“EAGLE Eyes the Cape 2010”

Captain Cook’s cannon and anchor in Cooktown’s Museum provided the starting point of our MBBC and MBC adventure north to Cape York. On through Old Laura Station over Battlecamp Road we took the path well known to the gold digger pioneers of the Palmer River Goldfields. As a party of 7 vehicles, we crossed water for the first time at Kalpower Crossing and made our way for Bathurst Bay, remote crocodile country, scene of where, in 2004 a grandmother saved her grandson from an attack. The track posed challenges with the mud capturing the first three vehicles at one point and many recoveries were made before making a rocky ascent over the range and on to Bathurst Bay for the first night. Andrew served a feast while the boys and girls enjoyed their own bonfire on the beach.
The graceful White and Red Lily Lagoons of Lakefield National Park greeted our return journey after again breaking through the muddy tracks. Brolga, ibis and bountiful wildlife of monitor lizards and snakes were frequently seen. The northern journey next day followed a long swim in Archer River and then we headed east, out through the Iron Range rainforest to Chilli Beach and Portland Roads, site of an Edmund Kennedy base camp. Windy and full of flotsam and large pumicestone, and fringed by palm trees this is a beautiful campsite. The journey out was to be along the Frenchman’s Line which brought us to the Pascoe River. We had reports from only two weeks previously that it was impassable due to the late wet but our luck held true. It proved a challenge of teamwork with several vehicles needing a snatch up the rocky exit. We continued west and onto Weipa for two nights.

At Weipa, the Bauxite Mine, fishing and catching up with the news filled a day of rest and relaxation and then we headed north to the Delahunty River for the night and swimming at the crossing. The next day was the start of the Old Telegraph track, renowned for its many creek crossings: Gunshot, Cockatoo Creek, the Alice, Cannibal Creek and Nolan Brook. Several mums took to the driving, relishing the creek crossings.
All our vehicles and owners were tested with a few minor breakdowns and recoveries but it was such great fun. While camping at Elliot and Twin falls, the fruit bats filled the morning and evening sky and swimming again jam-packed the afternoon. Back on the track onto the telegraph track we navigated the log bridge at Cypress Creek but later trapped ourselves at Nolan Brook. After crossing the Jardine Ferry, we pulled up at the WW11 aircraft wrecks at Jacky Jacky Airfield. Choosing to leave Usccher Point off our itinerary, the group headed to Punsand Bay for three days of R&R.
The tip of Cape York eluded us for another two days as we fished, relaxed and explored the coastline including the end of the Telegraph Track at Cable Bay where it had once joined the undersea link from Australia to Papua New Guinea. We explored Somerset (the Singapore of the North- it never happened) and Thursday Island including its 1890 gun emplacements built to protect us from the Russians. We went on to Horn Island where the third most bombs landed on Australian shores during WW11 and we explored the Z shaped dugout trenches built for air raids as well as remnants of fatal plane crashes. On the way back we passed Possession Island, site of Captain Cook’s proclamation of Australia, marked by a tiny white memorial on a rocky point.

After a busy 12 days, our journey towards home seemed a letdown as we came down the Development Road, past more of Kennedy’s Campsites and the Split Rock Aboriginal Art at Laura where we departed on our separate ways. We all had a great time, we had our challenges, and we overcame them.

Thank you to Andrew Morse from Global 4WD for another wonderful trip.