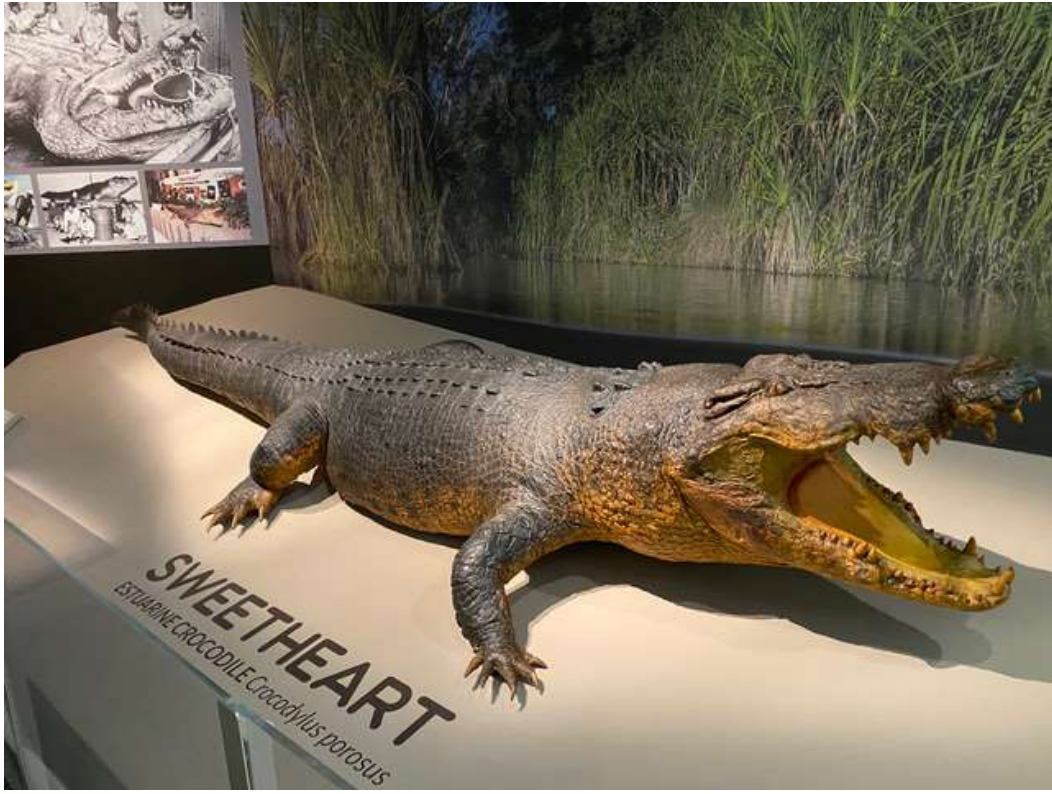


Firstly, we, the Penhallow, the Blackmores and the Manahans started a 3 way WhatsApp Group called "Thrill Ghang" so that we could stay in touch by messaging between hotels, hotel rooms, cabins and coaches at a minimal cost.

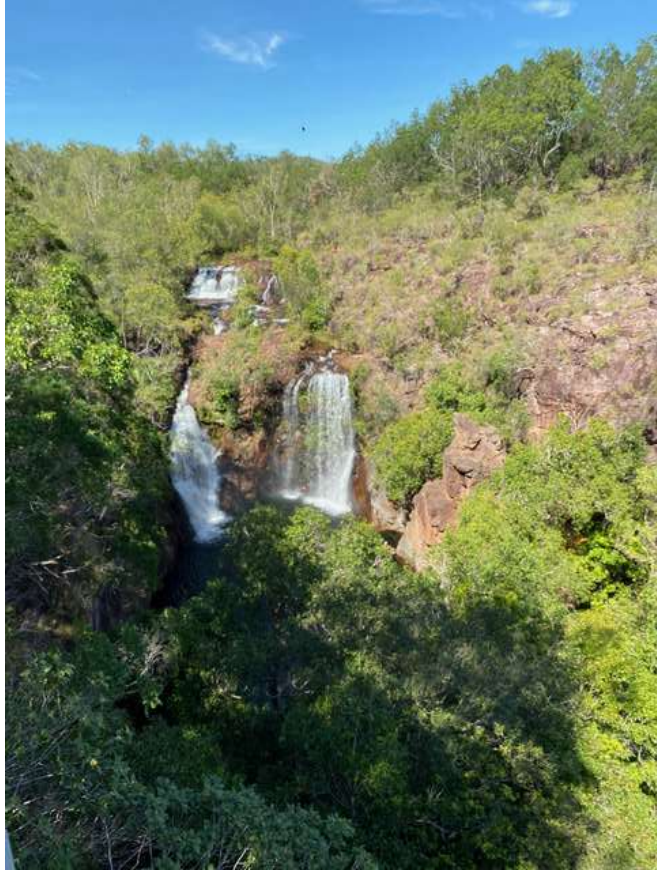
Days 1: We flew into Darwin and checked into our hotel on The Esplanade overlooking Darwin Harbour and Angie to her first look at the water - checking for crocs!



The next day was Sunday and we all jumped on the free bus service (for Seniors) out to the Darwin Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory aka MAGNT. Many interesting exhibits including lots of things that can kill you starting with Sweetheart the big male croc that is thankfully stuffed and on display! The Cyclone Tracy Exhibit was the most moving for us as we heard the sound of the cyclone that my brother and family would have heard back in 1974.



Day 3 :We took an all day coach trip to Litchfield Park to check out the Termite Mounds and the Waterfalls there. It was a fascinating day flora and fauna that included a swim in the Florence Waterfall Pool for 4 of us





Day 4: An afternoon adventure up the Adelaide River to feed the Jumping Crocodiles and the swooping Whistling Kites.



On our return to Darwin we wandered up the road to Ruby's for our final Darwin Dinner together.



Day 5. We joined a hundred other travellers down the road for the coach transfer to The Ghan.





YOUR JOURNEY BY NUMBERS

YOUR JOURNEY

- 2 nights and 3 days (54 hours) for a one-way journey spanning 2979km
- Average train speed is 85km/h with a maximum speed of 115km/h
- Average train length and weight is 902 metres and 1768 tonnes

YOUR AVERAGE RETURN RAIL JOURNEY INCLUDES APPROXIMATELY:

- 49 onboard crew
- 25 Platinum Service beds and 258 Gold Service beds
- 36 carriages, including guest carriages, crew quarters, Platinum Club, Queen Adelaide Restaurants, Outback Explorer Lounges and power vans
- 3 power vans, which each contain three 180kVa generators – each van provides electricity for approximately 14 carriages
- 2 locomotives which cost approximately \$100,000 to operate
- 40,000 litres of diesel
- 3000 litres of water for each carriage
- \$40,000 in maintenance and servicing costs
- \$70,000 in fees to access and use the rail tracks



At lunch in the Queen Adelaide Dining Car Derrick was holding court!

In the afternoon we had an off train trip up the Katherine Gorge which was spectacular!



and saw the rock art paintings that were 40,000 years old!



That night the fun started who would sleep on the top bed!



Day 6: On to Alice Springs



We were met by a fleet of buses and some of us went to the Alice Springs Desert Park to see the Bird Show - more feeding on the wing and a demo of a Buzzard busting an Emu egg open by throwing a stone at it. Here's the before shot...



The Park Ranger with his Aboriginal partner then went on to show and tell us all about more animals, plants and trees that can kill you if you choose the wrong one to touch or eat! The Nocturnal House was a delight with interesting exhibits like Thorny Devils and Bilbys.



In the evening we were whisked off again in coaches to the old Telegraph Station for an Outback BarBQ Dinner Under the Stars for all the 250+ passengers on the train. They had a great local band playing classic Aussie Rock Songs like Great Southern Land, Under the Milky Way and Solid Rock. The guest Didgeridoo player turned out to be a very knowledgeable astronomer who pointed out all the various star groups to us. The station buildings were like a living museum too.





Day 7: A stop at a siding called Manguri and onto coaches for the ride into Cooper Pedy via the Breakaways where the land just drops away and you see a huge plain of flat topped mesas a couple of hundred metres below you.



Back on the bus we checked out the longest fence in the world the Dog Fence to keep the Dingoes out before driving in to Cooper Pedy. What a town this is! We checked out the Underground Serbian Church, the Opal Mine shops - most of the hotels offer underground accomodation where the temp is a constant 24C.



Then it was time for lunch down an Opal Mine, so donning our Ghan Hard Hats from the coach driver we all trooped down into the tunnels below, found out how to make explosive sticks and not to hang around once the fuse is lit!



It's a real moonscape alright!



Back to the train to be met by a glass of something nice in red, white and amber colours before boarding the train for a fantastic sunset dinner. Brian kept saying it's getting better every few minutes so here's one just before it goes too dark:



Day 8: Arrival into Adelaide - not much happened we all did our own thing!

Day 9: After an early morning wake up for the Anzac Day Dawn Service in our hotel rooms on TV we met up for a small group guided tour of three Adelaide Hills

Wineries and Hahndorf. Greig, our driver was really knowledgeable and started us off at Penfolds Magill Estate for a tasting of some of the best of the current crop. Here we are tasting "Baby Grange" the 389 blend.



After the tasting Greg showed us around the historic site just 15 minutes from our hotel in town and still has wine producing vines there:





We all bought something from the next winery, Artwines as the owner was very charming and she runs a well organised tasting room and restaurant there. The wines were also affordable between \$20 and \$30 a bottle.



The afternoon finished with a tea and coffee stop in Hahndorf that great little German style Village that was full of happy tourists enjoying the Anzac Day sunshine.

Day 10: An early morning start at the Airport for the flight back to Sydney - we all had a great holiday - everything happened as planned with no surprises. And should anybody be interested Next year I'll be looking at the Great Southern Train Trip run by the same company in December 2022 or Jan 2023. It starts in Brisbane and travels with stops at Coffs Harbour, Canberra and The Grampians to Adelaide with hotel nights at either end of the 7 or 8 day holiday. Let me know if you are remotely interested! John Penhallow.

