



Clockwise from top: airboat safari across the floodplains; and Cruiser with 'vintage' upholstery; Bamurru Plains

Float on

浮流樂土

上圖起順時針：乘汽船橫渡泛濫平原；堅固耐用的Land Cruiser越野車有如一件「古董」；巴姆魯平原



**BAMURRU PLAINS, NORTHERN TERRITORY**

We are flying east from Darwin. The millennia of ebbing and teeming waters have created a kind of leftover dinner plate where the sauces all run together: spinaches and coppers, taupes and cobalts.

We land at a rural Aussie airstrip and climb into a Land Cruiser, tough and sun-burnished as a rhino. The driver's seat is a work of art: shredded leather, dust-encrusted steering wheel, peeling fabric and battered side panels. You've seen better looking interiors on the scrap heaps. But it's a Land Cruiser: it'll go on forever.

This is not fancy resort time. We arrive at a converted woolshed, and this honest aesthetic goes throughout. The rooms stand on stilts with wooden verandas. They have tin roofs and fly screens.

We've been in chic, urbanised Australian country and wandered the ancient Aboriginal heartland. Now we are in pioneer land.

True, there's a nice swimming pool with elegant chairs, big cushions and shade. It overlooks a floodplain: tufty, rough grass is littered with wallaby poo, termite mounds and desiccated palm fronds. A herd of buffalo fossick in patches of grass. This is the nursery. Dads and mums are resting knee-deep in the cool distant water, trying not to worry about crocodiles. They wander in at dusk. And if you want to see a happy water buffalo, watch them having a good bum scratch on a termite mound. They also love ploughing through a clump of turkey bushes: the flowers are natural antihistamines. They work on mosquito bites.

Photos: Airboat: Emma Pritchett; Lodge exterior: Archie Sartracom

The next day, we are out on the airboat across the floodplains and into the 'ponds' – quiet, spooky places of reflections and ghostly paperbark trees.

The only croc of the visit is a tiddler, no more than a year old, out hunting for frogs and dragonflies. If you want the big saltwater fellows, join Outback Floatplane Adventures on an expedition from Darwin.

Poisonous South American cane toads have wreaked havoc here, especially with the snake population. That may be welcome news for nervous tourists (though you're very unlikely to encounter the two deadliest species, the Taipans and the Brown) but it's bad news for native species.

The wallabies are thriving, though. They're everywhere, inquisitive, then skittish. The lodge guide, Cam, reckons there is a dingo family about, too: but they're super-shy.

I love Bamurru. It's not some luxe lodge built from a kit designed in the Kruger. The interior has buffalo horn handles on the doors, a long, vintage table and a help-yourself bar with a little tin roof. Old fans and older photographs are set on green corrugated iron walls. You collapse into huge wicker chairs surrounded by animal skulls, antique grog bottles, hurricane lamps, pioneer cooking utensils, sculpted bark. You wouldn't be surprised to see John McDouall Stuart, the explorer who travelled the length of the country from south to north in 1861, wander in for a cold one.

We share dinner at the long table with a relaxed group of travellers from – everywhere, really. The conversation flows easily, unimpeded by Wi-Fi and phone signals.

Next morning, it's the dusty ride back to the landing strip, Darwin and on to a couple of nights in Sydney.

Over obscure wines at the very cool Paramount Hotel, hipster Surry Hills is out in force. Inner City Sydney competes pretty fiercely with Brooklyn for bragging rights on the length of its beards, and the intensity of its devotion to all things craftlike. Which is great. But while the hipster bars are all beginning to look pretty much alike, there is nowhere, nowhere, nowhere, like the three places we've just been to. ■

[luxurylodgesofaustralia.com.au](http://luxurylodgesofaustralia.com.au)

The writer rented a car from Hertz for the Pretty Beach leg of the trip. [hertzmultibrand.com/cathaypacific](http://hertzmultibrand.com/cathaypacific)

**北領地·巴姆魯平原**

我們從達爾文飛往東部。海水經過上千年的潮漲潮退，現在猶如用餐後各種醬汁混作一團的碟子，泛起菠菜色、紅銅色、褐灰色和鈷藍色。

我們在澳洲郊區的小型機場著陸，然後坐上久經日曬、有如犀牛般強勁的Land Cruiser越野車。司機位的皮革已裂開，軟盤鋪滿塵埃，布料剝落，兩側的車門滿佈刮花的痕跡，有如一件「藝術品」。即使廢車場內的車，車廂狀況亦沒有這麼糟，但它是一輛Land Cruiser，無論如何也能開得動。

這裡沒有豪華度假村的設施。我們來到一間改建的剪羊毛工場，整個度假村始終貫徹樸素的風格：客房由木柱支撐，走廊及屋頂用木和鐵皮搭建，還配備了紗窗。

我們到過澳洲最時尚新潮的市郊，拜訪過古老的原住民居住地，現在終於來到這片屬於拓荒者的土地。

沒錯，這裡確實有漂亮泳池、優雅座椅、寬大舒適的坐墊和遮陰篷。不過外面的風景是一片泛濫平原：雜草堆中遍佈沙袋鼠大便、白蟻丘及乾枯的棕櫚葉。一群水牛用腳將草地翻起。這是水牛的育嬰室，牛爸爸和牛媽媽浸在及膝的河水中休息，暫時忘卻不時出沒的鱷魚。水牛通常在黃昏出現，如想看到水牛開心的場面，就要觀察牠們如何在蟻丘上擦屁股。牠們亦愛在土耳其灌木堆中穿插，這種植物的花朵具有天然的抗組織胺藥效，可以對付蚊叮。

翌日，我們乘坐汽船，沿河道穿過泛濫平原，來到「池塘」，這裡幽深寧靜，長滿白千層樹，帶點神秘氣氛。

旅程中碰到的唯一一條鱷魚是未足一歲、出來捕獵青蛙和蜻蜓的小娃娃。如果你想一睹成年鹹水鱷的雄姿，就要報名參加達爾文Outback Floatplane Adventures旅行社的旅行團。

有毒的南美海蟾蜍是這裡的破壞王，

特別對當地蛇類構成重大威脅。對於憂心的遊客來說，這也許是好消息（但你不太可能碰到當地兩種致命毒蛇：太攀蛇和棕蛇）。但壞消息是，海蟾蜍在灌木林中大量繁殖，殺死本地的原生物種。

不過，沙袋鼠卻在此開枝散葉，繁衍眾多。牠們四處蹦跳、好奇心重，而且古靈精怪。導遊Cam估計附近還住了澳洲野犬一家幾口，不過牠們非常容易受驚。

我喜歡巴姆魯，因為這裡的設計並非常見的豪華酒店風格。走進室內，你會發現水牛角製成的門柄、古舊的長椅，以及有個小型鐵皮上蓋的自助酒吧。綠色波紋的鐵牆上掛有古舊的風扇和老照片。巨型藤椅的四周放置了動物頭骨、古董酒瓶、防風燈、野外煮食器具及樹皮雕刻。在這裡，即使見到1861年從南到北橫越澳洲的探險家John McDouall Stuart闖進來喝酒，你也不會感到意外。

我們與一群來自世界各地的旅客暢快地共晉晚餐，我們可以暢快交談，不會被Wi-Fi無線網絡和流動電話訊號打斷。

翌日上午，我們乘坐滿佈塵埃的越野車回到機場，轉乘飛機至達爾文，再回悉尼逗留數天。

坐在型格的Paramount Hotel酒店，啜飲不知名的美酒，欣賞時尚Surry Hills區的一眾潮人。位於悉尼內城的Surry Hills區，正與布魯克林爭奪鬍子最長和手工藝最發達的寶座。老實說，世上所有時尚酒吧已經開始變得一式一樣，而我們到過的這三個地方，卻絕對、絕對、絕對與別不同。■

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本文作者在遊覽美麗海灘一段行程時向Hertz租用車輛。[hertzmultibrand.com/cathaypacific](http://hertzmultibrand.com/cathaypacific)



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