

Dr. Ludwig

One of Australia's most celebrated and misunderstood explorers is Ludwig Leichhardt or Dr. Leichhardt as he liked to be called. Although he attended several universities in Europe and England he never finished a course. These courses were funded by family, friends and wealthy sponsors. Having dodged his compulsory army training in Germany, and thereby becoming a fugitive - he ended up by roundabout, and some may say devious means, in Australia. Ludwig was not a doctor in any sense of the word, he just adopted the salutation after being called doctor once by some misguided fool on his arrival in Sydney. Ludwig was a self made explorer he was often lost and regularly saved by others, often aboriginal and always uncredited. His companions suffered a high rate of unnatural attrition and he eventually wandered off never to be seen again.

I shouldn't sell Ludwig short though he did cover a lot of country and endure ridiculous hardship to help map Australia. He covered a lot of ground and filled in a few blank spaces on the map. By way of gratitude we named a suburb in Sydney Leichhardt, the Leichhardt River, numerous streets and various other parks and gardens after him (he actually named the river but we let him keep it). All in all I guess he didn't do too badly for a draft dodging uni. dropout.

So tonight we are camped at Leichhardt Lagoon just south of Normanton. The lagoon is part of a local cattle station and for seven dollars a head you can ... "bask in the ambiance of this picturesque little oasis, commune with nature, observe outstanding bird life, enjoy a hot shower and sleep beneath the stars. Awake refreshed after a halcyon sleep, enjoy a leisurely breakfast and be ready to face the rigors of the new day".

Then the Leichhardt factor comes in

The picturesque little oasis is home to crocodiles. The grass verge is home to a variety of deadly snakes. One bite from a snake and the flocks of birds will be onto you like so much roadkill. You commune with a myriad of little bugs that squeeze through standard fly screen material and bigger ones that see flyscreens as no impediment.. The water comes untreated from the lagoon and it is essential that you boil it for ten minutes before drinking it, and preferably before washing with it. Did I mention the heat. Did I mention the risk of Ross River fever, Japanese Encephalitis, Dengue Fever, the Black Spot, Athletes Foot. Thank goodness we have the internet because it's just alerted me to thousands of more and even deadlier risks that I've never even heard of. If we can keep the cane toads away long enough and we can maintain a perimeter of bug spray we should get some sleep (I think we should work in shifts till the toads give up, I'll let Jen go first because it's time for my saucer of milk). As for breakfast... well we will cross that bridge if and when we come to it.

Seriously though its a pleasant little spot. I just wish we hadn't signed the Damage and Personal Injury waiver.

Maybe people were a little tougher in Ludwig's day... Hmmmm.



Leichhardt Falls



Leichhardt Lagoon

