

Post



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A Coast of Gold - April 20, 2025

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SUMMARY

Happy Easter! We took off for a tour with our guide Tania at 8:00 a.m. First stop, a hike through the Coombabah Wetlands, a mosquito-filled but picturesque swamp, then off to the Gold Coast south of Brisbane. Walked out to the end of The Spit, a narrow bit of land jutting out into the Coral Sea. In the town of Surfers' Paradise we were dropped off at Sky Pointe tower where, 77 floors up, we enjoyed the view, lunch and people watching. Our last stop was at Springbrook National Park where did the Natural Bridge hike through old growth forests to a beautiful waterfall. - Karen

DETAIL

Right at 8 a.m. our guide, Tanya, is at our hotel to pick us up for our tour. We're on an "only us" tour today, of the Gold Coast, which is good and bad. A tour where there's lots of people is a defined itinerary. When it's just us the guide wants to know "I don't know, what do YOU want to do??" Alas we do not know this area, that's why we're hiring a guide! Over dinner last night Tricia and Tanya had a long message back-and-forth where they hashed it all out, kind of.

We're headed out of town, towards the south, and it's a bit of a drive. We get some area history and some sales pitch for other tours of theirs we might want to sign up for. (Please no, don't spend the time we've paid for trying to get us to pay for more stuff).

We're wearing our seatbelts, of course, and Tanya lets us know it's a AU\$1,162 fine for being caught without a belt on. We'd heard that they have camera, with AI, that detect that you're not wearing a seatbelt, take a picture (of you and your license plate) and automatically mail you a bill. I guess it could be true.

First stop is the Coombabah Wetlands for a walk. Out of the van Tanya offers us bug spray ("you're going to want it"). Waiting for us, outside the van, are magpies (birds) looking for something to eat. Tanya obliges, and three birds instantly becomes thirteen. She holds out the food and the birds flutter in place to grab it out of her hand. The birds are not pleased when Tanya decides 'show is over'.

The wetlands are as they sound, trails (many elevated walkway so you're not walking through bogs). There's lots of gum/eucalyptus trees. If we're lucky we'll spot a wild koala or two. We're not lucky. What wildlife we do encounter is trying desperately to suck our blood. The bug spray, though smelly, does work (mostly). The bugs only attack where you didn't put on repellent.

As we proceed down the boardwalk elevated above the bog, I'm curious if there are crocodiles or pythons or anything else that can kill us. We're looking high in the trees, for koala, and could easily fall into the water. Thankfully none of us do. At one point Tanya asks us to take a deep breath. Smell that? she asks? That's the smell of damp possum and koala poo, it has a very distinctive smell. I guess it's just not my cup of tea. I'm not much of a possum poo guy.

What's after poo? Spit. We're going to a spit. We're going to a long straight walk leading out into the water. There are fisher people fishing, and holiday makers gliding by, overhead, paragliding behind a power boat. On one side of the spit there are waves and surfers waiting (and waiting) just for that one perfect wave. Eventually we see a caught wave and some impressive surfing, for about 10 seconds. Hey, whatever floats your board, dude.

We drive on. It looks like Miami Beach. There's water, roads, beach, and expensive high-rises. The boats look very expensive. We're told condos here, 20 years ago, were up to a million dollars. Now they're all six to twenty million. We're dropped off to walk near the Surfer's Paradise Beach sign. Is this a paradise for surfers. No, not really. Back in the day there was one hotel here (Surfer's Paradise Hotel) and the area didn't have a name. There were good beaches for surfing and good waves. The area became know by the hotel's name and to make the water more livable and swimmable multiple sand bars were engineered with broke the waves. But, at least the place now has an identifiable name. And there are so many tourists here, just like us, buying things and taking pictures.

For lunch we're dropped off at SkyPointe. It's 77 floors and is like \$35 to ride to the top for a view. The ride is 38 seconds which is really impressive, making it one of the fastest elevators in the world. The view really is impressive from 77 stories up. We have a good lunch and eventually spend another 38 seconds getting back to terra firma.

As we drive on we learn more slang. A cooler is called a chilly or an eski (pronounced ess-key) after Eskimo brand coolers. Sunbathing here is called sun baking. And a pedophile is called a rock spider. Don't ask me how we got on that topic. We drive through a national park and hear that back in the day the Europeans came to Australia and were cutting down the forests like crazy. Most of the European forests were all cut down centuries ago. Locals got nervous and set aside some as national parks, thank goodness.

We go to the Natural Bridge and take a walk. It seems like a rain forest. Signs warn us that they have big snakes here, pythons. They're not poisonous, but they will strike and bite if provoked or cornered. I plan to keep my distance. We pass big, tall, amazing trees - birch we're told - that have been totally enveloped by the strangler fig vine. We see vines just hanging down. They're 2" or 5" across. Tarzan would love swinging on these things. I see more strangled trees and can't help but think "Damn! That fig vine really made that tree its birch!" (Bad joke)

We hear a waterfall and soon see it, or at least part of it. It's carved a huge hole in the rock and now it forms the natural bridge of its name. We see it from below and above. Just beautiful. We do see a kookaburra bird, but no snake. We see (and stop at) an ice cream truck and finally head back to our tour van.

After some downtime we hike to a wonderful restaurant and sit outside in the evening cool for dinner. Uber home and our day is complete.

Photos



First stop: a walk in the boggy wood, scented with marsupial poo. The magpie-looking birds were thrilled to see Tanya and she did feed them (or maybe die, it seemed).



Did we smell the koala and possum poo? I'm not saying we did and I'm not saying we didn't. I'm just trying to forget the whole thing.



Walking through a bog (thankfully) on an elevated boardwalk. We were keenly looking up hopefully (and as it turns out, in vain) trying to see any koalas in the wild.



We did see some pretty lily flowers.



We walked out a long spit of land called "The Spit" out to the end. We and many others. Parallel to our walk were boats and jet skis, zooming by, and parasailers being pulled behind the boats.



There is a beach and we're told (since it's a holiday weekend) it should be crowded. We see people on the beach but not enough to warrant it being called 'crowded'. Just sayin'.



We watched for a long time for someone (anyone) to 'catch the perfect wave'. Finally one guy does look pretty impressive. Time to walk on.



Closer to Surfer's Paradise we stop to see where a recent storm moved many tons of sand out to sea. This happened back in 1965 and the local government's been trying to put it back ever since. This new loss of sand isn't good news. You used to be able to walk from where Karen's standing out onto the beach. Now? You'd fall 20+ feet down a steep cliff.



Tricia, Karen, and Borobi, the mascot of Sydney's summer olympic games. Apparently around these parts he's still a thing.



Closer to Surfer's Paradise we did see a beach which would qualify, for us, as being crowded.



The sign for Surfer's Paradise. Supposedly famous and everyone is taking a picture of it, so we did, too. Go figure.



SkyPointe from the ground. We were impressed.



At the top of SkyPointe (77 floors up) 38 seconds later. That really impressed us.



Good lunch: fish and chips, fish and soft taco wrappers, salad with halumi cheese and other things. Good, all.



The view of the Gold Coast, from 77 floors up. It's impressive. Lots of money has found it's way here, apparently.



Back into nature. This is in a national park and is where a river's been dammed. Doing so did kill some trees. Not sure if you can see them here (wink).



Another thing that kills trees in National Parks? The strangler fig. The tree is small and the surrounding merged fig vines are



The water fall that created the natural bridge. The bridge is overhead us even as I take this picture.



Maybe my favorite of the trees strangled by the strangler fig vine. I couldn't help but think that this vine really did make this tree it's birch.



A cookabura bird, supposedly watching a snake (that we could never spot). Bird's thinking "Psych!!"

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