

Airlie Beach Relaxa.con

Progress Report 1 - October 2001

Relaxa.con - it's still on! 14-17 June 2002

Venue: Whitsunday Terraces Resort, Airlie Beach, Queensland, Australia

Committee: Eric Lindsay and Jean Weber

We are holding a relaxacon on the weekend after the Australian NatCon. Programming will consist mainly of meals and optional activities.

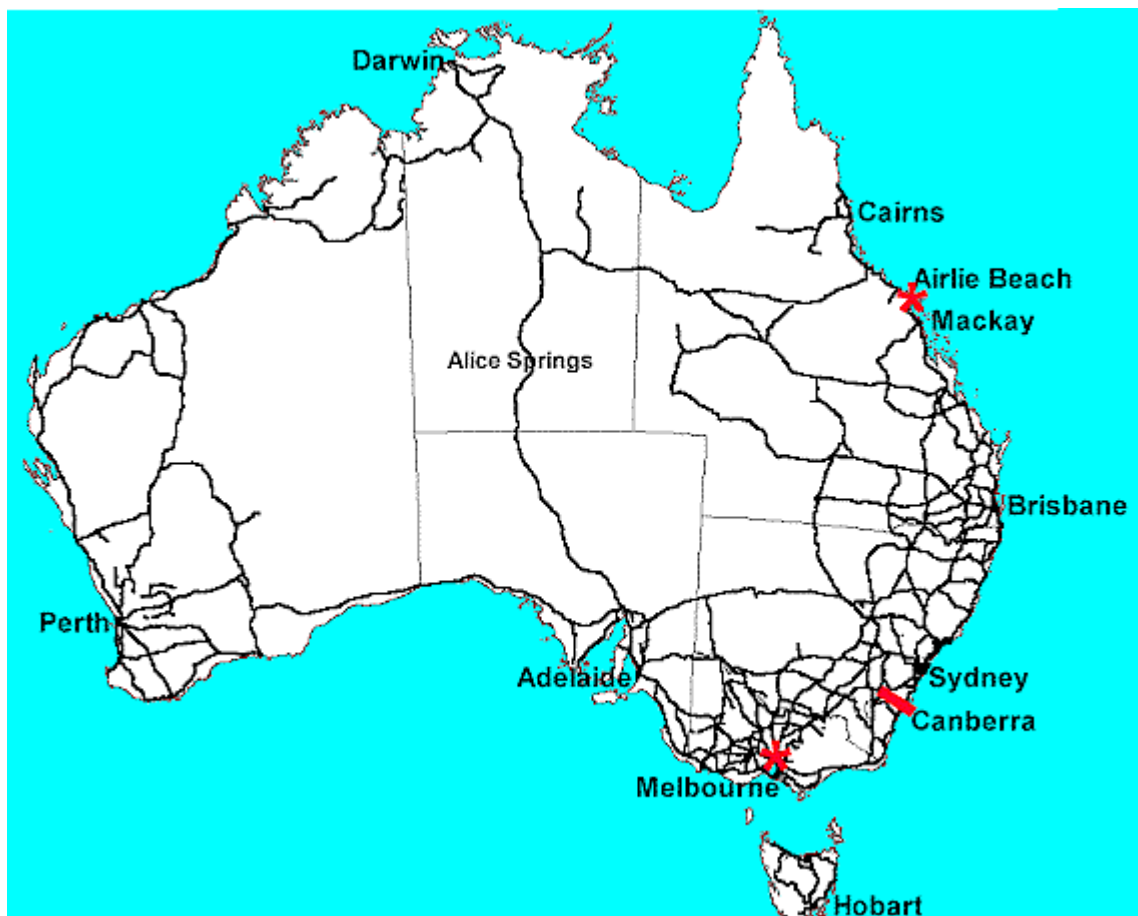
Accommodation and facilities

For more about Airlie Beach, the Whitsunday Terraces Resort, other facilities in town, and possible activities at the con, please see <http://www.ericlindsay.com/relaxa.con/relaxcon.htm> or download our original flyer in PDF format (320MB) from <http://www.ericlindsay.com/relaxa.con/relaxcon.pdf>. Information about other cons in Australian and New Zealand in June 2002 is here: <http://www.ericlindsay.com/relaxa.con/index.htm> or in PDF format: <http://www.ericlindsay.com/relaxa.con/conlet.pdf>

We don't have much to add to the information in that flyer, but we do want to bring you up to date on the transportation situation.

Transportation

Airlie Beach is a long way from anywhere else (see map) - around 2,500 km (1,500 miles) from Melbourne.



Above: Location of major Australian cities and Airlie Beach

You have a choice of several ways to get here.

Unless you have a lot of time to spare, you probably won't want to drive. In addition to the distance, not all of the roads are of "motorway" standard, so it can be a slow (and occasionally dangerous) trip.

You could take the train, which takes about the same amount of time (but sleeper cars are available), or the bus (which we consider too uncomfortable to contemplate for such a long trip).

Most likely you'll want to fly. Normally we'd tell you how to get the best deal, who to fly with, what airport to fly into, and all that stuff, but - we have no idea what the situation will be in mid-2002. We will update the web page (or issue a new Progress Report) when we find out something more definite, sometime early in 2002.

We have several airports to choose from. One is on Hamilton Island, just offshore, with direct flights from Brisbane or Sydney and a ferry and water taxi service to the mainland. Another airport is near the town of Proserpine, 35km inland from here (about 1/2 hour drive). Usually two flights a day come in, and a bus meets the planes and takes people to their hotels. The small city of Mackay is 2 hours' drive south of here and has a lot more flights each day. Flights to Proserpine or Mackay come from Brisbane, so travellers from Melbourne will need to change planes there.

The problem isn't airports; it's the airlines. One of the two major airlines in Australia (Ansett) went out of business in September, but is now (October) flying a limited number of routes again. Qantas is still flying and has recently increased the number of flights up here. Virgin Blue is starting flights to Mackay (two hours drive away) on 1st November. What any of these airlines will be doing 6 or 9 months from now is anybody's guess.

But don't be put off; the situation will almost surely sort itself out in the next few months, well before you have to make a booking. Just don't leave it until the last minute, or there might not be any seats left unless you pay full fare (and possibly not even then).

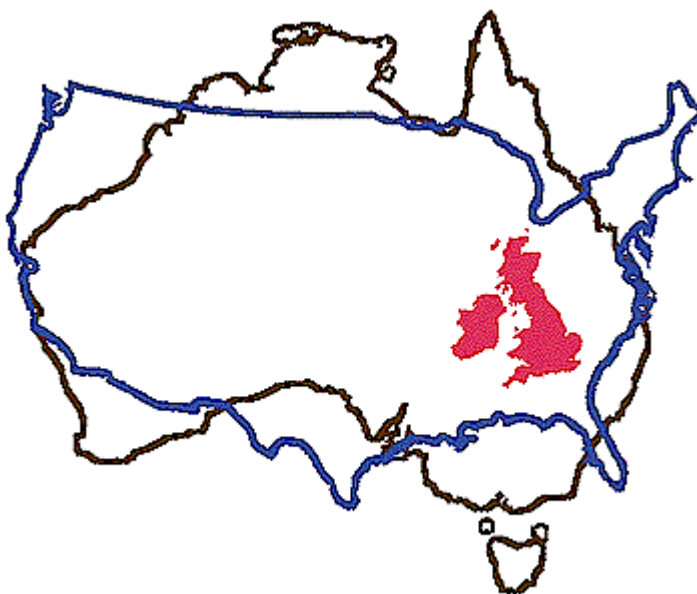
If you're coming from overseas, you can probably get a reasonably priced add-on to your international ticket. If you're buying your ticket from Melbourne separately, the best fares by far are the Internet-only fares; next best are advance-purchase return (round-trip) fares; both fare types apply to limited numbers of seats on each flight - much the same as in North America and probably the rest of the world.

Here are the websites to watch:

Ansett - <http://www.ansett.com.au/>

Qantas - <http://www.qantas.com.au/>

Virgin Blue - <http://www.virginblue.com.au/>



Above: Size comparison of Australia, USA and UK-Ireland