

OUTBACK ADVENTURE

NOWAK TRAVELOGUE | APRIL, MAY | 2012

Darwin's War History

With only 100,000 people Darwin is still only a very small city today. When the Pacific war broke out the population was only 3000 - a tiny place where most people knew each other. Services were rudimentary and life was very basic.

So much of what happened during the early war years has only recently become widely known. The Defence of Darwin Museum, which we visited after a bike ride in the morning, gave us an insight into the sequence of events and the characters involved during the conflict. The Museum would rate as one of the BEST of its type we have seen. An amazing multimedia experience for us, and co-incidentally, about 100 American soldiers currently stationed in Darwin.

The theatre ran a film, with dramatic sounds and clever animations of still photos. This was most exceptional - we watched it twice. It gave us a real sense of how violent and how scary the bombings must have been to people on the ground. Most of the inside exhibits were interactive with directional speakers which made the experience more personal. Outside the exhibits of old machinery and other memorabilia was cleverly put together. The place is a "must see" for all of us. It really brought out the feeling of "How dare they!". I almost broke out into Waltzing Matilda!



Aquascene

We visited a well known Darwin attraction that has given information about the existed here for over 30 years. Each day thousands of wild fish come in and are fed at the same spot. It was truly amazing to see sooooo many different fish coming so close to us as we fed them bread. While



FANNY BAY Large numbers of non locals, including young children, regularly swim on this gorgeous beach. Imagine the horror when the local newspaper displayed a photo of a 5m crocodile trapped by rangers at this very same spot just hours after the swimmers had gone



MANGROVE BOARDWALK We were impressed with this stainless steel boardwalk out on the mangroves. The tide was going out so we did not see any fish or crabs but the local midge population was quick to introduce themselves to us.



SUBMARINE NET Darwin was protected from submarine attacks by a long metal net that ran across the bay. This is the remains of it. Two weeks before the Japanese bombers attacked a large 60 man submarine was sunk

INSECT REPELLANT ANYONE?



I am one of those unfortunate people who begins to sweat at the drop of a hat and I get long-lasting itchy welts from mossier bites and sand flies (midges). Darwin is humid and full of biting insects.

Darwin is actually quite a nice, small city, but don't dip your toe or try to swim to cool off - the beaches have dangerous box jelly fish while rivers are home to salt water crocodiles (and recently on beaches as per the local newspaper). The "bities" come out when the humidity is at its worst so if you wish to sit outside under the cool of a shady tree (especially late in the afternoon) you have to lather yourself in insect repellent. Going inside the van is useless without a fan on full.

The most appropriate time to take a sightseeing walk or go riding on the many bike trails in Darwin is to go very early in the morning or an hour or so before dark. We drove in to the Charles Darwin National Park late in the afternoon today only to be confronted by large signs saying "biting insects - use repellent". Certainly puts people off coming up to the highest stop in Darwin to enjoy an evening BBQ.



WAR STORIES

After the war the Japanese paid the Australia government 34,000 pounds to salvage some of the ships that the Japanese themselves sunk in the Darwin harbor. Business is business.

One of the gunnery soldiers stationed in Darwin was in the shower when the first wave of Japanese bombers attacked. He had no time to dry himself or get dressed so he ran out to his gunnery emplacement and started firing at the enemy. He was out there for 30 minutes doing all he could to kill the bastards. It was only after the planes left that he realised he did not have a stitch on.

One of the original fold up bikes was on display at the Museum. The front of the frame could be completely disconnected from the back part which had the pedals and drive train mechanism. The bikes were used by airborne troops to get quick mobility after landing. The design is far better than some of the fold up bikes the Chinese are making today. They all should have spoken to our bike designer, Mr Brompton.



