

the

PriceBreaker

Magazine

*Unique experiences in
Australia's Northern Territory*



Issue 05
June 2011

my travel

I had just hauled myself up into the Land cruiser – a real off-roader, with crash bars on the front and a black exhaust snorkel jutting up the side for fording deep water. It was a tough, masculine vehicle which, I soon discovered, looked even better when covered with mud. Which is to say it was perfect for it's driver. He was a bull of a man, with stout legs, a barrel chest and forearms like stove pipes, covered in sun-bleached hair all the way to his muscular calloused hands. He peered beneath his tattered, broad rimmed, safari hat. "G'day mate, name's Sab Lord." His smile stretched across a leathery face and sun-cracked lips. I was in Australia. And this was my guide.



Towering Termite mounds dot the Top End landscape

Being a culinary explorer, I sampled stems of lotus flowers, like sweet celery, and seeds from water lilies, like almonds. Sab taught me to pluck a wad of green ants from tree leaves, roll them in my fingers and pop them in my mouth. The ants, biting at my tongue before their final fate, tasted bright and citrusy, like delicious lemon. Wherever I turned, another culinary discovery awaited, revealing the edible potpourri enjoyed by the indigenous people who live off this land.

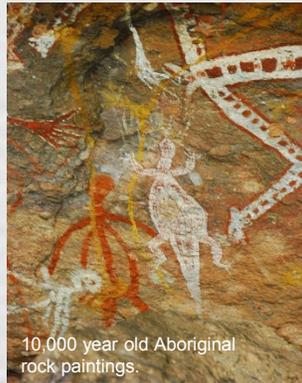


The brilliant savannas of Arnhem Land



Remote Kakadu waterfall.

We headed East in the upper area of the Northern Territory known as the Top End, working our way toward Kakadu National Park and Arnhem Land beyond. It was the Wet, which meant there were few people around. Most visitors experience a baked, thirsty Australia glowing like a sea of red ochre. But in the Wet the Top End transforms to a kaleidoscope of color. Brilliant green grasslands shimmer until disappearing on the horizon. The world comes alive with teeming wildlife and blossoming flora in an utterly undisturbed natural environment. The cool breezes even keep the flies at bay – well, a little....



10,000 year old Aboriginal rock paintings.

There was so much to see and Sab didn't want me to miss a thing. Termite mounds shadowed us like cathedrals seven meters above, as we marveled at their remarkable cooling structure. We air-boated over vast floodplains, ablaze in pastel pinks and purples from uncountable lotus flowers and water lilies. Wherever we went I was mesmerized by the surging force of countless rivers and waterfalls, entertained by wallabies and kookaburras, and alarmed by the devastating power of huge crocodiles. Rock drawings—some dating back thirty thousand years—looked as bright and fresh as if just applied by a troop of graffiti-painting hooligan-anthropologists. The images were so clear, the aesthetics so precise and rich, that the ancestral stories seemed to reveal themselves to me just as they do to the local Aboriginals who still learn from them today.



The Top End of Australia's Northern Territory has it all—tropical beaches and rocky coastline, wetlands larger than nearly any on earth, and endless canyons, plains and forests. National parks like Kakadu and Litchfield, with their gorges, waterfalls and ancient history, are easy to access and very organized. And at the northern tip lies Darwin, a manageable, friendly city. The rest is wild and remote – second only to Africa – but with tap water you can drink, language you understand and no political strife. Magnificent!

Kevin F. Cox,
Culinary Explorer

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