

Day 29 – Cairns, Australia – Night Market – Aboriginal Show - 25 Oct. 09: The day started with a partly cloudy sky but bright sunshine. The sea was calm as we proceeded through the Coral Sea towards Cairns, Australia. The temperature was just right so by 6am we were down on the Lower Promenade Deck doing our morning walk. There was some serious looking, long winged sea birds coasting along on the wind currents created by the Amsterdam. However, we couldn't get any good photographs. Bonnie (bongy) was on deck also and she was getting some good photos of the birds that she thought were "Boobies".

The Tray Issue: Most of today was spent at sea as we approached Cairns from the East. At breakfast we met Bob and Rosemary in the Lido. Right away we noticed that Bob had taken the initiative and compensated for the Amsterdam policy of not providing trays for the buffet line in the Lido. Forewarned by info about the new "no tray policy" on the Cruise Critic message board Bob and Rosemary (ROSO'SBEAU) had bought some inexpensive small trays that they brought with them to the Amsterdam. This morning Bob was making use of his tray to get his breakfast in a single trip through the buffet line, as shown in this picture on the right.



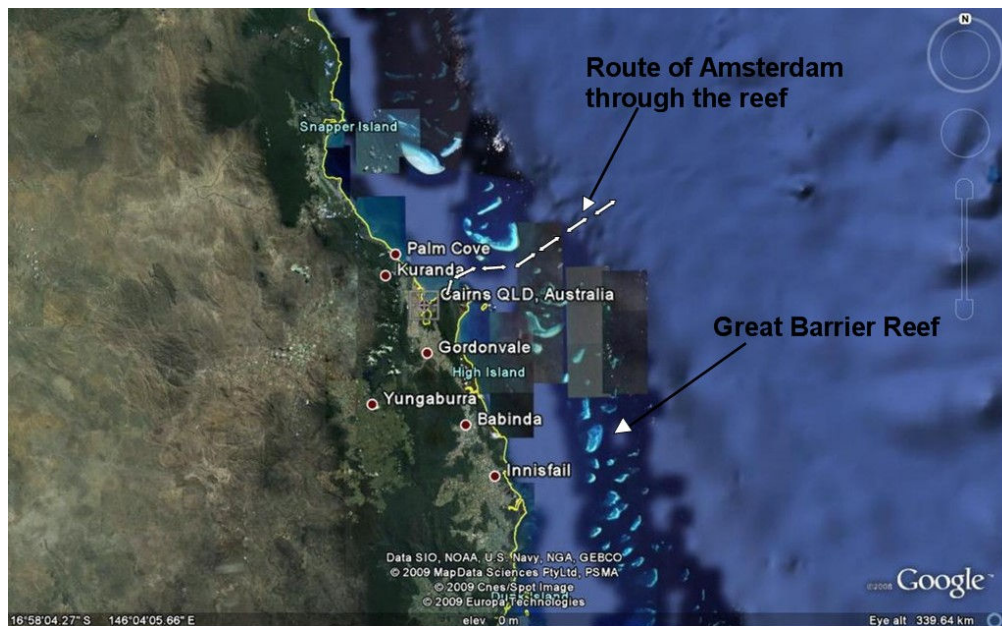
Church Services: Today was Sunday and at 9am we attended Protestant church services in the Wajang Theater which was filled to capacity. The pastor, Dick Buzby, conducted the services with assistance from his wife. He had a positive message that encouraged us to firmly set our priorities in life and make the hard decisions every day that are necessary to achieve our goals.

Captain Cray: The Reef Pilot, Captain Cray, was on board to ensure safe passage through the narrow and shallow, but well marked, channels in the reef. The plan was to arrive at Cairns about 5pm this evening.

In addition to helping navigate through the Great Barrier Reef, Captain Cray is also a bit of an expert on Captain Bligh of Mutiny on the Bounty fame. As a consequence of his knowledge of the Barrier Reef and Captain Bligh, Captain Cray was also one of the Exploration Speakers on board. Today he made a presentation on the subject of Captain Bligh and the sailor's perspective of the man. In the opinion of Captain Cray, Bligh does not deserve the bad reputation he has gotten from historians. He was a victim of the design of the Bounty that sacrificed basic human comfort in favor of maximizing space for cargo, which was breadfruit trees. Bligh was a superb navigator and also more lenient than most ship captains and did not impose flogging nearly as much as others. However,

Fletcher Christian was an influential leader and the mutiny took place. Bligh was a Free Mason which brought him favors in the British Navy but later when he was Governor in Sydney, the fact that the British Army officers hated the Free Masons led to another near mutiny of the colony against Bligh.

Cairns, Australia: About 4:30 the Amsterdam made its way through the Great Barrier Reef. The reef pilot, Captain Cray, had said that as we pass through the reef there would be no visible sign of it on the surface, as viewed from the ship. The best views of the reef are from far above the water or up close, underwater. We had access to satellite views of the Great Barrier Reef courtesy of Google Earth so we used those. The following pictures adapted from Google Earth show the path taken through the reef in to Cairns, Australia.



After we passed through the reef the Cairns Harbor Pilot came out in the pilot boat and was taken on board to assist in the final approach to the dock. In this photo on the right the pilot in the blue shirt gets ready to make the leap into the open hatch in the side of the Amsterdam.



As we approached the harbor a nice looking yacht, probably a group of people coming back from a Barrier Reef outing, followed us closely.



There was a couple of small pontoon planes parked outside the yacht basin. The harbor was taking on the trappings of a prosperous place.



Within the yacht basin there was an ancient looking sailing ship that appeared to be operational and it added to the varied harbor scene.



The skyline of Cairns was one of a modern city with tall office buildings mixed with a yacht basin and structures of widely different architecture as shown in the photo below.



The building on the extreme right, showing radial white roof beams is the convention center. The building in the center of the photo with the four sided inverted bowl roof is the Casino, on The Esplanade street that we visited later in the evening.

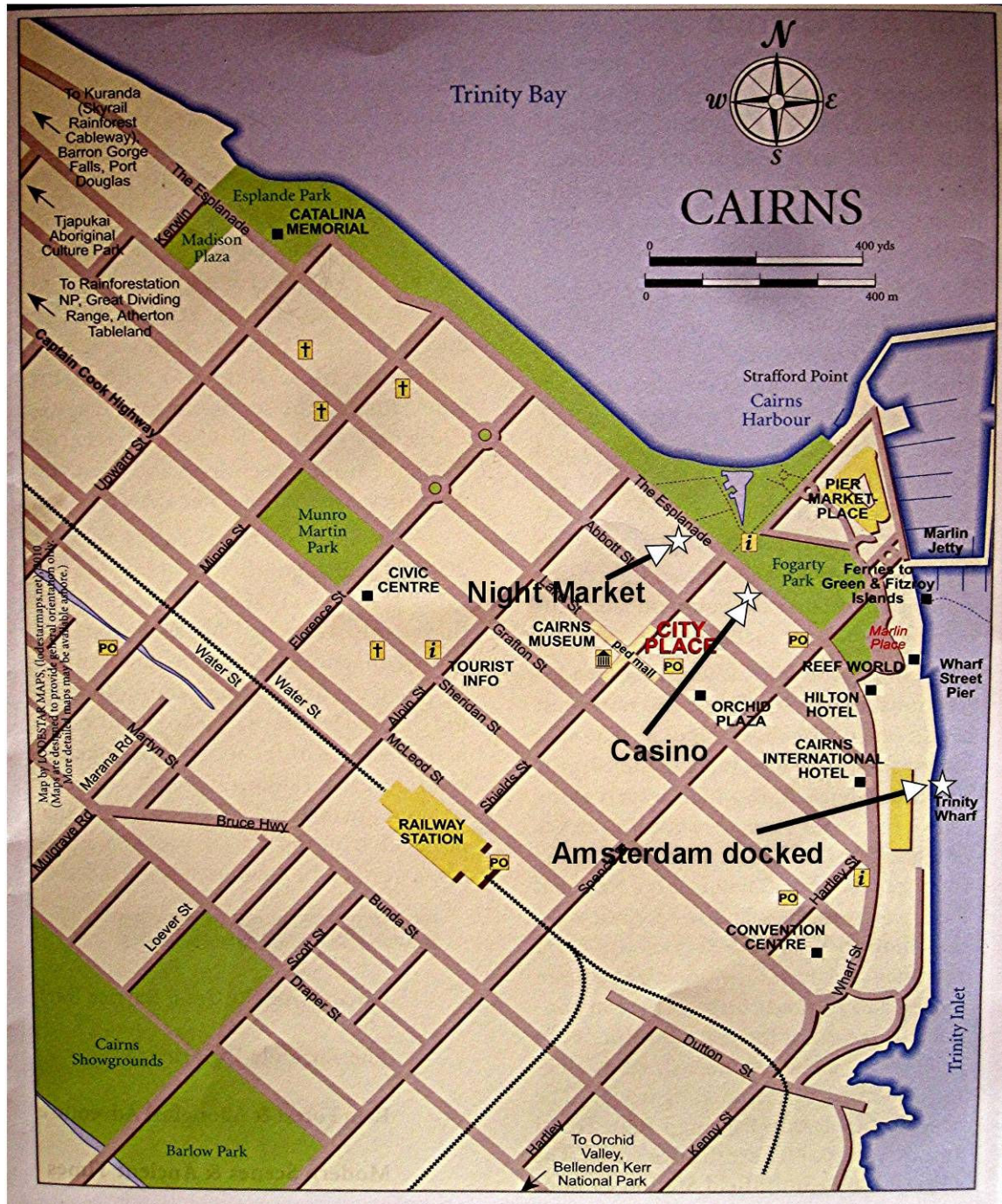
The location of Cairns in Australia where the Amsterdam was located today is shown on the map to the right.



Here, below, is the welcome sign on the cruise terminal building.



The Amsterdam completed the docking procedure at the Trinity Wharf in Cairns. The location of the Amsterdam in Cairns is shown on the Cairns street map below.



We had been at sea for nearly 3 days and we were ready to go ashore. We had heard of a shopping area called “The Night Market”. Of course, as serial shoppers, the passengers of the Amsterdam, us included, could not wait to check out this place which was supposed to be open, even on Sunday night. We met with Valerie, Karen, and Ellen to form our touring group for Cairns. Ellen is the Cruise Specialist representative on board and we had not met her previously. Here is a photograph of the four ladies in the group as we waited for clearance of the ship so we could start the night’s adventure. Left to right: Karen (KweenKaren), Valerie (SDHALFAN), Barbara (TENNCruisers) and Ellen.



We passed through the Cruise Terminal Building and got a quick confirmation that Barbara’s library card had visited Cairns Australia, as shown on the right. This sign even mentioned the Amsterdam.



We exited the cruise terminal and then turned right on The Esplanade. The walk along The Esplanade was very pleasant with a nice park and the harbor on the right with the city on the left. After a couple blocks we came to the swimming pool in Fogarty Park. This is a shallow public pool that circulates sea water. The sea water is filtered to remove the infamous box jellyfish that is common along the shoreline and can deliver a painful sting to swimmers if they make contact. As the photos below indicate, it is popular with the people of Cairns.



Near the pool was this attractive palm tree with gray colored fronds, as shown on the right



The Night Market was across the street from the pool in Forgarty Park as shown in the Cairns map above. Here are some pictures of the activity there as we toured the place.



This store had a nice collection of colorful beaded bracelets and other costume jewelry.

Calling on his vast experience in evaluating the Aborigine Didgeridoo, Orlin offers his advice to Karen for her purchase of a fine Didgeridoo in this Night Market store.



With mixed emotions Barbara feels the soft fur of this small kangaroo skin for sale. They seem so adorable but apparently they are hunted much like deer in the US.

In the picture on the right, Orlin checks out some packaged crocodile and kangaroo jerky as potential munchies while watching TV.



The Night Market was a popular destination for many of the Amsterdam passengers tonight and we saw many of our friends there. At one point we took advantage of a chance meeting and took this picture. Left to right we have Bob, Karen, Ellen, Barbara, Rosemary and Orlin.



We left the Night Market and walked about a block towards the Amsterdam on The Esplanade street. While entering the harbor earlier we had seen the distinctive roofline of the Casino, as shown on the right. Tonight as we walked by the Casino lights beckoned, as shown below, and we dropped in for a few minutes.



Karen actually managed to play the slot machines and come out a winner. However the machines we played didn't give any hints of payout so we soon tired of casino and returned to the Amsterdam.

Snake Gully Bush Band: On the Amsterdam they had just wrapped up a gala night of Australian barbeque on the Lido Pool Deck. We arrived too late for the barbeque but the musical group was still playing. The Australian musical group called "Snake Gully Bush Band" was playing traditional Australian songs. We picked up a snack and enjoyed the Snake Gully Bush Band which is shown in the picture on the right.



In preparation for the Australian Barbeque the Lido pool deck had been decorated with some humorous Aussie signs like those shown below.



We noticed that all the palm trees on the Lido Pool Deck had been covered with a cheesecloth-like material that completely encased the plant. They sort of looked like an inflated hot air balloon. We were wondering if this was supposed to represent some sort of Australian custom. Here is an example of what the half dozen palm trees looked like, as shown below.



We learned from Karen that Henk, the hotel manager, had told her the reason for the covering of the palms. He said that the Australian plant quarantine laws were being enforced so strictly that the palm trees had to be covered to prevent potential palm tree pests from migrating from the ship to the palm trees on the shore. We were reminded several times that no food was to be taken ashore because of the quarantine.

Food detecting dogs sniffed our packages each time we left the ship. We got the message that the Australians are serious about enforcing their plant quarantine laws.

The Tjapukai Aboriginal Culture Show: At 10pm there was a special show in the Queen's Lounge. The Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural organization of Cairns put on a show that included playing of the didgeridoo and performing some traditional Aboriginal dances.



This young man, on the left, played the didgeridoo better than we had ever heard it before. It requires circular breathing where air is stored in the puffed out cheeks and pushed out through the lips to produce sound while more air is simultaneously drawn in through the nose into the lungs.

This was a dance about hunting a bird that landed in the tree represented by the third person from the left.



This dance portrayed a group of the large, flightless, cassowary birds that live in the rain forests of Queensland.

It was a rare treat to experience the music and watch the men perform the traditional dances of their Aboriginal tribe. After the show the audience gathered around the stage to take pictures and talk to the performers.

After the Aboriginal show we called it a full day and turned in. Tomorrow we have a 6 hour tour planned into the rain forest in the mountains north of Cairns.