

Tourists come to Tassie, and drive round in three days
Sticking to the bitumen, and never the byways
So here's a poem for them, slightly tongue in cheek
'Bout a Tassie bloke and New York girl, who did Queensland in a week.



We had to go to Cairns you see, to retrieve a cartop tent
Lent to a bloke and sheila, who somehow seemed intent
On keeping it beyond, the allotted time agreed
We went in a red Pulsar, with a handy turn of speed.



December was the time of year, when the outback is like hell
When the burning sun in Queensland causes hardy souls to dwell
Upon the cooler climates, way south of Capricorn
To the cool green slopes of Tassie, the place where I was born.

QUEENSLAND IN A WEEK

“Queensland in a week?” she said, “It surely can't be done.”
“Queensland in a week?” she said, “In all that blazing sun.”
“Queensland in a week,” he said, “Sure it's not a worry.”
“Queensland in a week,” he said, “But we might just have to hurry.”

The ‘Spirit of Tasmania’, it sailed on Saturday night
And arrived in Victoria's Melbourne, Sunday morning bright
The streets they were deserted at that time of the day
And we quickly cleared the city to the northern highway.



Echuca was the first stop, where the mighty Murray flows
To see the paddle steamers from a hundred years ago
We marvelled at that way of life in the days of ‘Cobb & Co’
Before the railways came along and dealt the final blow.

Then back onto the road we went, to speed the trip along
North through towns like Tocumwal, and on to Wyalong
Then Forbes and Parkes and Dubbo, we made that red car fly
And on and on we went, and flew through Narrabri.

The Newell Highway we followed north, on route thirty nine
We grabbed a hamburger just on dark, we sure were making time
Laurie started getting sleepy as through the night we went
So slightly short of Condamine we stopped and used a tent.

Before the sun was up, we were on our way again
And smiled as we heard the radio extolling Wandoan
A sleepy little one horse town, but maybe worth a stay
If only Cairns, our destination, wasn't still so far away.

And finally at Rocky, we got onto highway one
And still we hadn't struck that dreaded blazing sun
In fact it was so balmy that we halted before dark
And had a pleasant interlude, at Hillsborough National Park.



Day three we did the tourist thing and the shoreline we did rove
And as we passed by Bowen town went out to Horseshoe Cove
But only very briefly as ahead was still a trail
And at Townsville detoured into town to check on our email.



And finally at Cairns we stopped, the end of a long hitch
Where the bloke wasn't very pleased, and SHE acted like a bitch
But it wasn't very long before the tent was on our rack
And south we headed at long last, to Tassie down the track.

But on the way I said to Elli, "The outback you must see."
So out to Winton we did go, what a feeling to be free
To travel here and travel there, and places far beyond
Where it seems a million miles before you'll see a pond.

Elli marvelled at the tent upon the long roofrack
It surely is the only way to tour the great outback
At home in good old USA these things are never seen
The cartop tent is definitely part of the Aussie dream.



The Ranger at Lark Quarry said, "We closed the day before."
We groaned, and thought, "We've come a thousand miles or more
To see the Dinosaur footprints, the big ones and the small."
But we'll be here again next year, so didn't mind at all.

At Longreach the sun burned down, the Coke was boiling hot
So into a camping shop we went, and a canvas bag we got
To hang upon the roofrack, to keep some water cool
Then slightly out of town we drove, to tour the famous school.



The School of the Air, that used to use the pedal radio
To teach the kids out in the bush, where mustering they'd go
Though far apart in distance, the school kept them together
Even when the roads were closed due to the rainy weather.

That surely is an Aussie thing, and so's the Hall of Fame
The Stockman's Hall's the one I mean, where Aussies quietly claim
We had a different way of life back in those early days
When pioneers spread cross the land, with bullocks and their drays.

We had our early drovers, of legendary fame
We had our women pilots, the first to fly a plane
And out in Central Queensland the Flying Doctor flew
And the mighty airline QANTAS out of humble hangars grew.



And the Talking Drover, now there's a sight to see
As he quietly spins a yarn or two, sitting near a tree
And in the corner scratching, a noise you plainly hear
A Wombat? Dingo? Echidna? A Bunyip I do fear.

The temperature hit forty and Tas was sorely missed
But Carnarvon and the Bunyas were still upon our list
So we travelled on to Roma where they used to have a mine
And 'cause the rain was coming down, will do the Gorge another time.

At the Bunya Mountains there wasn't any power
So we had to light a fire to heat water for a shower
It was a pleasant spot to be, with cheeky birds about
And they tried to steal our food till Elli gave a shout.



We did the Glasshouse mountains, and the Ettamogah Pub
Where we shopped for souvenirs, and bought some Aussie grub
We drove round Bribie Island, a secret Aussie spot
Then stayed the night with Brian and Gail, and a shower good and hot.



Queensland in a week, our seven days had flown
But a little of the outback, to Elli I had shown
So south to Beaudesert, and up the Lion's Way
To the Border Mountains, at Sheepyard Creek we stay.



And in the morning Elli walked the 10 K to the topps
Through dripping rain forest, slowly, but never really stopped
While Laurie drove the car around, he'd done the walk before
This was a favourite spot of his, and he'd be back for more.

We passed through Nimbin briefly and Hippies we did see
Then out to Byron Bay where we finally saw the sea
The dusty hot interior has a beauty of its own
But the breakers on the shoreline is where WE feel at home.

That afternoon at Boorkoom, we found a great campground
But Laurie was dismayed to see the posts stuck in the ground
But two of them were not too close, and through them our car squeezed
And other campers followed, and we were greatly pleased.

The thought of the Ranger's face when he came to collect his fee
And saw cars upon the grass where they plainly shouldn't be
Kept us amused for quite a time, as the fire we did light
But he never showed his face at all, so we had a peaceful night.

We could have stayed for days in spots along this coast
The long white beaches, shady trees, it really was the most
We even dropped our clothes off and went in for a swim
What a marvellous place it was, we did it on a whim.



At Indian Head we camped that night, where Kookaburras stood
On branches all around us, and tried to steal out food
We walked out to the headland, where the rock formations stood
And looked at Kylie's hut, and nearly got lost in the wood.

We toured the lakes all down the coast, and the Pelicans weren't shy
At a little town called 'Entrance' one tried to steal Elli's pie
We fought him off, he went away, we wouldn't play his game
And went onto the Hawkesbury to call on our mate Wayne.

He ran a kayak business and the locals they did flock
To get their gear and lessons, from his little shed and shop
He was a chatty person and it really made our day
And as the day was nearly done we went upon our way.

Down to mighty Sydney Town, to Daniel in Beecroft
Here our trip was over, here we made a stop
And Elli left for USA, and Laurie didn't wait
But headed down to Tassie, and recrossed his Bass Strait.

Queensland in a week, this was just a trial run
For a longer trip next winter, as we head north to the sun
Then we'll stop and dally, at sights along the way
As we motor round Australia, having fun on every day.

Laurie Ford (Written on the Spirit of Tasmania - December 2001)

