressively more advanced as we move further north. The temperatures are relatively benign and the water is warm enough to swim in comfortably.

Draft Itinerary

Day 1, Sunday 6th September: Depart Brisbane 8.00 am. To Bunya Mountains, via Caboolture, and Kilcoy (morning tea) and Yarraman. Explore the Bunya Aracaurian rainforest in the afternoon on a great circuit walk. There is prolific wildlife. Colourful parrots and rosellas eat from ones hand. Camp: Bunya Mountains

Day 2, Monday, 7th September: Drive across the rich Darling Downs and Brigalow Belt rich areas for cotton and grain production, and then via Roma, a grazing town and oil centre. Make camp at the edge of beautiful Carnarvon National Park, "Home of the Rivers". Camp: Takkarkka

Day 3, Tuesday, 8th September: Carnarvon Gorge: Spend great day exploring some stunning sandstone landscape and outstanding Aboriginal art and heritage. Ambitious walkers will take the 25 km return trek along Carnarvon Creek to Cathedral Cave with optional walks to explore the interesting side gorges. This is one of Australia's best day walks. Camp: Takkarkka

Day 4, Wednesday, 9th September: To the rapidly developing agricultural areas of Queensland's Central Highlands based on Emerald. Lunch at the Fairburn Dam then follow the Tropic of Capricorn to Barcaldine with its "Tree of Knowledge" and Workers' Heritage Centre. The ALP and the world's first socialist government was conceived in the 1891 Shearers Strike. Camp Barcaldine

Thursday, 10th September: After spending some time appreciating "Barcy's" heritage, drive on to Longreach to spend at least 2 hours exploring the Stockman's Hall of Fame which commemorates the spirit of the settlement of the Outback. Travel on to Winton. Camp Winton

Day 6, Friday, 11th September: Take a day excursion to Lark Quarry (road conditions permitting). The footprints of three types of dinosaurs engaged in a life and death chase are beautifully preserved in the rocks here. After exploring the area return to Winton, the birthplace of Qantas. Camp: Winton

Day 7, Saturday, 12th September: Explore Combo Waterhole, the actual billabong on the Diamantina River near Kynuna. This is the billabong immortalized in Banjo Patterson's "Waltzing Matilda". Then via McKinlay to Cloncurry an old mining town located amongst the Selwyn Range's 2 billion years old rocks. Camp: Cloncurry

Day 8, Sunday, 13th September: Through the cattle grazing Gulf Country via Burke & Wills and Gregory Downs. Roadhouses to beautiful Boodjamulla National Park. Camp: Lawn Hill Gorge.

Day 9, Monday, 14th September: Lawn Hill Gorge is an oasis with a river 70 metres wide, 5 metres deep fringed with monsoonal rainforest. Water cascades over natural limestone weirs. All walking trails can be traversed comfortably in a day and a half. Use of canoes will be coordinated. The Island Stack is a plateau of dry spinifex, reflects its red, black and white, limestone and sandstone cliffs in the green water of the river. Explore its scenic, geological, archeological and biological interest by foot and canoe. Camp: Lawn Hill Gorge.

Day 10, Tuesday, 15th September: Lawn Hill. Spend the morning exploring many of the remaining trails or canoeing on the river. After lunch break camp to go to Mt Isa stopping to inspect the World Heritage Riversleigh fossil fields. Camp Mt Isa.

Day 11, Wednesday, 16th September: Visit the Riversleigh Fossil Centre and replenish supplies before heading south to Boulia, famous for the Min Min Lights. Boulia has a museum celebrating them. Camp Boulia.

Days 12, 13 and 14: Travel through the remote and often harsh Channel Country. The destinations, route and timing of travel between Boulia and Birdsville through the Channel Country will be determined by road and seasonal conditions at the time which may cause options to vary between the two Bush Heritage properties and National Parks. Camp (19th September) Birdsville

Day 15, Sunday, 20th September: Travel 400 kms via Betoota to camp — Cooper Creek near Windorah

Day 16, Monday, 21st September: Travel another 450 kms via Quilpie and Thargomindah to Currawinya National Park to see bilbies and hopefully some spectacular bird life on the lakes. Camp Currawinya

Day 17, Tuesday, 22nd September: Travel 550kms via Cunamulla and Bollon to St George. Camp: St George

Day 18, Wednesday, 23rd September: Follow the Moonie Highway to Dalby to complete the huge loopthrough inLnd Queensland then via Toowoomba to Brisbane aiming to arrive about 5.30 pm.