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Adventurous Rainforest Hike

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Journals from James Cook University, Australia

2011-03-30 Adventurous Rainforest Hike



The red arrow trail lookout

As the 50-day mark since arriving in Cairns approaches, I have enjoyed learning about the differences between Australian and American cultures. One of the main differences I have enjoyed observing is the variation in English accents. Sam and I are friends with four Australians, who get a kick out of listening to our American accents just as much as we do their Australian accents. Several times over dinner, swapping vocabulary words has been the only topic of conversation. These friends have also brought to our attention the only Mexican restaurant in Cairns. Sam and I would eat some type of Mexican food two to three times a week at home, and so far, we have hardly found tortillas in the grocery stores. We have had some major cravings for Mexican food over the last few weeks, so we're going out to dinner this weekend to spoil ourselves. The restaurant is pretty expensive, so this meal will probably have to last us until we get back to the U.S.

Last weekend, Katie, Matthea, Sam and I decided to go hiking through the botanical gardens. There are two trails, the red arrow and blue arrow. Sam and I have climbed the red arrow trail before and it leads to a spectacular view of the ocean and mountain range. When the blue arrow trail opened after being closed for construction, we decided to check it out. Fortunately for us, since we chose one of the hottest days yet to go hiking, the trail was shaded from the rainforest canopy. We passed a few people on the trail who were completely drenched in sweat, which intimidated us a bit on what lay ahead. We soon discovered that the trail was mostly uphill, and every time we thought we were going back downhill on the loop, the incline would increase again. Not only was the terrain difficult to walk through, but the solid wall of mosquitoes was hard to get past as well. For the entire three hours of our hike, I saw Sam had a swarm of mosquitoes trailing him, and I'm sure the rest of us each had one as well. Every time I looked down at my legs, I had at least five bugs attached to me, even with bug spray. At the end of the day, I had 42 bug bites on the back of my left leg alone. Along the trail, we saw at about a dozen bush turkeys, several of Australia's enormous spiders, and a wallaby on our way back to the trailhead. It was a unique experience and a great way to see relatively undisturbed rain forest.

Another exciting thing that happened last week was that we got new couches and televisions in our apartments. Before, the apartments at the lodge did not look welcoming. The old couches were torn apart to the point that the foam pads underneath the covers showed, and they were covered up by thin, knitted blue blankets. The televisions were these little boxes with screens smaller than my laptop computer screen, which didn't accommodate movie nights very well. This last week, we received not only one new couch, but two. Previously, if three people wanted to

sit in the living room, one person had to sit on the floor because the couch was only big enough for two people. Now up to 6 people can sit on furniture before the floor needs to be utilized. The room definitely looks more inviting and homey than it did before. I didn't need to worry about the appearance and level of comfort that much, since I will only be living at the lodge for another three months, but both of my roommates are first-year students and would have been sitting on the same old couch, or the floor, for another two years

Over the next week and a half, Sam and I have a large lab report and several exams to complete before our mid-semester break. We are very excited to finish these assignments, because a week from Saturday, we leave on our first big trip in Australia! We have arranged to travel down to the Whitsunday Islands for a sailing tour, complete with snorkeling and accommodations on one of the pristine islands. These islands are supposed to be the most beautiful and spectacular islands in the world, and we couldn't be more excited to spend a few days enjoying them.

Amanda Contreras