

Wily Possums and Elusive Bandicoots

(Facebook excerpt written for Alliance Abroad Group)

Bandicoots. They are an endangered species in Australia, very rare. Q- Station Resort happens to be chuck full of them and guests tend to be simply ecstatic when they see one. Personally I find them to be quite ugly what with their long snouts and gimpy legs, but I do have a funny story about them.

One evening back in November I was driving Blinky, one of our large shuttle buses, around the resort and trying very hard to remember to drive in the left lane. I was still a shiny new employee and terrified by how backwards the driving felt. As I snailed around a corner I came across a gaggle of British ladies needing a lift from their rooms. They were quite chatty as I drove and it helped relax me a little as I listened to them happily gossip. They reminded me of the Golden Girls to be honest.

“So did you all know that Bev did liposuction last month?” said one woman in a hushed whisper.

“No!” exclaimed a second lady with a bit of pink lipstick smeared on her teeth. “I wondered how she became so thin suddenly.”

“How deceptive that she didn’t tell us!” declared another woman in a purple, polka-dot shirt.

“Well, she *did* tell *me*,” said the first woman with a bit of a superior attitude as she patted her voluminous hair. She was obviously the Queen Bee of the group.

The other two looked at her reproachfully, and I snickered to myself.

Just then a creature darted out onto the road and I stepped on the breaks, coming to a halt (speed limit on the resort is only 15 kilometers, so very easy to stop. My first two weeks I never went a fraction over since I was so scared!)

“OH MY HEAVENLY DAY, what is that?!” screeched the polka-dot woman.

“Pearl, never in my life, why I do believe that it’s a bandicoot!” cried Queen Bee in delight.

“Yes, that is a bandicoot,” I said with pride. “They are an endangered species.”

“Oh driver, please stop, I simply MUST take a photo!” she shouted out.

Putting the bus in park, I waited as they practically climbed over each other in their haste to exit the vehicle. Whipping out their cameras, all 3 ladies approached the rodent. I held my breath, half-way hoping it would attack so I’d have a good story to tell.

As if knowing it was on display, the animal looked at the English ladies curiously, and then suddenly stood up on hind legs, standing fully erect.

“Oh my, how darling, look!” screeched Pink Lipstick as she snapped a photo, the flash immobilizing the creature.

Queen Bee stooped down and took a picture a mere foot away from the feral thing.

“Madge will be so envious of this!” cried Polka Dot with her hand to her chest, and I thought she was gonna soil her linens from all the excitement. “I can’t *wait* to show my pictures to the Bridge-club gals!”

All 3 women were swooning over the creature, and it suddenly scampered off into the bush, probably scared for its life. I know I would have been.

As I drove the ladies back up to reception they were positively beaming over the experience.

A few nights later when I was driving around the resort again, another bandicoot ran out in front of me.

“Holy buckets there are bandicoots EVERYWHERE!” I said to the duty manager, David, who was riding along with me.

He raised his eyebrows and looked at me like I was cray cray.

“Matt, that’s not a bandicoot.”

“What? Of course it is. They’re practically taking over the resort!” I declared sagely.

David started to laugh. “Those are possums, not bandicoots!” he said and I immediately felt like a moron.

“Oh,” I said in a small voice.

A minute later we passed a different critter on the side of the road. “THAT’S a bandicoot there,” David pointed out. “Possums have long, fluffy tails. Bandicoots don’t.” Suddenly remembering the incident with the Golden Girls Wanna-Be’s, I busted up laughing.

“Gah! I told a bunch of English ladies that it was a bandicoot, and they took tons of pics!”

We both had a good snigger, and I was wishing more than anything that I could be an invisible witness the moment Polka Dot displayed her “bandicoot” pictures for the world to see.

Fast forward to 3 nights ago.

Once again I was driving a group around the resort, this time a cluster about to take a ghost-tour. Suddenly a possum darted out and I had to slam on the breaks since I tend to speed now.

“Oh my gosh, it’s a bonda!” one man practically screamed behind me, and I flinched.

“A bonda?” I asked. “You mean a *bandicoot*?”

“Yes! Oh I’ve never seen one, I wish I had my camera,” he moaned.

I didn’t say anything, but continued to drive. A moment later I rounded a corner and found another possum lying comfortably in the middle of the road. All that was missing was its lounge chair and lemonade.

“Quick, someone give me your camera!” yelled the man.

Unable to keep it to myself, I spoke up.

“Actually, that’s a possum.” I said in as delicate a voice as possible.

“No!” I looked in the rearview mirror and the man frowned. “Are you so sure though?”

“Yup I’m sure. I’ve never been more sure of anything in my life, definitely sure,” I spouted off.

He looked crestfallen and I unrolled my window.

“Move it!” I yelled, while simultaneously laying on the horn to scare the beast off the road. The possum collected its popcorn and magazine and ran off into the night.

As I started driving again, the man muttered under his breath and I heard something like, “Could have at least *lied* to me.”

A minute later I dropped the crowd off at the Visitor’s Center for their ghost-tour. As I drove back up the hill I passed 2 bandicoots sitting by the side of the road.

And if bandicoots can laugh, then they were most DEFINITELY laughing at me.

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