

OUTBACK ADVENTURE

NOWAK TRAVELOGUE | APRIL, MAY | 2012

Nourlangie

We headed off very early this morning from our green oasis of a caravan park, to one of the two main rock art sites in the park. Nourlangie, as it is known, is part of the Arnhem Land escarpment. We had the place to ourselves until we met an American couple towards the end of the climb. The well maintained path (including stairs and landings), led around the lower parts of the escarpment. As we walked, 20,000 years of art work (or graffiti of old), was revealed. It was the best we have seen. The scenery was starkly beautiful -- the colours of the vegetation and the rocks, contrasted with the blue sky. It was a very pleasant time looking out over the plains below.

We travelled further south and found another path up a steep escarpment. It was only 250m up but gave a great view of the plains below. We could see a billabong in the distance. Unfortunately, the walk around the billabong was closed for "seasonal reasons". Decoded that meant that it was still too wet and we might meet some unfriendly inhabitants. By that time it was getting too hot anyway and so we headed on our way.



Kakadu Landscape

It is very difficult to understand the make up of Kakadu by simply driving through the Park. The flight yesterday, made that very obvious.

Kakadu has two distinct types of landscape - the "stone country" and the "plains" - as we heard one aboriginal explain it. In the wet the low areas flood and lots of waterfalls can be seen coming off the escarpment.



LOCAL CLANS We understand that aboriginals that lived here were either called "stone people" or "plains people." Not sure if we could tell the difference if we saw them.



RANGER TRAINING We came across these appropriately dressed people training to be "interpretative rangers". Their job is to tell tourist all about the lives of indigenous people and their customs. Apart from the trainer not one of them was aboriginal. Pity.



ROAD STILL CLOSED We came back to Magela Crossing once more to see if the water had subsided enough for us to cross. Alas it was still quite high. Maybe next time.

ROCK ART

DREAMTIME
CREATION



Art is an important part of Aboriginal traditional life.

Aboriginal people paint to record events in their lives, to illustrate stories and for fun and enjoyment. Some paintings have religious power and are said to influence the success of the hunt. The art in some of the Nurlangi galleries was probably painted during the last 1000 years and is considered to be "modern art"!



The creature featured is supposed to be a dangerous spirit who eats females after striking them with a yam. His name is pronounced Nar-bull-win-bull-win. Heather suggested that "bullshit" would be far more suitable or YamBlaBlaMan.



Arnhem Escarpment



PLANTS, ANIMALS AND ECOSYSTEMS

We visited the impressive Aboriginal Cultural Centre today and learned all about the traditional ways of life and how the locals lived in harmony with their environment. The various displays showed us how closely aligned their lives were to the 6 seasons. It was amazing to us how well these people understood what the huge variety of plants could provide for them - medicine, food, cooking and eating utensils, tools and weapons, musical instruments, shelter, paint and transport (canoes). They were definitely at one with their environment. It is interesting to note that there are many schemes today where younger people join with their older relatives for a few months and immerse themselves in the old way of life.



