

# Sand Groper

## Day 1 Sydney, New South Wales

Welcome to Sydney, Australia's International city. Overlooking the "harbour" the city quietly executes its evolution in true, casual Australian style. It feels no need to advertise its virtues — locals know how good they've got it. After transferring to the hotel, located along Darling Harbour, take a walk and experience the city for yourself. Dinner tonight will be on your own. To avoid jet lag, drink lots of water and get to bed at a reasonable hour.

## Day 2 Bankstown Airport

Transfer for the day to Bankstown to meet your plane and our crew. A CFI will be on hand to perform the check rides, sign off for your Australian licensing, and conduct the tour briefing. Afterward, enjoy a "welcome" dinner with your travel companions.

## Day 3 Sydney to Glen Innes, New South Wales

Known as the Celtic Country of Australia, and home to the official National monument celebrating the Celtic pioneers of the 1830's, Glen Innes, unlike the rest of Australia, is home to four distinct seasons including occasional snowfall in Winter. Sample award winning wines and try your luck at some of the world's richest sapphire, emerald and topaz gem fields all the while surrounded by World Heritage listed national parks.

## Day 4 Glen Innes to Fraser Island, Queensland

Landing at nearby Hervey Bay, then ferrying to the island, you will discover that Fraser Island is one of the true wonders of Australia. At 184,000 sq km (114,332 sq miles), it is the largest sand island in the world. See the extraordinary freshwater sand dune lakes, quiet streams, white beaches, rainforest, eucalyptus forests and massive cliffs of multi colored sand. This World Heritage listed national park will be our stop over for the night.

## Day 5 and 6 Fraser Island to Hamilton Island, Queensland

If you didn't take the opportunity to enjoy the beach at Fraser Island, here is another opportunity at Hamilton Island. First, however, a trip out to the reef to experience one of the most beautiful wonders on Earth. If you don't dive or snorkel, that's fine too. The dive instructors can give you a lesson on both. Getting into the water isn't mandatory, but having fun and enjoying the day is. Back on shore, there are 20 kilometers of bushwalking trails and endless beaches. By the marina, a village has been built to overlook the harbour. You can find everything from souvenirs to ice cream as well as a cocktail to end the day.

## Day 7 and 8 Hamilton Island to Cairns, Queensland

There are so many activities available in this town that you may have a difficult time choosing. As we will be here for two days, you get to decide your itinerary. Will it be beach, reef diving or snorkeling, botanical gardens, the 7.5 kilometer (4.6 mile) long skyrail, Tjapukai Aboriginal Culture Centre, a trip to Hartley's Crocodile Adventure Park to see the "Best Crocodile Show in Australia," or just resting by the motel pool? These two days are yours. You decide. Be sure to have your picture taken by the 7 meter (21 feet) tall Big Captain Cook and the 8 meter (24 feet) tall Marlin statues in town. (You thought they made everything big in Texas!!!)

## Day 9 Georgetown, Queensland

Georgetown is a pleasant, sleepy little town on the Etheridge River. Recognized as the centre of some of the best gem fields in Queensland, it is said that everyone who goes to O'Brien's Creek (north of Mount Surprise) will bring back a piece of topaz. The agate in the area, most notably the formations known as 'thunder eggs,' are a result of now ancient volcanoes that litter Australia from coast to desert. Because of its rich and fertile red basalt soils, the region became prime grazing country. The cattle in the area are predominantly Brahmin and the locally developed Droughtmaster. Local and privately owned Cobbold Gorge will remind you of a miniature Grand Canyon.

## Day 10 Georgetown to Burketown, Queensland

Located 418 km north of Mount Isa and 15 metres above sea-level, Burketown proudly announces to the world that it is 'The Barramundi Capital of Australia'. This small town on the flat plains of the Gulf near the Albert River is really nothing more than a school, a pub, a couple of service stations, a council office, and three general stores. It currently has a population of 235 which is about as high as it has ever been. As there is little to interest tourists in this town, take the day to relax or go fishing. You're not going to find a better place to wet a hook.

## Day 11 and 12 Burketown to Katherine via a stop over in Borroloola

Long flying day today, but due to the fact that these tiny little towns have limited accommodation, and avgas, we press onward. Stop in Borroloola for lunch and fuel and keep heading northwest to Katherine. 32 kilometers (20 miles)

northeast of Katherine, lies a series of gorges cut into the banks of the Adelaide River. The Katherine Gorge National Park, an 180,352 hectare (445,659 acres) park, is comprised of 13 gorges each of which are separated by rocky areas during the "dry season." Our cruise up the river is made interesting not only by the gorges themselves, but by the guides, who aren't timid about creating fanciful stories for visitor's entertainment. We are reminded to keep our hands inside the boat, for in the words of the John Williamson song, "don't use your hands for a paddle;crocodile waiting for you."

#### Day 13 Katherine to Kununurra, Western Australia

Although Kununurra is a fairly young town, it sits on an ancient landscape where early Aboriginal tribes roamed. In fact, the word Kununurra means 'big water' in the language of Aboriginal locals. Untamed and adventurous Kununurra is the gateway to some of Western Australia's remarkable natural attractions. With sizzling red soil, wide open blue skies and rugged bush scenery, this place will awaken your senses through a landscape of gorges, waterfalls and cattle stations the size of small European countries. And let's not forget the Argyle Diamond mine, the World's largest producer of diamonds. Fly over Lake Argyle, so vast it's called the Inland Sea.

#### Day 14 Kununurra to The Kimberley

Today we head west towards the area of Australia called The Kimberley. Some people claim that warm sunny days and balmy nights make The Kimberley a tropical paradise. The next stop over is at Drysdale River Station, a one million acre working cattle station located on the dirt track, between the towns of Kimberley and Kalumburu, in the extreme northern part of Western Australia. Experience for yourself how isolated this area can be just after the "Wet";

#### Day 15 The Kimberley to Broome

Continuing west, fly over the horizontal waterfall before turning slightly southwest towards the town of Broome. Broome, founded in the 1880's due to the discovery of rich pearling grounds just offshore, is home to 22k (13mile) Cable Beach which is considered to be the most beautiful beach in Australia. At the southern tip of the beach is an outcropping of impossibly red rocks that are in extreme contrast to the blue of the Indian Ocean. At Gantheasume Point, dinosaur footprints, estimated at over 130 million years old, are visible at low tide. On the events calendar for the day;a camel ride on the pristine sand of Cable Beach.

#### Day 16 Port Hedland

Port Hedland is a massive port on the Western Australia coast exporting the extensive iron ore deposits found in the region. No tour today. Spend the day hanging out in the town's main attraction, Pretty Pool, a popular picnicking, swimming, and shell fossicking area. Be careful in the water, though. Sharks, sea snakes, stonefish and blue ringed octopus frequent these waters. The fishing, turtle watching, mangrove crabbing, and whale watching (seasonal) is incredible. If you're interested, a trip can be arranged.

#### Day 17 Port Hedland to Coral Bay

Coral Bay is a small settlement that lies protected from the Indian Ocean by the Ningaloo Reef. It is Australia's only fringing reef, and in contrast to the Great Barrier Reef, the coral starts right at the water's edge. Whale Sharks come to the area between March and June. The largest fish in the world, they can grow to 14 meters in length. They are filter feeders that live off plankton and krill and thus are entirely safe to swim with.

#### Day 18 Coral Bay to Monkey Mia, Western Australia

Leave early so that you can spend the afternoon, swimming with Monkey Mia's famous wild resident dolphins, which come to shore to "visit" the tourists. If you prefer not to spend the day with "flipper," then be sure to take a trip out to Hamelin's Pool; a landlocked, hyper-salinated pool filled with cyan bacteria. Known as "living fossils," the cyan bacteria has grown into large stromatolites and is believed to be one of the oldest forms of life on earth. This area lays claim to being one of Australia's most important historical sites. The juxtaposition between the early Dutch explorers, the romance of pearl fishing, and white sand beaches edged by aquamarine waters that stretch to the horizon, is more apparent here than anywhere else in Australia. Day 19 Monkey Mia to Geraldton, Western Australia

Located between beautiful coastlines to the west, and rolling hills to the east, is the town of Geraldton. You have the option of two tours today. One is a wildflower tour. It is said that Western Australia has over 12,000 different wildflowers that bloom between April and October. Surprisingly, only 4,000 of these have been categorized and named. If flowers are a passion for you, you will love this tour. The other is a sightseeing tour of the town. First off, is the Memorial to the HMS Sydney, a WWII battleship that sank during a confrontation with a German battleship and remains lost at sea. Continuing on with the nautical theme, is the Shipwrecks Gallery, which is a wonderful example of how a museum allows us to vicariously participate in daily life on a 1670's exploration vessel.

#### Day 20 Geraldton to Perth

Welcome to Perth, the "friendly city." After all of the smaller towns, Perth is a well received oasis on our journey. There are many things to do in Perth: take a river cruise, cuddle a koala or wombat at nearby Caversham Wildlife Park or hit the golf course. Even though upon landing in Perth, the tour is officially over, we would be happy to assist in arranging activities for you for the day. Transportation back to the hotel is already organized as is a farewell feast tonight.

\*\*This is an all-inclusive holiday. The only things not covered are alcohol, souvenirs and International airfares.

\*\*As this is a flying tour, we are at the mercy of the weather. Therefore, tour cities are subject to change.

#### Terms and Conditions

**TERMS:** A 10% deposit is required to hold your spot on the tour. All tours are provisional until we have sufficient bookings. The 10% deposit will be refunded if Australian Air Safaris is unable to operate the tour. Once we have sufficient bookings, for the tour to proceed, we will contact all participants and a payment of 25% of the tour cost is required. The balance of the tour is due 60 days prior to tour departure. A cancellation after the tour is confirmed will mean non refund of the deposit and 25% of tour cost (per person).

**DISCLAIMER:** As this is a flying tour, we are at the mercy of the weather. Therefore, tour cities are subject to change. Current pricing is based on a \$1.50 per litre fuel cost. Pricing may be affected by rising fuel costs. Australian Air Safaris will only pass on additional costs for avgas if increase is considerable. Notification will be sent to you prior to the 60 day closing period.

Australian Air Safaris would be happy to arrange all of your international airfares as well. These fares will be based upon current airline rates and availability and are additional to the cost of the tour itself.

\*\*\*Should you decide to stay additional nights in Australia, Australian Air Safaris would be more than happy to arrange the extra accommodation, car rental or tours upon request. Fees are additional to the original tour cost and subject to availability at the time of booking.