

OUTBACK ADVENTURE

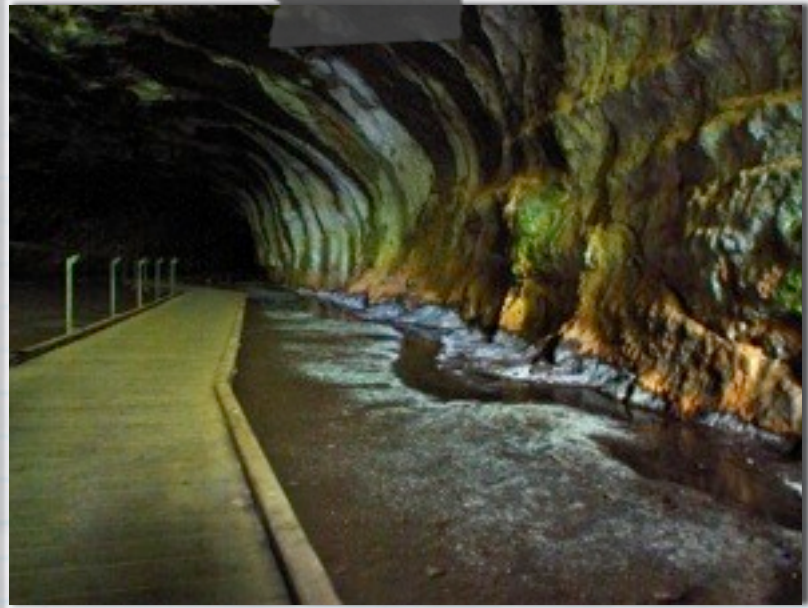
NOWAK TRAVELOGUE | APRIL, MAY | 2012

Savannah Way

Since leaving Karumba, we have been traveling along the eastern part of a system of roads called the Savannah Way. The Savannah Way goes from Cairns across to Broome. There are various alternative routes which make up the road system. Some of the roads are well made but there are rough sections of gravel that are closed to traffic in the wet. Its called the Savanna Way because of the landscape - mainly flat grassy with low trees.

The first day we passed through Croydon and then stayed at Georgetown for the night. Both are old gold mining towns. In their heyday they were vibrant towns with large populations but today they are very small but very well kept and green.

Today we travelled only a short distance to the Undara Volcanic National Park. We spent the afternoon on a tour of the underground lava tubes. In the evening we walked up a nearby rise and watched the sun set on a green flat plain. Tomorrow we strike out for the Cairns hinterland.



Gold Towns

We have visited many towns in our travel but few have been so neat and tidy as Georgetown (and neighboring Croydon). We rode our bikes around and found not a blade of grass out of place. Many houses still had their old world charm and the Georgetown hospital was really tiny. When we were there the annual golf tournament was in full swing. This major event swells the population by 50 or more.



BULLET TRAIN? There is a railway station in Normanton. The Gulflander train departs every second day. There is also a station in Croydon. A train departs every other day from Croydon. Its the same train - Normanton to Croydon and the tourists love it.



OUTBACK We know we are leaving the outback. There are fewer dirt roads, the evenings are getting cooler and there are fewer black kites preying on a decreasing road kill.



SILVER STREAK The Savannahlander was, in its heyday, one of the most modern trains in the world. Time has caught up with the rattler today although the tourists look forward to a journey from Cairns up the escarpment and on to Mt Surprise and back.

CROYDON



In its heyday Croydon was the “big smoke” of the Outback. After gold was discovered in 1862 the population swelled rapidly to over 7000 and was the largest and most prosperous town in the north. Within 4 years the gold ran out and the miners ran away too. Today all that is left are memories of a bygone era and the rusted remains of heavy mining machinery. Croydon’s 120 people have done a great job to encourage tourists to stop, linger, and learn about its glorious heritage. The information centre and preserved buildings are worth a visit.



Lava Tubes



UNDERGROUND SPECTACULAR

The Undara region was the home of 164 volcanoes. Not that there is not much to show for this today. Except, that is, for a strange phenomenon called lava tubes. These were formed by lava that spewed out from some of these volcanoes. The exterior of the flow cooled quicker than the interior. When the flow had passed through it left these “tubes” -- hundreds of miles of them. Those that are visible are so, because, part of the roofs have collapsed. Studies of these tubes have only recently been undertaken. Of course, station owners and local aboriginal tribes have known about their existence for a long time. Evidently only a very small part of the overall tubes have been explored. It is only possible to experience the tubes on guided tours.



