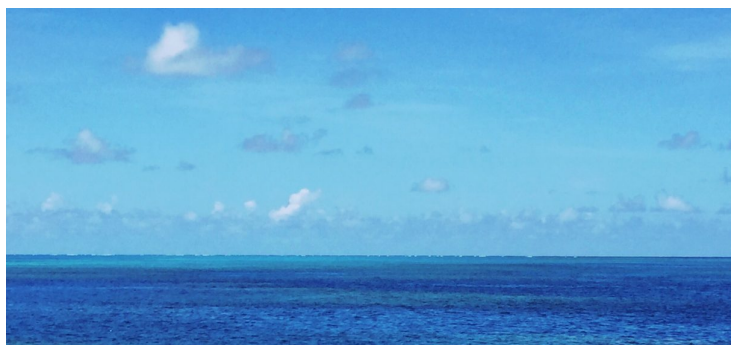


Who knew SCUBA was on my bucket list. I didn't put it there.



Turns out then edge of the Great Barrier Reef looks just like the edge of the Universe in sci-fi movies. A churning cauldron of death. Just barely invisible if you enlarge this image.

Today was the day to put a line through my wife's bucket list, a line through what I thought to be a pretty unlikely one to accomplish. Seeing the Great Barrier Reef. This was not in the original plan for this year's vacation; I thought Angkor Wat ought to be enough. Nope. So a simple and relatively inexpensive vacation changes into something completely different, with a myriad of connecting flights and a recall of an earlier trip to Australia that convinced me at the time, and continuing until very recently, that it was too expensive a place to return to.

Yet here I am, doing my part to spend my kids' inheritance (as well as cashing in stocks bought from paper route money back in the late-60s) while keeping the economy of Cairns alive.

Did we see fish? Yes, lots of them. More than in Hawaii off Kauai way back when? Not sure. The fish certainly act more like you'd expect a fish to act here in Australia, maybe because they have a \$50k fine for feeding them here. They don't come sniffing at a closed hand thinking you're hiding the fish equivalent of a Dove bar from them.

But it was fun to snorkel 30 miles from shore. What I didn't realize was that an introductory SCUBA dive was included in the package. Unfortunately, my wife's medical history is way too complex for them to figure out if she's safe for SCUBA, but I passed the test.

It's a bit odd, this thing about not coming up for air, and how your ears feel when descending to a mere 33 feet. But it's also kinda fun just following a fish around for a while and realizing that, unlike the limited 2d world while snorkeling, the world suddenly becomes a much bigger place when you can travel up and down.

More soon. Hard to type an entry like this on an iPhone in bed when you're supposed to be trying to sleep because another early morning is just hours away.