Aussie Issue Summer 2006

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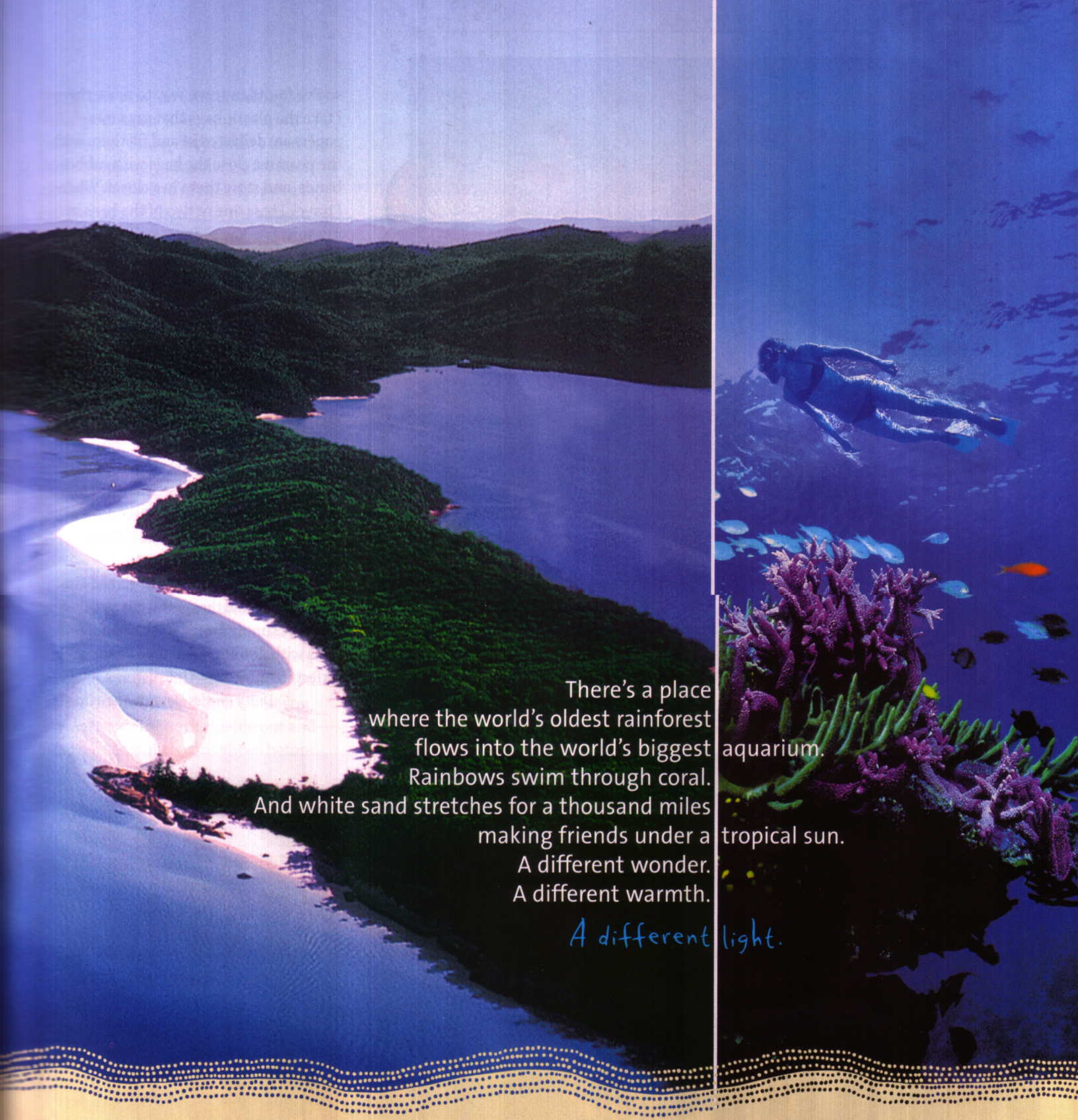
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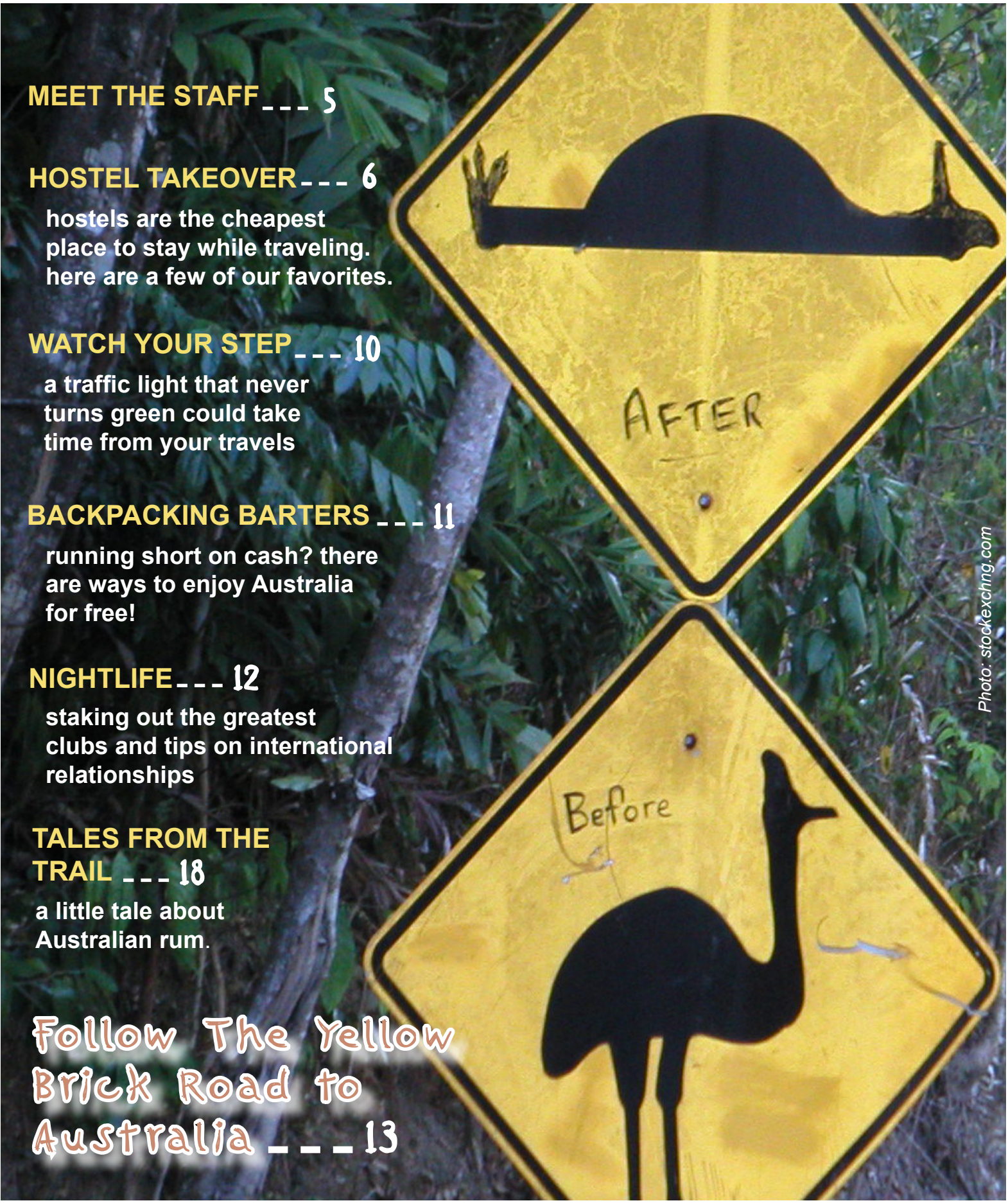


Photo: stockexchng.com

MEET THE STAFF ___ 5

HOSTEL TAKEOVER ___ 6
hostels are the cheapest place to stay while traveling. here are a few of our favorites.

WATCH YOUR STEP ___ 10
a traffic light that never turns green could take time from your travels

BACKPACKING BARTERS ___ 11
running short on cash? there are ways to enjoy Australia for free!

NIGHTLIFE ___ 12
staking out the greatest clubs and tips on international relationships

TALES FROM THE TRAIL ___ 18
a little tale about Australian rum.

Follow The Yellow Brick Road to Australia ___ 13

Hostel
MAGAZINE

Real Travel. Real People. Real Adventure.

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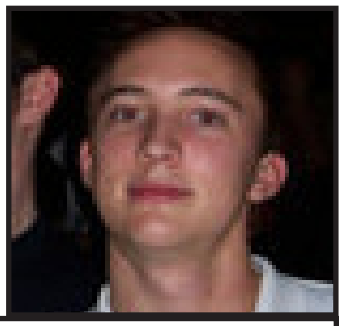
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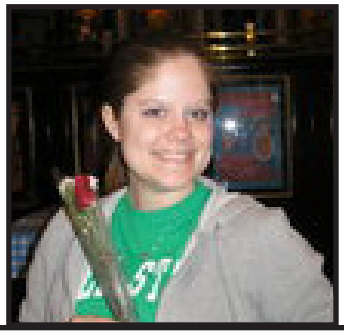
Charles Schelle
Hostel Publisher

Charles Schelle, the publisher of Hostel magazine, hails from Hagerstown, Maryland. He gets enjoyment from random car rides, Weezer and ice hockey. He washes his body with Zest in the morning to ensure that he is zestfully clean.



Brandon Smith
Hostel Editor

Brandon Smith, an editor for Hostel, is from Elkhart, Indiana. He enjoys a good game of tennis followed directly by a better game of beer pong. He is a Scorpio and is under the impression that this automatically makes him a bad-ass.



Hostel Designer
Latasha Porter

Latasha Porter, a designer for Hostel, comes to us from Granger, Indiana. She often likes to break out in song and dance after playing a good game of Lacrosse.



Ashley Rauen
Hostel Editor

Ashley Rauen, an editor for Hostel, is from Warsaw, Indiana. She, like many other women, enjoys spending money and playing with puppies. She also is a big fan of sushi and sleeping.



Tim Sukits
Hostel Designer

Tim Sukits, a designer for Hostel, is from Lafayette, Indiana. He's kind of a rock star and he plans to sell out Madison Square Garden some time in the near future. You may catch him at Cheeseburger in Paradise playing for the crowd, or just having some boat drinks.

Cheap Lodging, Good Times

HOSTELS ARE HOPPIN'! HERE ARE THE ONES WE LIKE THE BEST.

Sydney



Kanga House is ideally located to help you get the most out of your stay in Sydney. We are just a 2 min walk from Kings Cross train station on quiet cosmopolitan Victoria Street.

Kanga House is a small, well-kept hostel - the only one in Sydney with amazing views of the Harbour Bridge, Opera House and city skyline. We are also the closest to these Sydney landmarks but without the traffic and noise of the city!

Sydney's beaches are within easy reach. The city, Paddington, Aussie Stadium, Fox Studios are all within comfortable walking distance. Kings Cross with all its attractions is close by.

Kanga has a range of double, twin and dorm rooms available. Doubles have a TV, fridge, microwave and all are recently refurbished. We have a fully equipped kitchen, free Internet, free BBQs, free linen and free tea and coffee.

A great friendly atmosphere - drop by and have a look!

Being one of the original backpacker resorts in Qld, Trekkers is unique in it's homely feel. The old 'Queenslander' house has only 12 rooms with spacious dorms ranging from three to six beds. All rooms have wardrobe, fan some even have a bathtub! Twins and doubles have tv's. Every guest has a duvet/doona, fat pillow and a bedside lamp.

ALL guests MUST present photographic identification (eg: passport) at check-in.All internet bookings must be made 48 hours prior to arrival and also include your arrival time. Reception closes at 9.30pm daily and NO check-ins after this time - if you cannot arrive before 9.30pm, please book for the next day.

Trekkers a small, fun, friendly hostel which is quoted from Lonely planet as 'One of Best Hostels on the East coast'.



Surfer's Paradise

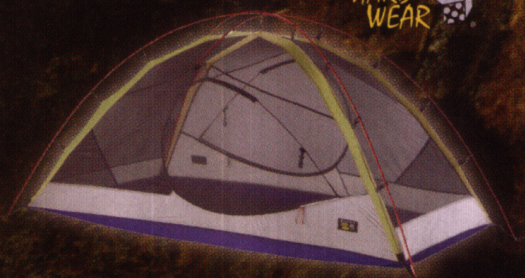
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(continued from page 6)

Cairns

Ssssizzle at the Nomads Serpent Resort.....Cairns style. Serpent is the ultimate tropical backpackers located just minutes from major transportation and attraction like the Esplanade Lagoon.

Serpent has all styles of accommodation from ensuite doubles and twins to larger dorm rooms. All rooms are air-conditioned, with lockers and linen provided....sleep well knowing that the Serpent has it all.

Serpent offers you outstanding value for your hard earned dollars! Low nightly rates are just the beginning. Our in-house travel agency makes sure you get the best deal when you explore the surrounding reefs, rainforests and tropical islands. We offer a FREE shuttle bus from the airport and hotspots in around town and a cheap Internet Café for keeping in touch with those poor sods you left home.

Beat the tropical heat by lounging around in our chilled out social areas, or take a dip in the biggest swimming pool you've ever seen in a backpacker hostel. We offer heaps of activities and chances to meet your Swedish sole mate!

Make new friends as you cook up a storm in the communal kitchen, eat under the wide veranda or by the pool or stay up late and catch the latest sport from back home in our Sports HQ bar open nightly.



* All of the Hostels reviewed can be found on the Hostels.com web site. On the site you can find reviews of the hostels, pictures, rates, and more!

Hostels.com
EVERY HOSTEL™ EVERYWHERE

Melbourne



Urban Central is Melbourne's newest accommodation property, offering the very latest in facilities and comfort for the budget conscious traveler.

Stay at one of Melbourne's highest rated hostel's from just $20.90 per night in a four bed dorm!
Each room has a maximum of 4 beds complete with air-conditioning/heating, and large personal lockers.
Ensuited double rooms are also available.

We offer FREE breakfast, all day tea & coffee, rice & pasta, daily activities, linen & towel.
Centrally located in Melbourne's vibrant Southbank precinct, Urban Central is the perfect starting point to uncover everything Melbourne has to offer, with most attractions just a short stroll or tram ride away.

Urban Central offers the latest in security with individual security swipe cards issued for each guest.

Stay and play at Urban Central!

HOSTEL OF THE MONTH : Bunk



Bunk is the unexpected oasis that budget travellers have been waiting for! With 200 beds consisting of dorms (4,6,8 share), twins and doubles all with ensuite bathroom and air-conditioning, Bunk is a fresh approach to luxury accommodation at backpacker prices. Single rooms have share bathrooms. Arts block rooms are available at a cheaper rate for the concious due to the fact they are above our bar and some noise is audible.

Bunk is much more than just a place to sleep…..Features/facilities include 24 hr reception, free pick up from bus/train station, internet access, job assistance, travel desk, huge self-catered kitchen, tv lounge, laundry and carpark. Dorm rooms are cleaned daily, and feature lockers, unique bed privacy screens, individual reading lights & powerpoints and security card access. Female only rooms are available.

Located in the heart of the café, cultural and nightlife scene, Bunk is the perfect place to explore the best Brisbane has to offer. Our friendly and helpful staff are dedicated to ensure travellers enjoy the best sites and tours available.

Bunk's "Birdee Num Num" bar and cafe is open till late with nightly themes and entertainment. Outside, the bar encases a huge open area complete with swimming pool, spa and bbq - taking advantage of everything the great Australian outdoors has to offer! Delicious meals are available for breakfast, lunch and dinner. H

[FOOTWEAR] APPAREL EQUIPMENT

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SALOMON

Red Light District

A TRAFFIC LIGHT TRICKS VISITORS, DON'T BE ONE OF THEM!

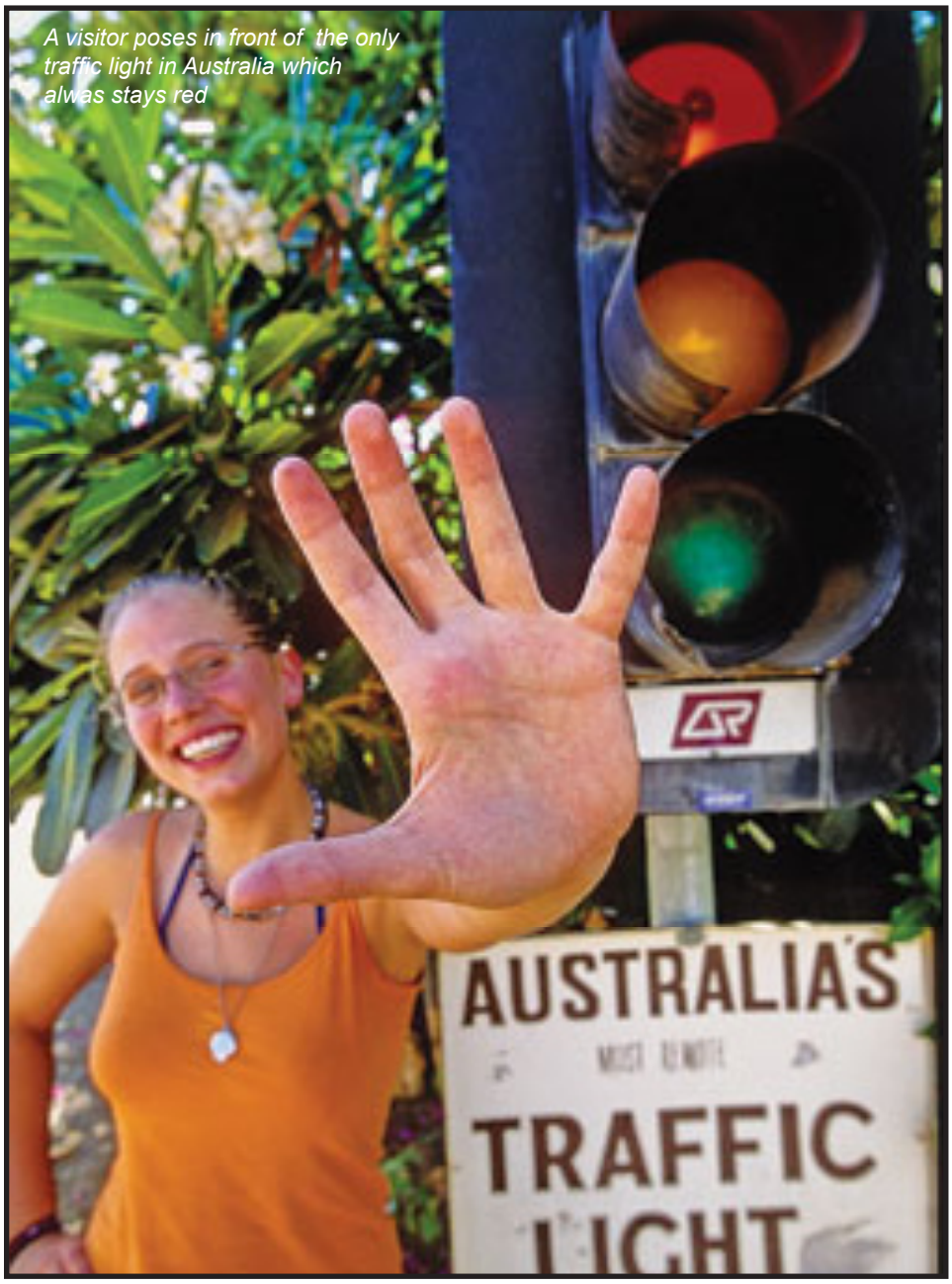
Oh, come on. There's no bloody traffic, and I've got somewhere to go. Why won't it change? Grrrrr. . . We've all been there. Trapped at a red light for seemingly decades for no apparent reason, tapping on the steering wheel and silently berating whichever idiot was put in charge of traffic flow. Well, if the whole waiting at traffic lights thing winds you up, then it's probably best that you avoid the Northern Territory town of Daly Waters.

Situated outside the local pub is what residents proudly claim to be the world's most remote traffic light. And, much to the howling amusement of those who set it up, it's permanently set to red in an attempt to trick as many visitors as possible. It is, quite literally, a tourist trap.

For a small town with a population of two football teams, Daly Waters is steeped in history. The airstrip here is effectively Australia's original international terminal, since it was used as a stop-off on the London to Sydney air race in 1926. Okay, so it may not have soulless glass panelling or hundreds of shops selling only Toblerone and whisky, but it got here first, and that's what counts. It was also a vital airbase during WWII as, after Darwin was attacked, the air force shifted its operations slightly to the south.

The town is most famous for its pub, however, and quite rightly so. It's truly something special, and is covered in crap from across the world: business cards, postcards, foreign currency, passport photographs, drivers' licences . . . by the looks of it, most visitors have left something behind and it's been put up on the walls, crammed between bus tickets, train passes and rather unpleasant looking underwear.

That so much from around the world has come together in such a remote place is staggering. Student cards from Chile mix with Berlin underground tickets. Scenic Galway countryside snapshots sit alongside rather less scenic pictures of maple leaf tattoos on a Canadian bottom. You could spend hours strolling around reading everything and notching up the nationalities. It's almost as entertaining as watching the people at the lights . . . Daly Waters is seven kms off the Stuart Highway, 275 kms south of Katherine. It's free to have a snoop around the aviation complex, and, if you want to stop overnight, the Daly Waters pub ([08] 8975 9927) provides accommodation. H



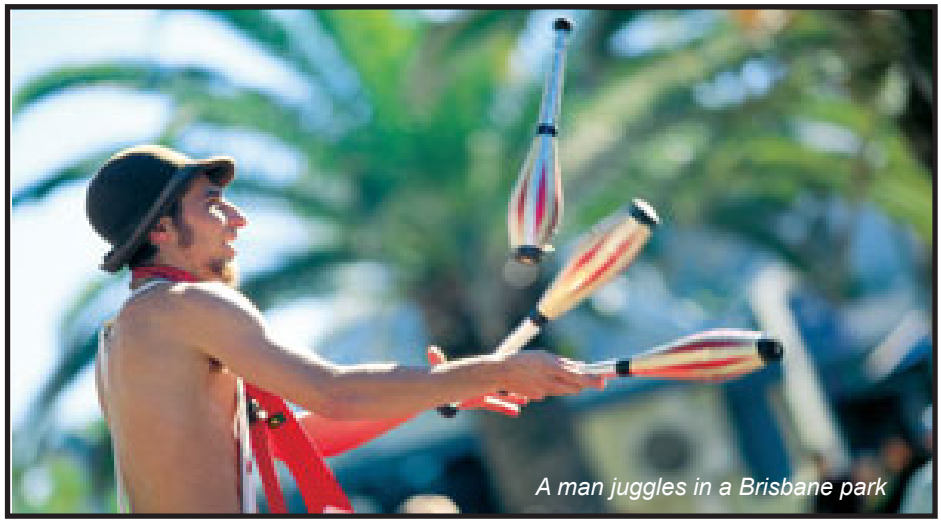
A visitor poses in front of the only traffic light in Australia which alwas stays red

Article and Photos: AustraliaTraveller.com

Aussie Freebies

SOME GREAT THINGS TO DO WHEN YOU'RE BROKE!

Every town has a stack of hidden to treasures to explore that won't cost you a cent. Here's the latest roundup of thrifty detours to keep you amused over the holidays.


A man juggles in a Brisbane park

1 Get shivers down your spine, and feel a pang of gratitude for the fallen, as the Last Post is played by a lone bugler. 4.50pm every day, the Australian War Memorial, Treloar Crescent, Canberra ([02] 6243 4211).

2 See a Tasmanian tiger (albeit a dead one) somewhere other than on an ice-cold bottle of Cascade. Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery at Inveresk, Invermay Road, Launceston ([03] 6323 3777).

3 Learn about exactly what goes into a good South Australian wine, and all the associated challenges of making one. The National Wine Centre of Australia, corner of Botanic Road and Hackney Road, Adelaide ([08] 8303 3355).

4 Watch jugglers risking limbs, unicyclists balancing precariously and other street entertainers just acting plain bizarrely. Southbank Art and Craft Markets, Southbank, Brisbane.


Kangaroos snack on golf course grass in Perth

5 Meet Sweetheart, a five metre-long saltwater croc captured in Kakadu National Park after terrorising fishing boats. The Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Conacher Street, Bullochy Point, Darwin ([08] 8999 8264).

6 Take a hop-on, hop-off ride around Perth's major attractions on one of the city's free, attractively grey CAT buses. There are three routes, with Perth train station being a logical starting point.

7 Gawp in jealousy at the lavish opulence enjoyed by the former Governors of NSW on a guided tour of Government House. Every half hour between 10am and 3pm, Government House, Macquarie Street, Sydney ([02] 9931 5222). H

Article and Photos: Australia Traveller.com

Frost Bites: A Club So Hot It's Cool

FROM FROZEN FRUIT DRINKS TO SLAMMIN' D.J.'S

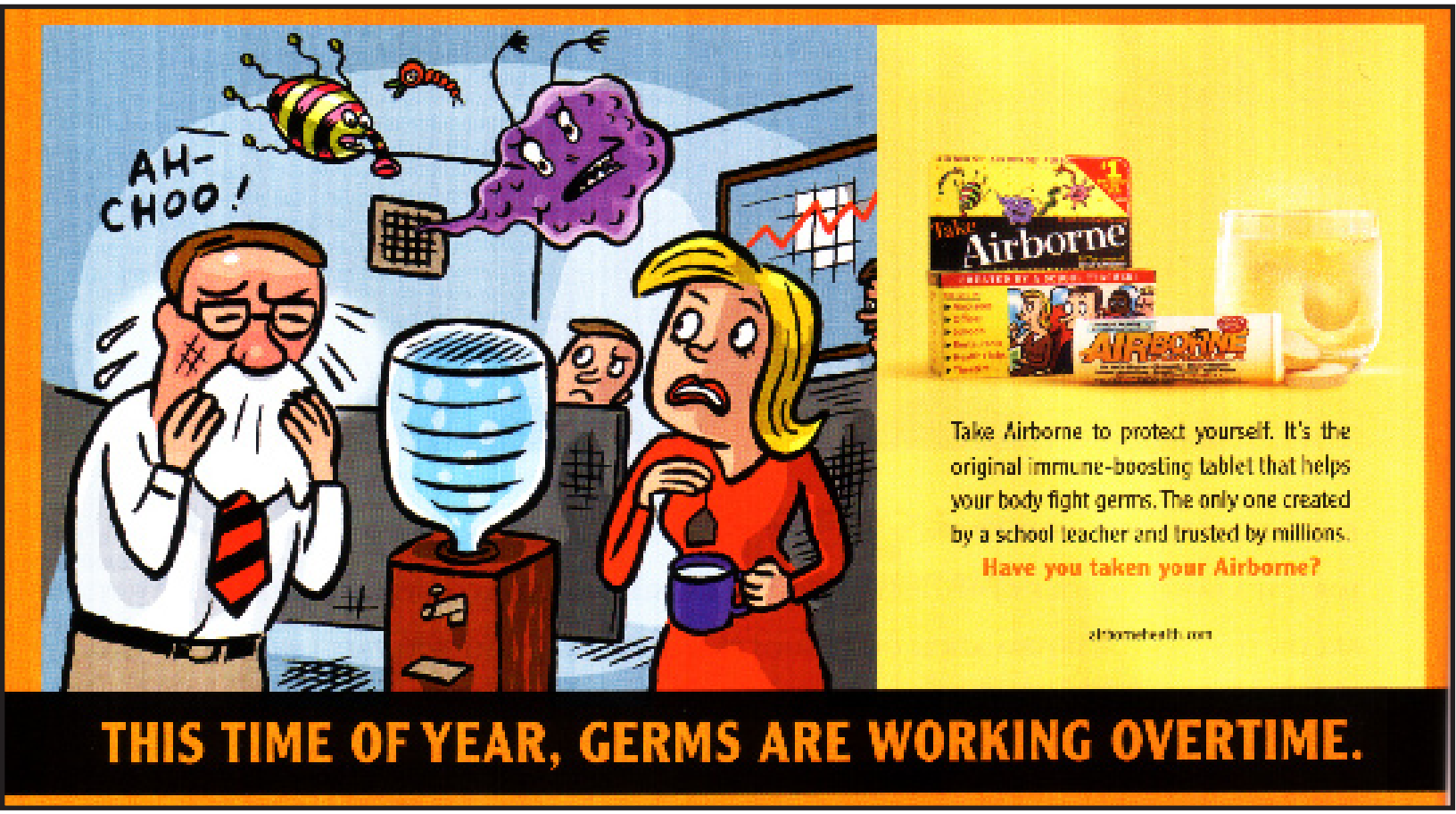
Australia's coolest bar & grill? Big call, isn't it... but with 15 original frost bites frozen cocktails on tap at any given time, frost bites serves up the coldest alcoholic slushies in australia.

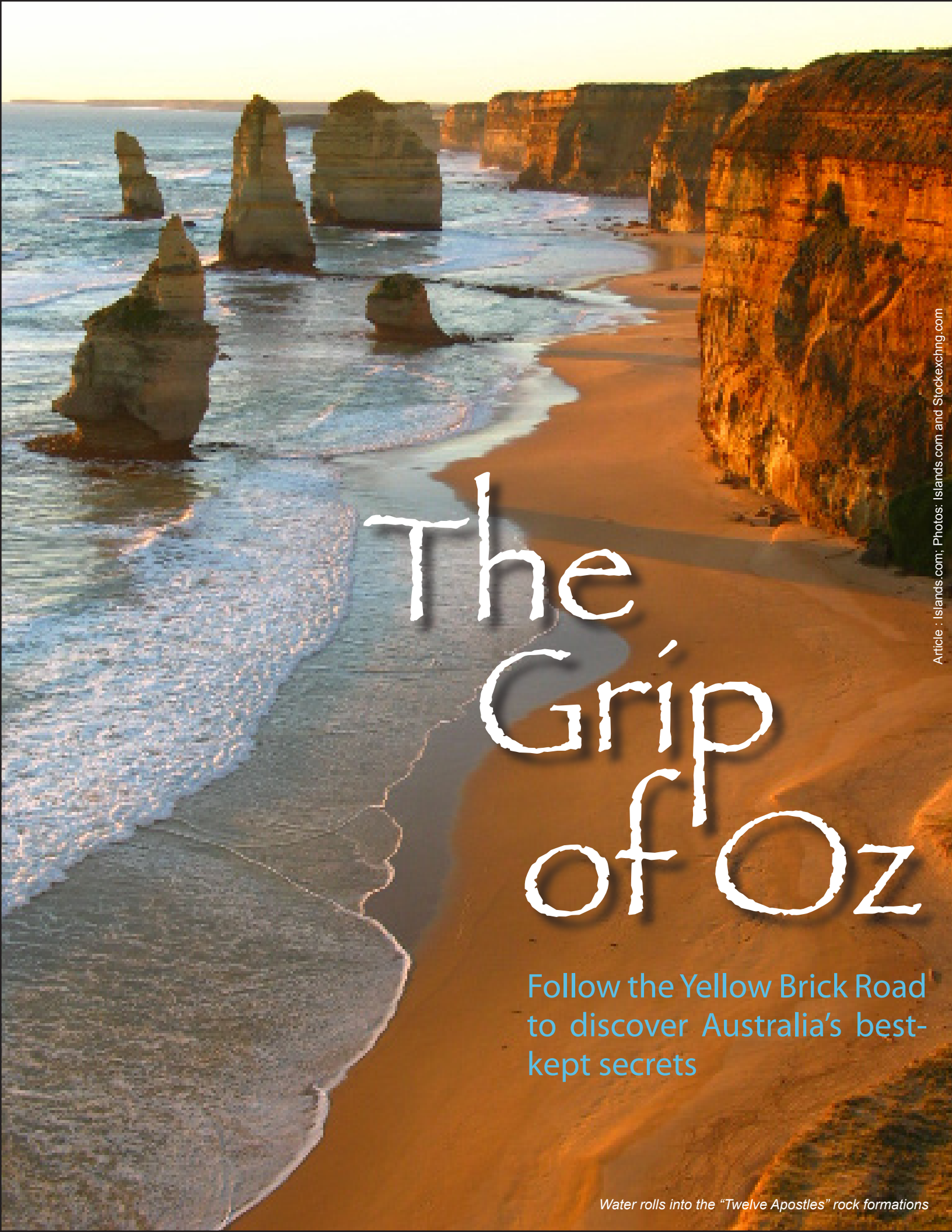
Frost bites originated over 10 years ago in perth and, try as they may, no one has been able to match us. we use real fruit & fruit juices in our unique drinks; these are exclusive to frost bites & cannot be found anywhere else! many imitators try, but we're still here. still the original, still the very best! open 7 days a week from midday through until 3am, frost bites naturally offers all your favourite beers, wines & spirits.

Showcasing only the very best in live music & dj's frost bites has become an entertainment icon in Melbourne, a party atmosphere that has become legendary over the years. whether it's lunch, dinner, a few drinks or a party night to remember, frost bites, right in the heart of chapel street, has got what you need. H



Article and Photo: www.clubvibes.com





The Grip of Oz

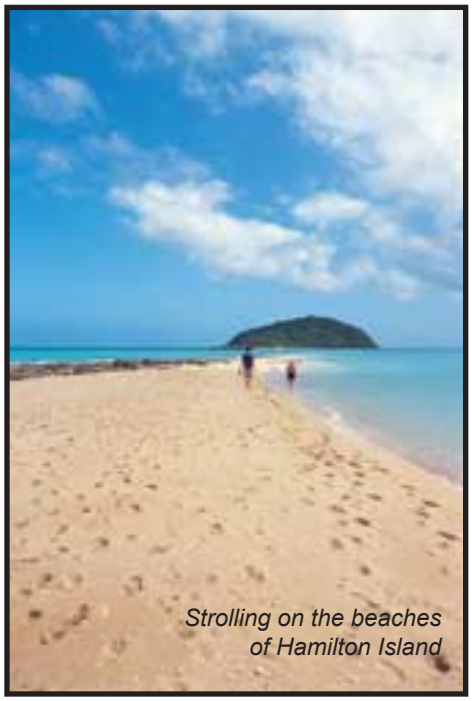
Follow the Yellow Brick Road to discover Australia's best-kept secrets

Article : Islands.com; Photos: Islands.com and Stockexchng.com

Water rolls into the "Twelve Apostles" rock formations

The wind was like medicine. There were only two of us on deck. The captain, Nick, had the good sense to stay in the pilothouse of the square-rigger, the Coral Trekker. Every now and then he'd pop his head out the door to check the sails and rigging. When he did, the squall would whip his hair into a frenzy that looked like a hundred coiled snakes battling for space on his head. He'd look at me as if I were crazy, rub his hands over his mutton chops as if considering my rescue, then shake his head, shiver off the chill and slide the door shut.

I stood beneath a jungle of halyards and sheets that whistled and rippled with the gusts. Massive ochre-colored sails, whose square shapes seemed more appropriate for a ship at Captain Cook's command, filled taut with an unseasonable gale, a "bit of a blow," Nick had said with grinning understatement. But he'd laid out canvas from the topgallant to the mains with the wild relish of a sailor ready to outpace the wind, and now the 75-foot Norwegian-built vessel was jumping and skipping through sea, well on its way to victory. My own hair danced around my head and my jacket flapped angrily. Salt spray stung my eyes and dripped from my cheeks, and I could feel the pulse of the ocean as the ship sliced a deep path into it. said in his log of June 3, 1770, "This



Strolling on the beaches of Hamilton Island

But I felt alive. I felt cold and wet and gloriously alive.

I'd only been in Australia for three days. Three days removed from the nonstop swirl of motherhood and Palm Pilots and play dates. Three days removed from the chaos of schedules and meetings. And I was just beginning to submit to the grip of Oz.

In 1770, Capt. James Cook made his epic voyage through these same waters discovering what had been known to the Aboriginal people for thousands upon thousands of years: The eastern coast of Australia and the continental islands bordering it are about as close to heaven as it is possible to be while still on this Earth. I, however, live in Florida, and spend a good deal of my life in minivans.

Then came the day my husband, Ty, arrived home from work and informed me with a silly grin that I was no fun anymore and I needed to get away. My balm would be "a few hours" to the southeast of our Orlando home.

"Just you and me on this trip," he said.

"Just you and me?" It was a concept I had almost forgotten. Right up there with peace and tranquility.

A few weeks later we were bound for oz. Now, I don't know exactly how Australia got the nickname "Oz." But when we arrived on Hamilton Island, in the Whitsundays just off the coast of Airlie Beach, Queensland, there was something immediately intoxicating. Something authentic, romantic, perhaps feral and, though I didn't know it at the time, transforming. As I stood on the balcony of our room at The Beach Club hotel, the sea danced in the early morning light as if it were alive with tiny, delighted pixies celebrating the dawn. A couple walked contentedly along the shore.

Before we set sail like Cook on his epic voyage, we boarded a helicopter to see the 74 Whitsunday Islands spread out on the horizon and the Great Barrier Reef. Cook named the passage between the reef and the mainland "Whitsunday Passage" because, as he



Sailing over the Great Barrier Reef

passage was discovered on Whitsunday." (Whitsunday is the British name for Pentecost.) Ironically, Cook had unknowingly crossed what would later be called the International Date Line and it really wasn't Whitsunday at all, but the name stuck nonetheless. The Reef spreads out across the horizon in a kaleidoscope of greens and blues, in water so clear you cannot imagine that it is actually over 120 feet deep in places. Several fascinating formations can be seen from the air, the most famous of which is Heart Reef. But I was drawn to the islands, which erupted from the sea like emeralds.

"They're so green," I shouted through my headset. It was a dimwitted thing to say, but my brain had not yet recovered from the shock of relaxation. What I really wanted to say was that they looked so completely unspoiled. The land looked as untouched and serene as it must have thousands of years ago.

"Almost all the islands are designated a national park," our pilot answered. "Only nine are inhabited."

"It's pretty," I said, still shouting, still temporarily mindless. What I meant to say was that it was probably the most lovely thing I'd ever laid eyes on, but I just said, "It's pretty," and followed up with an illuminating "Really pretty."



A plane flies over clear bllue and green water

The next day, Ty and I transferred to Abel Point marina, in Airlie Beach on the mainland, and climbed aboard the Coral Trekker to set sail. As much as I had enjoyed the relaxed luxury of the Beach Club, the best way to experience the Whitsundays is to be out among them, following the same wind that Cook felt brush his face; pushing through the same waters that rushed beneath Cook's ship.

Ten minutes out of Airlie Beach harbor, the ship was riding at full tilt, with nine passengers aboard and four crew. I leaned over the rail and watched the ship slice into the waves.

Over the next few days, we found ourselves exploring, diving and even playing "footie" (Australian for rugby) on and around many of the Whitsundays. Because of their national park status, the islands, even those that are inhabited, remain pristine. Every day aboard the Coral Trekker was like standing on the edge of a faultless, undefiled world, soaking up the nuances of the planet as it was meant to be. Every night the stars came out in astonishing array, sprays of light so numerous I felt I had traveled to a different planet. Each island stop was its own adventure. We dove and snorkeled many of the quiet coves sheltered off Hayman and Hook islands, encountering an unbelievable array of fish life and lush hard corals; octopus and rays and tiny purple anthias.

Then there was life on board, which is where I met Mac. Mac was 12. He had a wealth of knowledge, not all of it accurate and most of it learned from TV. He was traveling with his parents, his older sister Ani and a family friend named Ben. Mac was funny, spontaneous and told terrible jokes. At one point I looked up and met my husband's delighted gaze and realized I was actually laughing. I think I'd stopped laughing some time ago. Thus the reason for this trip. I felt a bit like a small girl who'd been looking at a roomful of new toys, and now, suddenly, I was being allowed to play.

When the weather turned rough, I could not help but stand on deck with the wind blowing through my hair and the sea surging up while those with more sense went below. It was dawning on me that there was more to life than just running around like a maniac. On that same day we were treated to the spectacle of humpback whales breaching not far from the ship. If you have never seen a whale breach, it is impossible for me to describe the thrill of seeing such an enormous creature effortlessly launch itself out of the ocean. My heart stopped for a moment each time. On the deck of the Coral Trekker , where there were no phones, no TVs, no BlackBerries, nothing to distract me from the inexorable pulse of life all around me, I began to believe that I could live my life differently, more grateful and graceful and less hurried. The spell of Oz was beginning to swirl about me.

We spent our last day on board in the protected cove of Nara Inlet off Hook Island. Taking a tender to shore, we hiked up a well-worn path to see Aboriginal cave paintings and a waterfall that flowed out of the rain forest and down the side of one of the cliffs overlooking the inlet. Throughout the islands, there is a casual excess of beauty. Standing on the edge of almost any path, you can look out and see 15 different shades of blue rising up from the sea to the sky. At one point along our hike, we all stopped and stared down into the inlet. No one spoke for a few minutes — we didn't have to. As we walked farther, the waterfall formed pools that glittered in the sunlight, inviting anyone spirited enough to jump in and swim. The water was icy cold, and Nigel, the Coral Trekker 's divemaster from New Zealand, was the first to brave it. Mac and Ani joined him. About the time Mac began to turn blue, we decided to continue on our hike. Just up the path from the pools, we discovered thousands of butterflies crowding the trees. Light filtered through the leaves, and everywhere we looked butterflies were dancing from branch to branch.



Looking out through trees in the private cover of Nara Inlet, Cook Isand

On the way back down the path, Ty, who'd been to Australia before, stopped the group and pointed to a green ants' nest attached to some bushes. These half-inch ants were immersed in slicing and "gluing" leaves for their arboreal enclave. "You should lick their bums," he said. "It's tasty."

"You what?" the rest of us responded.

Nigel looked slightly uncomfortable but nodded. "You can lick their bums."

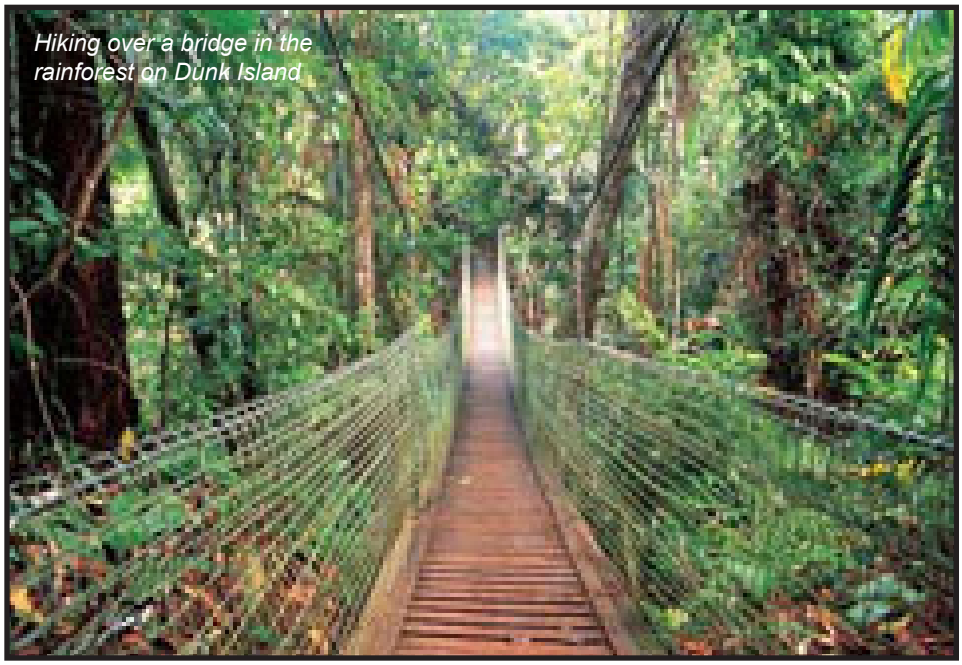
Mac, who according to his mother never ate anything, was the first to step up. He plucked an ant from the shrub and took a few cautionary licks. Once he got the hang of it, no ant was safe. The rest of us figured if Mac could do it why couldn't we, and an ant-licking fest was begun. Nigel commented later that he had never been able to get anyone to sample the ants, much less a whole crowd of people. Mob mentality, I suppose. Later that evening, Mac confessed that his tongue had gone a bit numb. He'd overdone it on the ant smorgasbord. Lesson learned: One bum licking is probably enough.

It was difficult to say goodbye to the Whitsundays, but our journey had two more stops before we headed home. We were on our way to Dunk and Bedarra, in the Family Islands.

Just north of the Whitsundays and two miles off the coastal town of Mission Beach, Dunk Island was called Coonanglebah by the Aboriginal people, it was renamed Dunk Island by Captain Cook in honor of the Earl of Halifax, George Montagu Dunk. There is one resort on the island, a small artists' colony, campgrounds and miles of walking trails; most of Dunk is designated a national park.

While on Dunk, we learned of its former famous resident, E.J. Banfield. I immediately felt a kinship with him. In the late 1800s, Banfield had been a newspaper reporter and editor for the Townsville Daily Bulletin of Queensland, and as the demands of his job became more and more taxing, his health began to fail. In 1897, his doctor told him he had only months to live, so a weak and ailing Banfield, with his wife, Bertha, made the dramatic decision to quit everything and move to uninhabited Dunk Island. It is reported that he was so frail when he arrived he literally had to crawl up the beach into the shade while others unloaded his boat. On Dunk, he grew strong and lived for 26 more years, championing wildlife preservation, conservationism and simplicity. Having just begun to emerge from my own state of hyper-stress, I was struck by a quote from Banfield's book The Confessions of a Beachcomber :

"Better this isolation and moderation in all things than, racked with worries, to moan and fret because of non-success in the ceaseless struggle for riches, or



Hiking over a bridge in the rainforest on Dunk Island



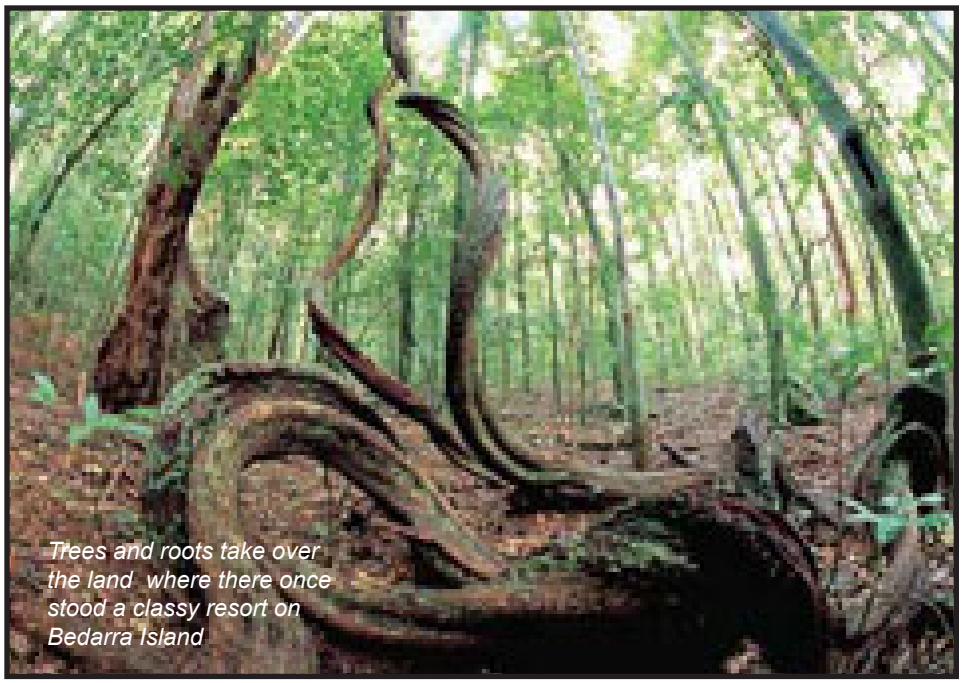
View of the water surrounding Dunk Island

the increase thereof. ...These writings are for those who see something in life beyond the mere 'getting on in the world,' or making a din in it."

I had lost sight of what was beyond "making a din in" the world. On Dunk, I began to feel the pulse of the Earth.

Later that day, Ty and I hiked through the rain forest. I will never grow tired of places where you can walk out the door and step into a world uninhibited. Birds were calling to each other through the dense foliage — haunting, otherworldly calls — and wild turkeys roamed across our path. The roots of buttress trees rose up around us, twisting and twining through each other in spontaneous sculptures superior to human artistic endeavor. After walking across a suspension bridge, we came across Banfield's grave, a fitting resting place for the wisest of souls. E.J. Banfield had been a lucky man. He could have died defeated and miserable, but instead he chose to live simply and died, full of years, in a place he dearly loved. I thought there could be nothing better, but Ty had saved the best for last. We were headed to Bedarra.

A launch service, operated by private and exclusive Bedarra Island, shuttles guests from Dunk to Bedarra. The night before our departure, the normally placid weather in this part of Australia took a turn. It poured rain and the winds be



Trees and roots take over the land where there once stood a classy resort on Bedarra Island

gan to blow. By the next day, the Family Islands were covered in thick, drenching mist. By the time we reached the jetty, 15 minutes later, we were exhilarated. We were finally on Bedarra.

Huge boulders line much of the shoreline. White sand beaches, like those of most of the islands here, are abundant, and the rain forest is thick with possibility. There is only one resort on Bedarra and a few residences on the far side of the island. Accommodations are luxurious, private and unbelievably romantic. We were shown to a villa, one of only 16, with a view to our own beach and the sea beyond. Outside, the mist had turned back into rain, giving us the perfect excuse to do nothing.

Many years ago, when I was in college, I would finish my exams, fly home and sleep for about a week. My mother cooked for me, I'd stay up late watching movies, and no one complained that I wasn't doing anything. Bedarra made me feel that way again. There was no agenda; just a library filled with books, games and DVDs, remarkable food, excellent wines and an atmosphere so conducive to rest that after an exquisite dinner, we fell into a blissfully sound sleep and didn't wake up until the first rays of sun filtered gently through the palms outside.

After breakfast we took out a "tinnie" (Australian for a small craft) and lunch to circumnavigate the island. Without stopping, a small motorboat can make its way around Bedarra in about 45 minutes. We, however, had another plan. We were headed to an abandoned resort on the far side of the island. It had been damaged in a cyclone about 13 years before, and the owner had chosen not to rebuild. We'd been told it was interesting, but when we arrived, "interesting" was an understatement.

We had stepped into Jurassic Park. A few bungalows peeked out of the jungle. We made our way to one and carefully entered. It was easy to see that the structure had once been a splendid hideaway. Striking wood floors and intricate architectural details remained, along with a few chair cushions and other small traces of human habitation, but the rain forest had begun to take hold. Vines had found their way in along one of the walls, and parts of the ceiling were beginning to give way to the inevitable takeover by nature. Outside, overgrown pathways led us to an ancient-looking pool, empty and disintegrating. We wandered the resort for hours, expecting at any minute to see a T-rex emerge from the undergrowth.

Suddenly, standing there among the ruins of man's ambition, I understood the indefinable quality of "Oz" that permeated Australia, the thing Banfield had figured out over 100 years ago. Here in this crumbling oasis, I realized that all the energy and money and time that had been put into building it and running it and making it matter were now just meaningless, abandoned to nature. Life was not about my doing, my succeeding, "the ceaseless struggle for riches." At last I recognized that it was time to stop worrying so much. Time to stop and watch a sunset and laugh with my children and lie outside on the ground with my husband staring up at the stars. I felt a freedom I had not known for many years. I was, at last, wholeheartedly in the grip of Oz.



An overhead view of Bedarra Island

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Rum Diary

WHO KNEW AUSTRALIA HAD ITS OWN TASTY RUM?

While the rest of the world drinks Bacardi thinking it's a bit hard-core, in Australia, it is fairly and squarely a lady's drink. (A Bacardi and coke, sir? Are you sure you wouldn't like a pink, frilly umbrella with that?) That's because Australia, as we all know, has its own rum – Bundy.

Bundaberg Rum is distilled in the town of the same name, about a four-hour drive north from Brisbane along the Bruce Highway, right in the heart of Queensland's sugar belt - although it's chugged back right across the country. Largely by men with mullets, admittedly, but – and this is spoken as a convert - it's really quite nice once you get used to it.

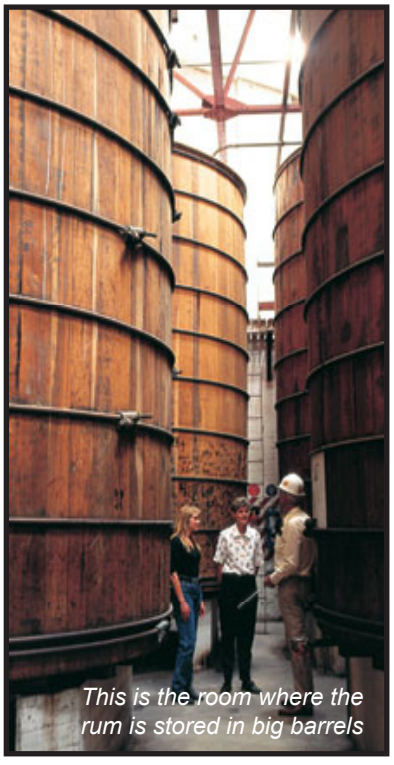
To get a taste for the stuff, you can visit the distillery. It's on Whittred Street on the outskirts of Bundaberg, and a tour of the premises takes you through the entire process, from growing the sugar cane to getting thrown out of the pub.

The sheer scale of the operation is impressive. Early on, you're confronted with a massive pit of what looks like tar. It is, in fact, molasses - the key ingredient of the distinctively fragrant beverage. That's followed by a huge room packed to the gills with the biggest barrels you've ever seen; from the smell, they're quite obviously full of the fighting juice, and they tower over you - hundreds of them. When you finally escape the feeling of being completely overshadowed, it's time for tasting. Here's where it pays not to be driving, as the samples tend towards the generous - clearly in the hope that you'll wind up with an armful of bottles. Take the designated driver's share as well, and this will almost certainly happen.

The tour of the Bundaberg Rum distillery costs $9.90. Check out www.bundabergrum.com.au or call (07) 4131 2999 for more information.



A sign welcomes visitors to a well-known rum distillery where you can go rum tasting


This is the room where the rum is stored in big barrels

Article and Photos: AustraliaTraveller.com





Excited. Can't sleep. Mind racing. Is it love, or vacation?

Bring on the goose bumps and the night before giddiness. It's time to begin the countdown to not being here. This is your pre-vacation, and you've got to make the most of it. So overpack the suitcase, butter up the neighbor to collect your newspapers, and pour a week's worth of cat food into the bowl. It's time to embrace travel with both arms like a long lost friend. It's time to enjoy your trip.







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