

LARAPINTA TRAIL

Our 2010 Larapinta season offers the perfect time for viewing the desert at its most abundant.

I've just returned from Alice Springs after working for a week on a volunteer project on the Larapinta Trail run by our friends from Trek Larapinta and the Rangers from Parks and Wildlife at Simpsons Gap.

Though the weather was hot and steamy, it was such a treat to work with an amazing group of volunteers and have Shane and Mark from Trek Larapinta look after us so brilliantly. The track work we undertook was a realignment of approximately 600 metres at the start of section 2 from Simpsons Gap to Jay Creek. We are not quite up to the standard of the professional track builders from Tassie – but we did manage to build a great set of rock steps sourced naturally from the area and undertake some nifty benching and track cutting.

Shane also set up two days working on an outstation on the Tanami side of the West Macs where we brought a disused vegetable garden back to life for the owners Gloria and Stephen McCormack.

The countryside this year is unbelievable after all the rain. We were lucky enough to have a few downpours while on the project, as you can see from the photos of the Todd River in flood. The rain really transforms the landscape and brings new life into the Red Centre.

If you've always longed to do this walk do it this year, as you will see a unique display of flora, fauna and abundant waterholes. It is remarkably beautiful and after six years of working on the trail I've never experienced such richness in the landscape.

We still have a few spots left on our six-day Larapinta Trail trips for 2010. Some of the available dates are: June 13th, 20th, 27th, and July 11th, , 18th, 25th.

If you'd like more information contact us or why not join us for a night of food, wine and slides at Bistro Flor on Monday April 26th from 6pm when we will showcase our Australian products – Larapinta Trail, Great Ocean Walk and Flinders Ranges. Bookings are essential.



NORTH INDIA – with Christine Manfield February 2010

Our first trip to North India was a resounding success and we are now planning our next culinary trip with Christine to Kerala and South India in February 2011.

The trip went from Mumbai through Rajasthan and its famous cities of Udaipur and Jodhpur and into the Aravali Hills. The final three nights were spent in Kolkata.

The array of culinary experiences our group enjoyed included a private candlelit dinner on the rooftop of the Udaipur Palace and dinner at an ancient stepwell in the Rajasthan desert accompanied by the haunting chants of a sadhu (holy man) as we sat under the stars.

Christine's local knowledge led us to sensational Gujarati food at Soam Restaurant in Mumbai and amazing Kebabs on the street just behind The Taj Hotel where we stayed.

Staying at the Lake Palace in Udaipur and returning to a perfectly drawn bath filled with oils and rose petals after our boat trip on Lake Pichola was a beautiful luxury for the weary traveller.

Other highlights were "camping" in stunning tents at Chhatrasagar; sharing a home cooked dinner with our guide Arun and his friends at his Kolkata apartment; and visiting Mother Teresa's hospital / centre in Kolkata, which was such an inspiring and touching experience.



HERE'S A RECIPE FROM OUR COOKING LESSON AT CHHATRASAGAR

IMLI BAINGAN (TAMARIND EGGPLANT)

Eggplants – 1kg small cut into halves and deep fried
 Onions – 4 large and finely chopped
 Garlic – 10-12 cloves finely chopped
 Whole red chillies – 5
 Tamarind paste – 3 tablespoons
 Brown sugar – 2 tablespoons
 Red chilly powder – 1 teaspoon
 Salt – ½ teaspoon

Method: Heat the oil and add whole red chillis followed by onions. Fry till pink and add the garlic and fry until they are cooked and dark pink, being careful not to let them brown. Add the tamarind paste, brown sugar, red chilli powder and salt. Stir and cook for a minute and then add the eggplant, stir and let simmer for a while and take off the flame. Serve hot



TESTIMONIAL FROM NORTH INDIA TOUR

When my friends ask "How was India" I tell them I had the time of my life. And it's true. I will always remember it as one of the best two weeks of my life. Thank you so much for all the work and planning you put into it to make it such an outstanding success. Congratulations!!

The thing that made the trip so special apart from just being in India, was the group – really lovely people. Can't wait to go back.

Chris Fraser



FLINDERS RANGES

Due to popular demand we are planning a second trip departing on September 5th 2010 to this fabulous region of South Australia. The seven-day tour takes you through some of the most spectacular sections of the Hans Heysen Trail, taking in ancient gorges and valleys, rugged ranges, meandering creeks lined with towering gums and plenty of wildlife.

Spring is a beautiful time of year to travel in the Flinders Ranges and three nights of our accommodation are in the fantastic new Eco Villas at Rawnsley Park – one of our favourites!

If you'd like anymore information about this trip or any others, please contact us...



SOIREES

The successful soirees of last year are upon us again, so get yourself along to one of our tailor-made evenings at some lovely Melbourne restaurants.

On Monday 19th April we will be drinking and eating all things Spanish, whilst discussing our trips through Andalucia and the pilgrims walk in northern Spain on the Camino de Santiago.

On Tuesday 20th April it's your turn to try a little bit of Indian cuisine and culture and discover our exciting new journeys through the Indian subcontinent.

And finally, Monday 26th April will be a chance to indulge in some local produce and be tempted by one of our trips through the Flinders Ranges, the Great Ocean Walk, and the popular Larapinta trail.

Call us for details.



CALENDAR



<p>May 2010</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larapinta Trail weekly departures • Heart of Tuscany • Camino de Santiago 	<p>June 2010</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larapinta Trail weekly departures • Mystical Umbria • Ladakh Himalaya Village Walk
<p>July 2010</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larapinta Trail weekly departures • Ladakh Himalaya Village Walk 	<p>August 2010</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larapinta Trail weekly departures • Flinders Ranges and the Hans Heysen Trail • Ladakh Himalaya Village Walk
<p>September 2010</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flinders Ranges and the Hans Heysen Trail • Camino de Santiago • Ladakh Himalaya Village Walk 	<p>October 2010</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colours of Andalucia • Basque Culinary Tour • India's Seductive South • Kumaon Himalaya Village Walk • Sikkim Himalaya Village Walk



<p>November 2010</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India's Seductive South • Kumaon Himalaya Village Walks • Sikkim Himalaya Village Walk • Majestic Rajasthan Spiritual Varanasi • Victorian High Country • Great Ocean Walk 	<p>December 2010</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great Ocean Walk weekly departures • India's Seductive South • Majestic Rajasthan Spiritual Varanasi • Kumaon Himalaya Village Walk • Sikkim Himalaya Village Walk • Kerala Cultural and Culinary • Victorian High Country
<p>January 2011</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great Ocean Walk weekly departures • India's Seductive South • Majestic Rajasthan Spiritual Varanasi • Kumaon Himalaya Village Walk • Sikkim Himalaya Village Walk • Kerala Cultural and Culinary • Victorian High Country 	<p>February 2011</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great Ocean Walk weekly departures • India's Seductive South • Majestic Rajasthan Spiritual Varanasi • Kumaon Himalaya Village Walk • Sikkim Himalaya Village Walk • Kerala Cultural and Culinary • Victorian High Country

