

The Ups' & Downs of Covid-19 and the Mole Creek Caves Enterprise

Rebecca Kearns, Mole Creek Caves.

It certainly has been a resilience building experience at the Mole Creek Caves over the last couple of years. During the initial lock down Autumn 2020 we were lucky enough to be considered essential workers and the team got down and dirty sorting all the Maintenance tasks we hadn't got around too since the big floods of 2016, this involved lots of track work and a deep clean of all the buildings including both Marakoopa and King Solomons caves, bucket loads of coffee and tonnes of cake.

Post the initial shock and a return to some semblance of normal our experience has probably been a little different to peeps in other states. As Tasmanians we are experiencing a lock in, we have a covid-19 safe plan for the Enterprise which requires smaller groups, Maximum of 10 at Marakoopa and 6 at King Solomons, no multiple tours. We're at less than 1/3 capacity, not great for the bottom line. Our much-loved Enterprise Manager Haydn Stedman has retired, they are the downside's.

The Upside, Caves are so happy... the cave fauna has rebounded significantly, Tasmanian Cave Spiders have been eating, mating and egg laying. We have observed a much more diverse bunch of critters in the public access areas of the cave, including the most elusive Cave Animal of the Year cave beetle. Guides have more time to interact with their smaller, more engaged groups. We have had the opportunity to get some 'science' embedded into our processes with rainfall sampling for a Climate, Bushfire research project, Cave Climate analysis with The Andy's, up and coming Interpretation work with Cathie Plowman, and we now have some exciting research on the cave micro spiders in progress.

Good luck everyone, stay safe we hope to see you soon.



Cutta Cutta Caves Northern Territory

"Here in the Northern Territory, we have been quite lucky in relation to Covid-19. This season, the Cutta Cutta Caves opened later in the year than usual due to a limited number of people being allowed on the tours as a result of restrictions. Last year the Cutta Cutta Caves Nature Park was closed for the entire season.

More Recently, Covid-19 has had very different impacts. Earlier in the year, Darwin and Alice Springs went into lockdown for a week. The largest town between Darwin and Alice Springs is Katherine, and that's where everyone travelling waited for the week. We had the busiest week of the season! Several customers had to be booked onto later dates to accommodate for the rush, we just didn't have the capacity to get everyone on a tour as we were so booked out.

Come to August; however, and Covid-19 had the complete opposite effect, as Katherine went into lockdown. Cutta Cutta closed for 4 days, and on return, we had tours that didn't run as we had no one and some with only one person. All in all, the ups and downs have really evened out the impact, so we do consider ourselves very lucky in comparison to other areas within Australia."

- Kristie

(Kristie also takes care of the banking and administration at Cutta Cutta as well. Our all-rounder!)

"It was very hot for us guides and customers wearing masks in the cave after the Katherine lockdown. Cutta Cutta cave sits at a temperature of 33 degrees, which is the perfect temperature for the bats that inhabit it and the calcite crystals Cutta Cutta is known for. Lucky it was only for the week"

- Ben

"Lots of new staff learning tours at Cutta Cutta has created a reliable team that helped a lot over the busy covid period" Cait

"We have been busy wiping handrails after each tour and ensuring covid protocols are in place. It can be challenging but everyone has worked well as a team to ensure we are Covid compliant"

- Angus

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