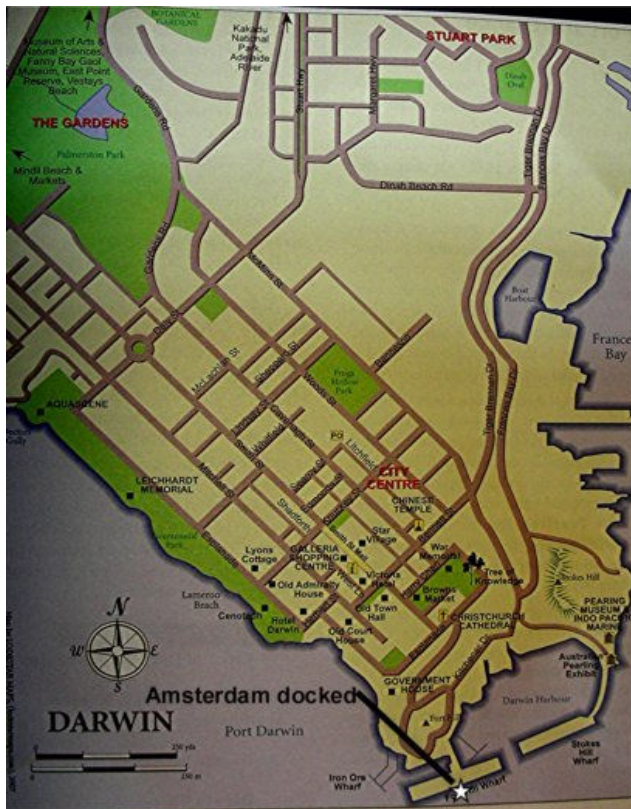


2/23/07 Day 39 – Darwin – Friday, 23 Feb 2007: We cruised in to Darwin harbor about 7am this morning. Darwin is located in the Northern Territory (NT) of Australia. On the right is shown where Darwin is located on the Australian continent and where the Amsterdam was located in Darwin Harbor.



The Darwin area has a population of about 130,000 people. Fellow passengers who had been to Darwin just 5 years ago were amazed at the many new high rise buildings and expansion of development out into the area around the central city area. We noticed that this part of Northern Territory is referred to as the Top End in commercial signs and names of some establishments. Presumably this means the Top End of Australia. The area has been going through a business boom. The unemployment rate is about 2 percent. The cost of land has risen rapidly in recent years. The price of 5 acres of land in an outlying area was estimated at about \$40,000 USD by the driver of our tour bus. The price of regular gasoline was posted at a price of about \$5 USD per gallon.

We took a tour out to the Jumping Crocodile Cruise (www.jumpingcrocodile.com.au). The cruise took place on the Adelaide River about an hour's drive out of Darwin.



We boarded the cruise boat which had an upper and lower deck. We took the upper deck but later learned that better views of the jumping crocodiles were had by people on the lower deck.





The bait for the crocodiles came aboard in two red buckets. Bait consisted of raw chunks of ribs cut from water buffalo.



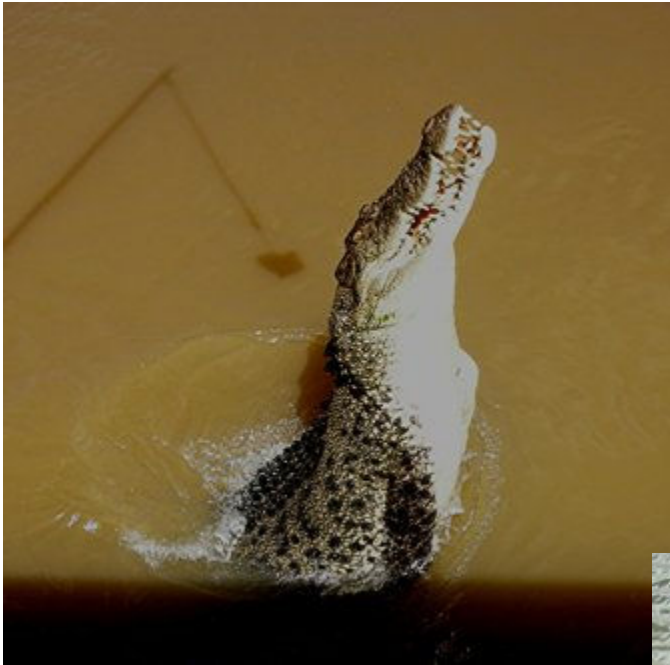
The crowd of Amsterdam passengers was eager to get the show going.

The bait was suspended on a string from the end of a flexible pole and dangle'd just at the surface of the water. When a crocodile would approach it was easy to see them on the surface. The bait would be raised a few feet off the surface of the water and after milling

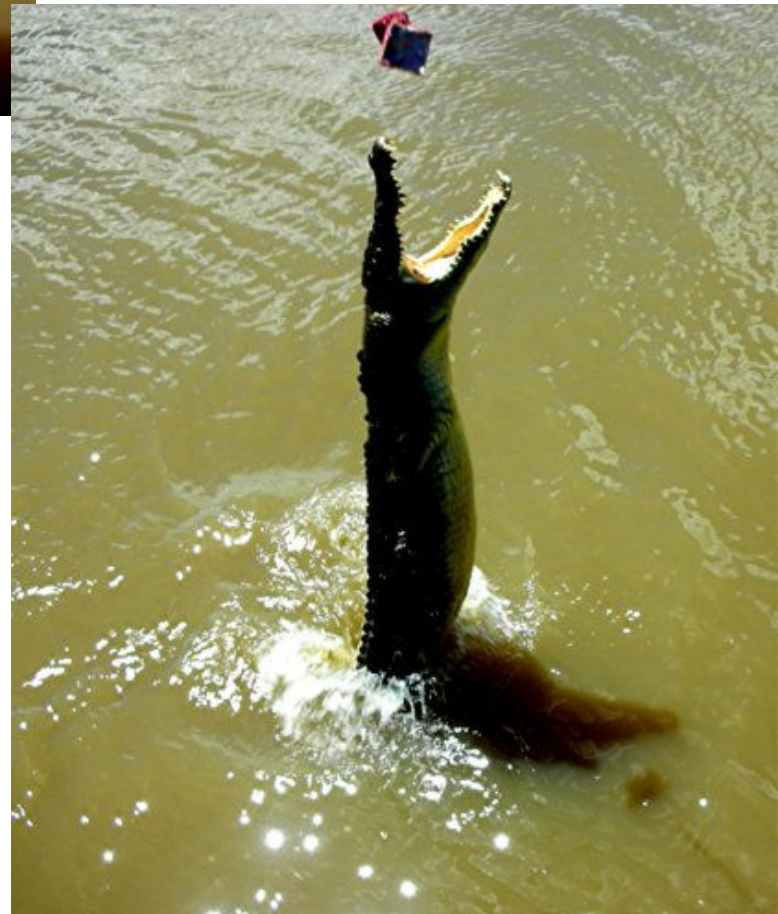
around for a few minutes the crocodile would usually make a lunge for the bait. After a few leaps by the crocodile the lady holding the bait would usually let the crocodile have it. Orlin didn't get any pictures worth showing. The built in delay in triggering the digital camera makes it difficult to get the picture at just the right time.

Here are some of the better shots of leaping crocodiles that Barbara was able to get.





The boat captain said that crocodiles on the Adelaide River were nearly hunted to extinction for their hides which were used to make handbags and other leather goods. In the 1970's laws were passed to protect the crocodile and now the wild crocodile are not hunted. Crocodiles for leather and meat are grown on crocodile farms in the area. The population of crocodiles in the Adelaide River has recovered nicely.





After the jumping crocodile cruise we got back on the bus and went to a museum for the wetlands around Darwin and a viewing area. The area around Darwin has many swamp like regions called the wetlands. According to our bus driver guide the rains were not nearly as plentiful as in prior years. Fence lines that normally would be under water were standing in only a few inches of water. The wetlands are covered with grass and low growing shrubbery. Here is a view of

the wetlands from the museum. This area is about an hour's drive from Darwin.

On the way back to Darwin we saw many termite mounds in the land on both sides of the road. The guide said that Australia had hundreds of termite types and each type builds a slightly different mud nest that sticks up in the fields around the area. We also went by many orchards of mango trees. They grow some bananas and production of mangoes has become one of the main agriculture crops around Darwin. Here on the right is a mango orchard.



The tops of the mango trees are cut off to promote more sunlight penetration and production of mangoes.



The bus took us back to Darwin and let us off in the center of the town's shopping area. The downtown area of Darwin is pleasant and similar to the downtown of any moderate size town in the United States. Cars are driven on the left side of the road in Australia just like in England.

Americans have to be careful to look both ways when crossing the street because the traffic is coming in a different direction than back home. Here is a view of a downtown street showing the left hand driving pattern.



Here on the right is a small park in the central shopping area.



In Australia there are no Wal-Mart stores. The guides have told us that Woolworth stores are in every town and are the Wal-Marts of Australia. They say they are going to Woollys when they are on their way to Woolworths.



We thought the license plates for this part of Australia were interesting because they officially refer to the region as the Outback ("NT" stands for Northern Territory).



We returned to the ship and boarded by way of the gangway which allows us to walk directly on to the ship from the dock. This is much more convenient than when we have to use the tender boats.

The ship got underway at 6pm headed for Bali, Indonesia.