

Australia: The Land Down Under

By Jean Brown
Jean Brown Travel

The world's oldest continent (80,000 yrs) is an island the size of our United States. My husband Jim and I have just returned from a tour. It's a long flight, some 21 hours! You cross the International Date Line, so today here is tomorrow there! Our first stop, Cairns (pronounced cans) in northern Australia, was a tropical beauty. To be greeted each morning with beautiful blue butterflies on our balcony and tropical breezes from the Coral Sea was quite a treat. We took a tour to the GREAT BARRIER REEF, on a catamaran. How can I describe one of the Wonders of the World? Magnificent comes to mind. Stretching some 2,000 miles, forty miles off the coast, is an underwater world. Dazzling in its array of the most brilliant-colored marine life under the sea,

brightly colored coral beds, hills, valleys and canyons, it's an undersea world in itself.

Taking the period train from Cairns high into the mountains to Kuranda, a town in the middle of the rain forest was yet another beautiful experience enroute to the Aboriginal Dance Theatre. Depicting the cultural background of the Aborigines, costumed in warpaint, with their ancient wind instruments, its mystical drone sounding in the background, was both a moving and informative insight into another way of life.

On to Sydney (by way of Australian ARMY AIRFORCE TRANSPORT PLANE) a most interesting trip! All the pilots flying for the domestic airlines resigned, looking for

higher wages and benefits. Consequently, the Army, several European airlines, and some private pilots were filling in. We did reach Sydney, no frills! The Sydney Opera House is every bit as impressive as described, sitting on the edge of the waterfront on their beautiful harbor. The high point of our trip, as far as I'm concerned, was our four-wheeling safari tour into the outback to view wildlife, and did we ever! In the protected Forest Range, just opened to limited public, we ventured upon mobs of kangaroos, grazing, playing "STATUE," hopping all over the range! A giant EMU (looks like an ostrich) came up to our Tea and Cookie tray, on one of our exploring stops, and stole cookies! You ask, cookies and tea in the middle of nowhere? The Australians are very British in their habits. You stop for tea at 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.! Yet their T.V. stations carry mostly American programs, and the music played in restaurants, etc., seemed to be our popular '40s.

Interesting combination!

A deserted mining town was also on the agenda, owned by an Australian woman. She was just what I expected, a no-frills, plain facts person, restoring this old abandoned mining town, and writing a book about the area, the Aboriginal tribes, and the miners who lived there. Wallabies were hopping around, a beautiful parrot flew by us and I felt we had gone back into another century!

Did we see koala bears?? Only once, in a wildlife park. They are darling, soft, cuddly and as light as a feather, like babies!! Wild boars, dingos (wild dogs) also at the park.

Australia is much like our United States, hills, valleys, mountains, its people, like all over the world, warm, friendly (or not). They are now bragging about being descendants of convicts and Aborigines. It's "trendy." Would I go back? Sure would... planning to do a group there next year. You can see Australia by air with Motorcoach Tours, river and reef cruises, self-drive excursions by car and camper (keep in mind, they drive on the other side of the road). Motor coach passes, air passes with discounts are available before you leave the States. Australia is affordable to many. You can stay for as little as 10 days to as many as you wish.

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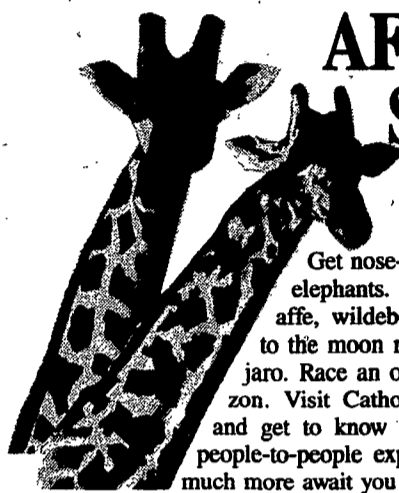
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