



I think many of us are now interested in the road less travelled, in meeting the locals, in taking the slow road in becoming an immersive traveller. There is a move afoot for travellers to touch lightly where they travel too, to experience the more unusual and off the beaten track, to interact with locals and to enjoy an authentic experience of the places we travel to.

With this in mind I have been thinking about journeys in Queensland.

It is cold this weekend and that inevitably makes me think of the appeal of a northern Queensland trip. Many of our clients love to travel by train and if you are a Queensland pensioner they offer excellent discounts to head to the Whitsundays, or out to Longreach or up to Cairns with Queensland Rail (by the way Travelling Places is your local Queensland rail licenced office).

Apart from these main truck journeys there are a couple of explorations up north. These re privately operated services and although used by locals in yesteryear are designed more for travellers to enjoy the region. You have probably heard of the Kuranda Railway which heads out of Cairns on a daily trip up to the Tablelands – it is great to combine on a day trip with the Skyrail on the return as you glide over the top of the rainforest by cable car back Cairns.

The Gulflander is another privately operated train which was built to connect the river port of Normanton with the goldfields of Croydon. This legendary train runs through countryside you can't visit by car, its heritage engine and rail cars are a fun way to see the gulf region.

On the other hand The Savannahlander offers travellers a magical 4 day 3 night excursion to remote Undara lava tubes, Chilligoe and the extraordinary Cobbold Gorge. Designed for travellers wanting to experience a piece of authentic Australia you join this trip in Cairns and head west. The driver/guides are great characters and your fellow travellers are also fascinated in finding the hidden side of the places they travel to. This 4 day/3 night trip operates weekly, as the only train using the line west of Kuranda you will stop enroute for a tea break, you will stay overnight in locals hotels with ensuite, you dinner and breakfast are included and you will be intrigued to meet the locals as you visit places of interest. Not to be missed is the Cobbold Gorge boat cruise and the Undara lava tubes.

To give you an idea – a package including return flights to Cairns, accommodation in central Cairns for one night, the 4 day/ 3 night Savannahlander experience combined with a weeks car hire and 7 nights in a resort in Palm Cove will cost about \$2650 per person twin share. Good value for a 12 day holiday with all of those inclusions.

Similar packages can be arranged to Longreach and Winton; or perhaps pottering up the Queensland coast by train and stopping for a few days here and there appeals. There really are some wonderful journeys with Queensland and now is a great time to explore our back yard. Of course 10th July sees Queensland opening borders to most of Australia – quite a few people are now booking to travel on The Ghan between Darwin and Adelaide or The Indian Pacific between Perth and Sydney. Normally booked out months in advance there are opportunities to secure a compartment on these train journeys this year because the international visitors are not coming. Another great opportunity that has had some cancellations from international travellers in a small expedition cruise from Darwin to Cairns – this 12 day journey visits several smaller isolated islands and communities.

Take your time to enjoy what is in our back door and become an immersive traveller.