

## Australia - Movie Trivia in Bowen

For a small town like Bowen in Queensland's Whitsundays, it's not every day that A-list Hollywood celebrities come to town. But for seven weeks in mid-2007 Bowen hosted a cast and crew of hundreds, including Nicole Kidman and Hugh Jackman, for the filming of Baz Luhrmann's \$100 million 20th Century Fox production, 'Australia'. Read on to discover all the gossip from the set, including the places in town the stars loved to visit, why Baz Luhrmann chose Bowen as the location for filming, and the many encounters that the locals had with the cast and crew.

- Bowen matriarch Merle Jochheim, a descendent of the town's founding father and owner of **Jochheim's Pies**, played a pivotal role in **Baz Luhrmann's** decision to film *Australia* in Bowen. One day Merle spotted Luhrmann outside the pie shop taking photos of the wide streets. Assuming he was a tourist, Merle started telling Luhrmann about Bowen's history and the things to see and do in the area. She then showed Luhrmann and his wife **Catherine Martin** (Academy Award Winner for Best Art Direction and Best Costume Design for *Moulin Rouge*) the walls of the bakery, which are decorated with old black-and-white photos depicting the town's past, and the rest is Bowenwood history! Catherine Martin said she was inspired by those very photos when designing the costumes for *Australia*.
- **Nicole Kidman** celebrated her 40<sup>th</sup> birthday while filming *Australia* in Bowen and her husband **Keith Urban** went to great lengths to ensure she had a night to remember. They began the celebrations at Bowen's **Summergarten Theatre** for a private screening of a premier movie, which was flown up especially for Nicole from Sydney. From there it was up to the restaurant on **Flagstaff Hill**, the aptly named **Three Sixty**, for a private dinner (Keith had hired out the whole restaurant for the two of them) complete with a spectacular fireworks display thanks to **Baz Luhrmann**.
- **Hugh Jackman and his family** were often spotted at **Horseshoe Bay**, one of Bowen's eight award-winning beaches. Featuring a white sandy beach and azure waters, the small bay is surrounded by large granite outcrops and is one of the few places in Queensland where you can snorkel right off the beach. The rock formations provide a haven for many fish species and Hugh and his son Oscar, were often seen surfing the waves off shore when the winds picked up. The popular swimming spot is patrolled by the local Surf Life Saving Club during summer and it has a paved parking area and licensed café/restaurant. An abundance of wild-life frequents the area, including nesting turtles.
- A gem of Bowen's heritage, the **Summergarten Theatre** was the cutting room floor for **Baz Luhrmann** and his editing and photographic crew while they were in Bowen. Every few days, the movie's head production team would use the 1940's theatre to privately



review raw footage, referred to as 'rushes' in movie lingo, for mistakes and inaccuracies. Theatre owner Ben De Luca said one time they had to re-film a scene when they noticed a jet skier and tugboat accidentally in the background of a shot!

- Approximately 600 extras were cast in the movie *Australia*, and around 100 local volunteers worked on the set as tour guides for visitors during the seven weeks of filming in Bowen.
- **Hugh Jackman** and his son Oscar were one of **Jochheim's Pies** most frequent customers for the seven weeks they stayed in Bowen. The bakery claims to have the best pies in Australia, and after owner Merle Jochheim's brush with the stars she added a *Hunky Hugh Jackman pie*, a *Baz Luhrmann baguette*, and a *Nicole Kidman Mango Cheesecake* to the menu. The bakery staff are happily tell visitors about their frequent encounters with Hugh and recall Oscar's daily visits to help ice cakes and fill pies. The walls of Jochheim's Pies adorn the historical Bowen photos that inspired **Baz Luhrmann** and **Catherine Martin**, alongside a feature wall of photos of the stars, cast and crew.
- **Country music legend Keith Urban** (and Nicole Kidman's husband) played a concert for the cast and crew of *Australia* at the **Grand View Hotel** to celebrate the end of filming. While the hotel's new beer garden provided the perfect modern setting for the celebrations, the hotel's exterior was still disguised as a typical 1930's building for its starring role in the movie. Look out for the hotel as Hugh Jackman and Nicole Kidman led cattle droves through the town. The Grandview also hosted many of the cast and crew for daily meals during their seven week stay, as well as thousands of tourists hoping to catch a glimpse of the set! If you're in Bowen, make sure you pop into the Grandview for a meal, a drink with one of the friendly locals, or an overnight stay.
- The '**Darwin Police Station**' is the only location of the original *Australia* movie set still standing in Bowen. The large flat grassy area in front of the Police Station was where the Darwin Harbour was recreated for the filming of the movie, and the 16ha set is believed to be one of the largest outdoor sets ever made.
- Built in 1948 and styled on the classic movie houses of southern California at that time, the **Summergarten Theatre** provided some of the props for *Australia*. If you look close enough in the movie, you'll see patrons at the 'Pearl Theatre in Darwin' using the very same tickets as the ones that movie-goers receive at Summergarten. The seats used in the Pearl Theatre were replicated on the ones from Summergarten and the theatre's historic projector was also used in a number of movie scenes. Theatre owner Ben De Luca is happy to show patrons the theatre's projection room so visitors can see how a movie works.
- Many of the cast and crew of *Australia* including **Hugh Jackman** and **Baz Luhrmann** were often spotted mingling amongst the locals to catch a new release movie with their family and friends at **Summergarten Theatre**. **Nicole Kidman** and **Keith Urban** hired the entire cinema for a private screening of a movie on Nicole's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. The movie had



not been released to the public at that stage and was flown up from Sydney especially for Nicole's birthday.

- Bowen's yacht club, **Anchors @ the Club** was a popular dining spot for many of the stars of *Australia* including **Hugh Jackman, Nicole Kidman, Baz Luhrmann, Catherine Martin, Bryan Brown, David Wenham** and **Ben Mendelsohn**. Hugh Jackman dined at Anchors @ the Club every Sunday while he was in town and there's even a signed plate with the statement 'I'll be back every Sunday' adorning the wall as proof! Owner Colin Oatley said Hugh loved his steaks and once he even cooked the fresh fish that Hugh had caught that day on a fishing trip. Bowen is known for its fantastic fishing and Anchors @ the Club is one of the best spots in town to dine on fresh local seafood. Pop in on a Wednesday night to enjoy a drink with the locals while watching the twilight sailing on the harbour.
  
- Bowen is building an outdoor entertainment area into the foreshore of Front Beach, which will include a special interactive section dedicated to *Australia*. The centre will include before and after shots from the movie, and will highlight a few special scenes from *Australia*, like when Nicole Kidman cracked her whip to lead more than 700 cows down the main street of Bowen!

For more information on Bowen visit [www.tourismbowen.com.au](http://www.tourismbowen.com.au) or on the Whitsundays – visit [www.thewhitsundays.com.au](http://www.thewhitsundays.com.au)