

## **Australia – Reefs and Rainforests Down Under**

**July 5 – 25, 2019**

**6 graduate semester hours**

**\$3955 With credit. \$3700. Without credit**

**Does not include airfare**

Our trip to Australia will focus on 5 things: Tropical Rainforest, Great Barrier Coral Reefs, Outback, Mangroves, and Aboriginal Culture. Well, let's throw in a little Aussie history and culture as well. This area of northern Queensland on the East Coast of Australia is the only area of the world where we can experience all of that. What a great chance to learn about some of the most treasured ecosystems of the world.

Australia has a great method for cheaper tourism, since the cost is so large to get there from anywhere. They have very nice campgrounds with hot showers and camp kitchens. By camping, we can keep the cost down by about \$1000. per person. Whew, that helps. Plus, I love camping near the tropics. The sounds of parrots, Rainbow Lorikeets, Sulphur Crested Cockatoos and Kookaburras are a gentle wake up call each morning. I saw 92 species of birds during my 3 weeks in Australia. (Even if some of my birding friends say I'm only tuned in half the time.)

Other exciting sights: fruit bats colonies that darken the sky on their evening exodus, kangaroos and other marsupials (as road kill usually), maybe oh maybe duck billed platypus, wombats, koalas, emus, maybe the elusive cassowary.

Other interesting topics: sugar cane, bananas, coffee plantations, Flying Doctors, South Hemisphere Astronomy, keystone species, exotic species such as Cane Toad.

### **Australia Itinerary 2019**

Day 1, 2 & 3. We will arrive in Cairns on July 7<sup>th</sup> close to noon. We leave Denver in the evening of July 5<sup>th</sup> and cross the International Date Line, which is why this flight is so long. No worries, we will make up the day on our return trip when we arrive back in the states before we leave Australia. Fly into Cairns, Queensland, Australia. We will arrive in time to tour the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park, where we will learn about bush culture, food, music, and mythology. Camp on beach north of town.

Day 4: Ride the Skyrail Tropical Rainforest Canopy Tour to Kuranda. The canopy tour stops at three stations along the way for our exploration enjoyment. At Kuranda, we will tour the Kuranda Zoo and Wildlife Park and the Butterfly Zoo. . Drive up the coast to Port Douglas exploring the coast and learning about the impact of the typhoon of 2007 and more history of Australia. .

Day 5: Drive to Daintree Tropical Rainforest National Park. On way, discuss the history of this amazing rainforest and how it holds many of the most ancient plant species, the cycads, on the planet. Tour Mossman Gorge within the rainforest. Take the KikiYalanji Aboriginal Tour into Daintree to learn how the natives use the forest to survive. Bruce

Belcher's Crocodile Boat Tour on Daintree River viewing amazing wildlife. Spend night in Cape Tribulation. Optional: Cape Trib. Rainforest Night Walk with Jungle Adventures. Port Douglas to Daintree 38 km.

Day 6 Finish up in Daintree. Mardja Botanical Boardwalk Play on beaches and drive back to Cairns. Time to set up tomorrow's adventure.

Day 7: This is a day that we will explore the rainforest and reef that are accessible around Port Douglas. People will choose their own adventure of Scuba Diving, Snorkeling, Rainforest 4WD Tours, or Jungle Ziplines. During the evening, we will have a class session to report on "jigsaws" and to share what we learned about the ecosystems.

Day 8: Drive into the Atherton Tablelands. Tour Mareeba Tropical Savanna and Wetland Reserve. Walk to see Cathedral Fig Tree in Rainforest and discuss how strangler fig trees overtake their victims but also provide much of the nutrition in the rainforest. Stop along the way to see amazing wetland waterfowl. Stay at Lake Eacham NP and hike to see the ancient volcanic caldera that has now been filled with water.

Day 9 Drive To Undara Lava Tubes National Park. (4 hours from Cairns) Hike, see wildlife. This is where we will see most of our kangaroos and Outback Wildlife. We are here as much for the wildlife as for the fascinating geology. We will take the Wildlife at Sunset Tour and then enjoy campfire singing – Aussie style. (With lots of history of the outback and sheep ranching. It was a long way between watering holes out here.)

Day 10 ½ Day Lava Tube Tour Departs Lodge 8:00 a.m. Drive back to Bruce Highway and start south along the coast to Airlie Beach. This is a great chance to see the Eucalyptus Ecosystem and to experience Australian road trains, the only way to move products this far in the outback.

Day 11: Do beaches and gem shopping. Australia has such good deals on opals that I bought them as presents for people. Then, can you believe, I ended up keeping most of them. Shameful. Now I need to go shopping again. Get to Airlie Beach by evening. Tour the local Australian culture and discuss how tourism impacts the economy and how the advent of the typhoons has destructed both the economy and local agriculture.

Day 12: Sail for Long Island to snorkel the reef, bask in the sun, tromp the Mangroves and relax. Here is where we really learn about the Great Barrier Reef and the tropical mangrove habitats. No cars for 3 days. Along the way and at Long Island, we will start our biodiversity research on fish, invertebrates, and other vertebrates of the Great Barrier Reef.

Day 13: Ah, the Whitsunday Islands. Clear water, blue skies, Great Barrier Reef. I can't imagine a better life. Put your head beneath those crystal blue waters and suddenly enter the most colorful, bright, darting, mesmerizing habitat on this planet. We will watch green sea turtles, hopefully Humpback Whales breaching, giant clams, and some of the

most beautiful reefs in the world. Continue our research. Also hike to the mangrove section of the island and learn the role of mangroves in the ecosystem.

Day 14: One more day of snorkeling and mangrove explorations. Long Island has rainforest at your back, sand beaches at your front, and mangroves around the corner. When the tide is up, grab your mask, fins, and snorkel. We actually swam with a Green Sea Turtle here. When the tide is out, the mangrove salt marsh is sandy, filled with crabs and all kinds of fascinating little critters. We will continue our study of marsupials, Australian history, and the ecosystems of reefs, rainforests and mangroves.

Day 15: Sail back to Airlie Beach and start driving for Cairns. You might have to drag me on board the boat back. Estimated 300 km. (240 miles). Along the way, we will discuss see firsthand the rain shadow formed by the mountains, the impact of agriculture in Australia, and the force of the typhoons that hammer this coast. Each person is also responsible for presenting a "jigsaw" to the group about some aspect of Australian culture or ecosystem. These presentations will be completed along the way.

Day 16: Drive to Cairns exploring beaches all along the way. The Great Barrier Reef runs along this entire way. At this point, it is only accessed by boat but the beaches are grand. Tour several of the small farming villages along the way. Tour a banana and a coffee plantation.

Day 17: Fly to Uluru (Ayer's Rock). As we fly, we will see how little human impact there is across the great expanses of the Outback. Read handouts about cattle ranching, Flying Doctors and Schools by Radio. Take the sunset walk to explore Uluru.

Day 18: Explore the Anangu Culture Center and take the Aborigine Tour. Take a guided walk around the base of Ayer's Rock. Travel to the Olga Mountains and hike this unusual and very different ecosystem. Optional: Take a camel tour around the base.

Day 19: Fly back to Cairns: Tour the Cairns Zoo and get our last chance to see those marsupials. We will also take a walking tour of a wetland located right in Cairns. Get packed and ready to fly home. Final class exit interviews.

Day 20: Fly home and arrive in L.A. before we left Cairns. Love that International Date Line.