

Daytripper Simon Webster

Destination unknown



> TRIP NOTES

■ Mystery flights cost \$295 for a daytrip, \$395 for flights plus one night's accommodation, and \$495 for flights plus two nights' accommodation. See www.mysteryflights.com.au.

Low rise ... indecisive travellers will love being sent to Brisbane.

Photo: Tourism Queensland

the pub after work and not say when they're coming home.

The black bag contains a Brisbane visitors' guide, which I peruse during my 90-minute Virgin Blue flight to work out what I'm going to do after I get off the plane. A few hours after discarding my cold-weather gear and setting off with my possessions wrapped in a red hankie tied to a stick, I'm cruising up the Brisbane River aboard the MV Neptune.

Developers in Brisbane have made a token effort to build skyscrapers – and very shiny and modern they look too – but then they seem to have decided that's all a bit hard and have instead concentrated on turning old wool stores and warehouses into riverfront apartment blocks.

As a result, unlike in Sydney, most of Brisbane's old buildings are still visible. And from the pedestrian Goodwill Bridge you can actually see green hills.

A dolphin follows us up the river for a while; pelicans and the odd classic Queensland pub with ornate balconies makes it feel more Porpoise Spit than urban jungle, and that's all right with me.

I stroll through the botanic gardens, eat at a South Bank cafe and decide to take in some Queensland culture. My thongs preclude me from the XXXX brewery tour (you don't want to get beer between your toes), so I head for the South Bank arts precinct instead.

At the Queensland Museum I discover that the Sunshine State is home to *Macropanesthia* rhinoceros, a giant cockroach that weighs as much as two house mice. It lives underground, maintaining an air of mystery.

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Mystery flights are putting the excitement back into air travel.

It is 6am and I'm in my kitchen trying to stuff boots, a warm coat, a beach towel and a snorkel into a day pack. My flight leaves in two hours but I don't know where it's going. I have to cover all possibilities.

On my kitchen table is a black, sealed bag – like a reusable supermarket bag, except swaddled in a shroud of mystery. It emanates mystique like cheap perfume.

In it are details of my destination. I have resisted opening the bag for two days – largely because those shrouds of mystery can be a

bugger getting into – but now, as I struggle with a recalcitrant sou'-wester, it's time to be practical.

With shaking hands I break the seal and reach in for the envelope. The tension is unbearable. The cat can barely watch. I open the envelope. Ladies and gentlemen, today's destination is (cue drum roll) ... Brisbane.

Flashbulbs pop. The orchestra strikes up. The cat buries his head beneath a paw.

Mystery flights have been out of vogue for 20 years or more – since flying went from being exotic and exciting to about as thrilling as a bus ride to work.

But mysteryflights.com.au is attempting to put the romance back into air travel with daytrips and short stays in surprise destinations. It's exciting not knowing where you're going to end up. Luggage has been having all the fun for far too long.

My daytrip could have been to Adelaide, the Gold Coast, Melbourne, Brisbane, Hobart, the Sunshine Coast or Launceston. The worst result, of course, would have been Melbourne. I would have still had to pack for all weather conditions.

Why anyone would pay \$300 to go somewhere they don't want to go – when for the same amount of money or less, they can go somewhere they do want to go – may seem to be the real mystery in all this. But indecisive travellers will welcome the mystery flight renaissance, as will people buying gifts for indecisive friends.

And the overnight options will appeal to indecisive couples wanting a weekend away. These weekenders are the mystery flights' biggest drawcard: all relationships can benefit from an injection of mystery, which is why a caring partner occasionally will go to