

# ***Kakadu to Home***

***by  
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From Kakadu we headed south stopping at Pussycat Flats for a night then down to Katherine to restock and on to Mataranka where we stayed at the Homestead Park. The weather was warm during the day but got cooler at night. However, the thermal pools were lovely. Unfortunately, our stay coincided with the NT school holidays, which are 4 weeks, so the pools were pretty full during the day. We found the best time was around 7 in the morning whilst most people were still in bed.



Having spent a couple of days there we continued south to have a night at the park at the famous Daly Waters pub. It is a typical old country pub but just like just about everywhere it was staffed in the most part by foreign backpackers. It takes something away from it. However, it was a quirky place and had live music on the day we were there.



From the pub, we turned northeast on the Carpentaria Highway up towards the gulf. We stopped for the night at a lovely roadside stop at Little River and then through Borroloola to a camp at King Ash Bay. The road into there was dirt and the first 10km were terrible. It is run by the King Ash Bay Fishing Club and a lovely position on the river but some 40-45km from the mouth. We were told the fishing was very slow and no-one was getting very much.

The water was too cold for the Barra so we did not take the boat off. We did run out of beer and whilst there was a bar at the camp there was no takeaway so we went back into town to get some. They only sold mid strength between 2.30 and 5.30 and if you were not a local you could buy a carton (less if you were a local) and you had to do a breathalyser. If you blew any alcohol you were not served.

From Borroloola we intended to take the Savannah Way east to Burketown through Hells Gate and into Queensland. We had been told that 40km either side of Hells Gate was rough. We reduced the tyre pressures in the car and the van and headed off. We got about 35km east of Borroloola and the road so far had been awful and full of potholes, washaways and severe corrugations, and this was not supposed to be the bad bit. We had another 600km of this to look forward too! I don't think the road had seen a grader for many years. We decided that we did not want to wreck the car and van or travel like this at 15-20 km /hour so we turned around and headed back and then down through Cape Crawford and down the highway towards the Barkly Roadhouse.

This road was bitumen but for the most part a single lane with a hard shoulder either side that both vehicles moved half over onto pass. Interesting when you meet a road train! We stopped at a roadside stop for the night and discovered our caravan fridge had stopped working for the third time this trip. I quickly found that the resistor wire the technician had installed in Darwin had broken. Probably as a result of the bad road so I did what the technician did whilst getting a resistor and by-passed the resistor. The fridge then worked but not as efficiently.

The next morning we continued on to the Barkly roadhouse in the morning to fill up on the dearest diesel of the trip at \$1.79 litre. We turned east again and stopped at another roadside stop about 90km from Mt Isa where we had a nice camp fire and drinks with some fellow travellers. The next day it was into Mt Isa to stock up on food and buy a new resistor. At \$0.55 it was cheap and solved the problem. I now carry a spare. We drove on to Cloncurry for the night and the next day headed up to Gregory Downs via Burke and Wills roadhouse.

At Gregory Downs we set up camp for a couple of nights as we wanted to go down to Lawn Hill NP the next day and decided that it was easier to drive down for the day than drive down with the van. We left early the following morning and did several walks when we were there.



We also visited the Riversleigh world heritage fossils site and were very disappointed. I think someone stole all the fossils that were supposed to be there where there were information/viewing boards.

From Gregory Downs we headed north to Burketown and then on to Leichhardt Falls for the night. The falls were not running and it was very dry. The road east then turned to gravel again but it was very good gravel and we stopped at Normanton and booked a trip on the Gulf Lander train for the next week before heading to Karumba and booking into a caravan park for 6 nights.

I had intended to put the boat in here but all we got in the caravan park was how bad the fishing was this year. Therefore, I decided to book a half day charter. I was going to go with RC's mate but he was fully booked and the first day available was Saturday so I booked. I had also got chatting to someone in the park staying for a few months and he said I could go out with him so I left the boat on the roof.

The day before the charter, I went out with the guy in the park and try as we may we only caught catfish and undersize bream, and they were hard to find. His mate was the decky on the charter and they got just about nothing as well. The Saturday I went out on the charter. We were looking for Threadfin Salmon but could not find them and finished up fishing for bream. 8 people and we managed 8 just legal bream. Not a good day.

On the Monday I went out with the guy in the park again and we could not find the salmon only undersized grunter and a few good sized bream. Just goes to show that the fishing is not always better away from Bribie!

We left Karumba on the Tuesday and set up camp at Normanton ready to go on the train the next morning. There is a model of the largest croc ever caught at over 8 metre in the main street and I would not have liked to have met that.

Wednesday we went on the Gulf Lander from Normanton to Croydon. This line is an isolated line and was established in the 1880's and the majority of the sleepers, which are steel are still the original. There is no ballast so the train is fairly bumpy. We were 30 minutes late because the coach that was supposed to pick up some passengers who were disembarking part way was nowhere to be found. In the end we had to leave them in the middle of nowhere to wait their coach. I don't think that driver would have been too popular because it was 30+C. This trip is a must do for train enthusiasts from all over the world.



We had a pub lunch at Croydon but did not have time to do much else due to the late arrival, and caught a coach back to Normanton.

From Normanton we headed to Croydon and stopped to look at the historic area before going on to Georgetown for the night. The scenery through here is not very riveting just typical Savannah.

We then continued on to the Atherton tablelands where we had a couple of nights camping at Tinaroo Dam with some friends that we had met on our big trip 10 years ago. It was very cold and windy and while we put the red claw traps in we got none and fishing was a waste of time because the water is too cold. But there were lovely sunsets.



We also had a night with friends at Kuranda before heading down to Cairns and then down the coast to home.