

Saturday 3 March 2012 - At Sea on way to Yorkey's Knob, Cairns 32° Humid & overcast

Bit of a domestic day, Australian immigration, excess luggage and hairdressers. Funny thing about that luggage we are going to pick up in Southampton is that you cannot put any alcohol in your cases and if they find out that you have you will never be able to leave luggage on board again. What shall we do with all the duty free bottles of gin that Rick has been stocking up! Someone on board has recognised us from the Black Watch cruise. Lisa has won the table tennis competition again and the other competitors are very encouraging and suggesting she change her grip – not so sure that is encouraging or competitive. She arrived late at the “Stretch & Relax” class and started jumping up and down on the big ball right next to me and then she started making funny noises with it. Fortunately, she moved away as I couldn't help bursting into laughter at a most serious class. It was almost a full, I think David went to the pub to watch the football. Met up with the Welsh Panama Canal couple who have an Australian Vietnam veteran on their table and he says he knows Kings Cross area well and is sure we will have fun. Mark Walker, who entertains the troops in Afghanistan, put on a good show tonight but didn't quite manage to keep Rick awake.

Sunday 4 March 2012 - At Sea on way to Yorkey's Knob, Cairns 29° Humid & overcast

The massive bruising on my upper-arm that was causing great concern to other passengers is finally fading. One lady even said that if Rick had been knocking me about I would have covered it up. We're having fun at Bridge as Clive doesn't bother to follow the rules and sometimes he has at least twelve points but doesn't bid. We will probably have to give some of Rick's gin stock away as there is no way we can drink four bottles by Friday. Lazy day as Rick like many others is suffering with his cold. Went to the late night showing of “My afternoon with Margueritte”, a tender French film with English subtitles starring Gerard Depardieu.

Rabaul to Yorkey's Knob 930 nm

Monday 5 March 2012 – Yorkey's Knob 32°



We had to anchor offshore at Yorkey's Knob and tender ashore as the port in Cairns wasn't deep enough for Arcadia to dock there. There were organised trips to The Great Barrier Reef, Cairns, The Rainforest Skyrail, the famous Kuranda Scenic Railway and the Koala Wildlife Sanctuary. There are miles and miles of beaches edged with mangroves in this part of Australia but it is not advisable to swim in the sea between November and April as you might get stung by a nasty jellyfish, although some beaches do have areas cordoned off. I'm not too keen on swimming in the sea as apart from jelly fish there are a few sharks to contend with especially between dusk and dawn. It was hot, but how great it is to be back in a civilised country. We opted for the “Aboriginals and Army Duck” as we thought we should get the cultural bit under our belt. At the Kuranda Rainforest Nature Park we were initially treated to some traditional Aboriginal dancing depicting food gathering and hunting. The overweight dancers didn't do much more than just shout and jump up and down with a spear or a palm leaf. Nothing, just nothing though will beat

the ten minutes or so eye movements that we had to watch by dancers in Cochin. The next bit, boomerang and spear throwing and a lesson on the didgeridoo wasn't too bad. This was followed by a trip in an amphibious Army Duck through the World Heritage Rainforest. It was a very short trip and the Army Duck was a bit temperamental as the guide had trouble starting it again a couple of times. We did see some real rain forest fauna and flora, no crocs but plenty of beautiful butterflies. There are some spectacular waterfalls nearby but it needs another visit. We weren't too keen on the visiting the touristy town of Kuranda but we only had about 40 minutes there, hardly enough time to draw out some money and get a takeaway sandwich. We have also pencilled in a trip to the Barrier Reef for another time. Although everything was lush and green it seems the soil is only really good enough to grow sugar cane.



Back on Arcadia it was once again a “Sail Away Party” which Rick loves. I took a photo of him singing and waving his arms about but I can't include it as it wasn't very flattering. The Cruise Queens had a fantastic time riding on the back of Harley Davidson's. I left Rick on the back deck to go to my boot camp session which didn't materialise. A couple of hours later he phoned to say he had been waylaid by Lisa and David and would I join them for a drink. Difficult to say no but what about his enormous alcohol stock that we somehow have to deplete before Friday. Had supper in the Belvedere where all I could eat was roast pork but there weren't any vegetables. At last I found someone with a bit of sense who sent down to the main dining room for some gravy and vegetables. Just as we were finishing Stu and Hilly turned up, the delay in getting ashore put them off and consequently they didn't bother. Rick was once again up on stage helping out the magician, he loves it.



The Cruise Queens enjoying Sail Away



Hilly & Stu

Tuesday 6 March 2012 – Sailing through the Great Barrier Reef 27° squally showers



It seems we have eventually got our sea legs just before we are about to get off. The weather has been mixed today, one minute it's boiling hot and next squally showers and the ship is once again going up and down. Arcadia picked up an experienced pilot to help guide us through the Great Barrier Reef. You need to be snorkelling, diving or in a glass bottom boat to appreciate it. Celia and Clive had a wonderful time doing just that yesterday. Whilst on board we haven't seen much wildlife, just a few birds after the flying fish. There is a cacophony of full phlegmy, productive coughing and sneezing all around – Rick is also contributing to this but tries to do it in private. We are ready to get off as even paying extra for the restaurant has lost it's appeal. However, we did meet an interesting couple in The Orchid tonight who are also meeting their son in Sydney. The son is an actor and is currently in Underbelly – The Razor. They, like us are going to stay in the Kings Cross area and they are also being taken to The Hunter Valley. Apart from his launderette duties Rick is still busy pouring gin from glass bottles in to plastic ones. We had to put two empty gin bottles in the bin and felt we had to explain to Robert, our cabin steward, that we hadn't drank them all today especially as we had the “Do not disturb” sign out.

Yorkey's Knob to Brisbane 788 nm

Wednesday 7 March 2012 – Brisbane 24° cloud with sunshine



We've done Brisbane before so we are off to Surfers Paradise on the Gold Coast. Most of the port at Brisbane is on reclaimed land – why can't we do that? There are car ferries where students can earn up to £30 an hour just moving the cars to and fro. The port is the country's fastest growing economic

development area and the major exports are sugar, grain and coal. On the way we passed loads of theme parks, Dreamworld, Waterworld, Wet'n'Wild, Outback, Seaworld and Movieworld. This is a country that feels like there are prospects to be had.



Surfers Paradise is a holiday resort, a mini Florida, not the real Australia. Rick forgot to bring his debit and credit card but luckily I had a few Australian dollars. We had planned to have a slap up fish meal with loads of wine but settled for fish and chips and spaghetti bolognese with beer and cider. It was a fantastic beach, miles and miles of sand but no shelter and also the sea was very cold. It was a bit of a change from the beaches in Cambodia where we had to succumb to all sorts of massage, and fight off their plans to strip us of body hair then eat fish on the beach off a table covered in flies. Caught up with Lisa and David who invited us to join them supping champagne at The Hilton. Back at the ship it was packing for the hold and a really good meal in the restaurant with a full table.

Tomorrow is our last full day on Arcadia and then we have a week to enjoy in Sydney with Lorne, Carolyn and Homer.