

OUTBACK ADVENTURE

NOWAK TRAVELOGUE | APRIL, MAY | 2012

El Questro

For a wilderness park El Questro is certainly very noisy. Helicopter at 5am, brogga's dance calls all night, drunk rowdy revelers and numerous generators. As for so-called first class facilities there was a problem with the hot water and there was no water from early morning till mid afternoon. This has been the most expensive camping place we have stayed at AND there is no electricity. Heather was disappointed because the horse riding was not operational. That was the one thing that she really wanted to do here.

We arrived at El Questro after a long, very bumpy and dusty 58km drive. There were two deep river crossings that we had to navigate. We had not realized that we might have to do this. Anyway, we arrived in one piece. This was good considering every vehicle here is a large 4WD dedicated to rough conditions. The vans are also dedicated outback types. Our Avan and our Subaru stood out, but our Brompton bikes got real laughs as we checked out the lay of the land. On our ride, we came across secluded sites next to the Pentecost River. We decided it was too much hard work to shift our van. Nevertheless the bike ride showed us how beautiful the cattle station is. White trunked eucalypts, stood out from the thick grasses. Occasional boabs dotted the country.

We planned for two walks the next day - one to Amalia Gorge and then on to Zebedee Springs. Amalia was spectacular and Zebedee was very interesting until tourists arrived in 3 buses. Our cool, clean van and afternoon nap beckoned.



We had to ford the Pentecost River many times

Trek up Amalia Gorge

What a beautiful place. It was only 3.7 km return, but it was the most difficult walk we have done in terms of the terrain. We essentially walked up the river bed all the way to the end of the gorge. In the wet, this whole area would obviously be a swirling mass of water. In this early dry period, we were left with a small creek, bubbling over rocky terrain. Along the way, we climbed around, large pools and walked under the

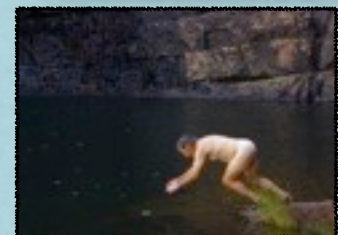
canopy of the most beautiful paper barks I have ever seen. Spiky spinifex, palms and grasses completed the idyllic picture. Because it is early in the dry, we were also treated to a number of waterfalls. Once again, we had the place to ourselves for most of the walk.



DIAMONDS After hearing stories about early geological explorers coming across diamonds in the river Heather keeps kicking stones over expecting to find a carot or two. I keep glueing up the soles of her walking shoes because they keep coming off. No diamonds yet!!



TREKKING The hike up the valley to Amalia Gorge Falls had some quite challenging sections. At least Heather had a go and succeeded unlike the lady we found in a car at the car park. She will not be able to have that extra chocolate today like Heather.



NYMPH SPOTTING Every time we visit a waterhole we wait quietly on the water's edge to see if the nymph ventures out. Heather was lucky enough to capture the creature on film before it disappeared into the cool rock pool at Amalia Gorge falls.

A Place to Cool Down



BEFORE THE MASSES ARRIVE

Zebedee Springs is only open from 7-12noon. The water is warm because it is artesian water that flows through the earth's crust. The pools found here are small but deep. There are only a handful of places where you can sit and soak. When we arrived at 11am there were only 2 families in the water. We relaxed and acknowledged their presence. After about 45mins we decided to leave because we knew the springs would be closed soon. Ostensibly the reason for the limited time is because of conservation purposes. Too many people can kill even the most hardy attraction.

We had not quite got back to the car park when we literally bumped into a huge crowd of people all heading to the springs. 3 large off road buses had arrived, each with about 30 people. All had towels and were ready to enjoy the warm waters. We realized why the springs are closed from 12noon. They are only available for private tours. We both smiled. It was crowded for us when we had 2 other families. Imagine paying extra to share the springs with over 90 other tourists!!!! I wonder if they get hot water and access to electricity this evening. We are leaving El Questro early tomorrow - if it does not rain tonight. If it does we will not be able to get out because even a small rise in the creek would keep us captive.



