

OUTBACK ADVENTURE

NOWAK TRAVELOGUE | APRIL, MAY | 2012

Mt Isa

We woke at 7am to get an early start for Mt Isa but the previous 220km trip to Lark's Quarry yesterday resulted in a slow leaking tyre which took 1hr to repair. After 5hrs we arrived in Mt Isa.

The "isa", as locals call it, is not an architectural marvel -- unless you count the heritage "fibro". However after you understand the history of the place, it is possible to see why the locals love it. It's not the beauty of the built environment, but the landscape that it is located in, and apparently the camaraderie of its inhabitants. The country is quite different to the flat, lightly treed horizons we have been driving over for five days. It is hilly, jagged, tinged with red and surprisingly more tree covered than I would ever have thought, It is equidistant to Melbourne and Port Moresby -- about 2100 km. An isolated place. The town grew up divided into "Mine-side and Town side" and the Leichardt Rver (currently a dry riverbed) is the dividing line to this day. We took a photo of the local aborigines drinking in the river bed..

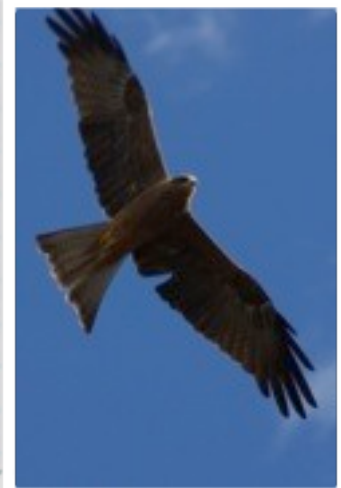


Black Kites

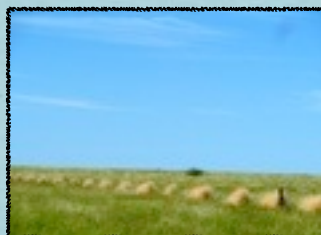
We see these beautiful birds everywhere. We have seen so many of them on our travels.

They are scavengers and will take anything they find on the land - lizards, marsupials and carrion. But mostly we see them feasting on road kill.

The birds seem to wheel effortlessly in the breeze. Very majestic. I took this photo at the Mt Isa lookout.



ON THE PISS The local aborigines acknowledged they were in our photo by raising their bottles in celebration. We waved back and thought - at least they are happy.



TUMBLEWEED FENCE We had to double take on this strange looking fence line. Each post was covered in tumbleweeds which gave the fence a weird soft look.



AIR CONDITIONING Mt Isa is obviously extremely hot in summer, yet they still build houses here without regard to the heat. No wide eaves but metal window awnings and horrid looking large air conditioner units with a hideous ducted snorkel into the house.

MILES FROM NOWHERE



In the 1930's, Mt Isa boasted a very large Finnish population. They insisted on retaining their customs by building, of all things, saunas! In the centre of Australia! They were called Huckleberrys. The area where the Finns resided was called Huckleberry Hill.

There were 97 different nationalities working in the mines which had many interesting effects. Cafe Budapest served up bowls of steaming goulash and the Italian Restaurant shocked diners with a wine menu that did not include beer.



The Rough Outback



TOURIST GEMS

On the way to Mt Isa we passed through a place called Walkabout Creek. The hotel is famous as Crocodile Dundee's drinking hole. Although we were weary after 5 hours of driving we decided not to have a drink in the bar but to push on to Mt Isa before dark.

The story of Mt Isa is told in some detail in the Isa Experience Centre. The conditions the early pioneers endured was amazing. Workers from all over the world came here to make their fortune. There was even an underground hospital during the war.

The average summer temperature in Mt Isa (40C) is only marginally lower than Cloncurry which recorded Australia's highest ever temperature - 53.3C in 1889. It's a sunburnt country, even in the winter.



