The Perils of Remote Property Management

Before you go on please dial up YouTube and have a look at this clip from the 1975 classic movie Network. The rest of this little story will be all the more entertaining for it.

Search YouTube Network I’m as mad as hell and I won’t take it anymore.

I always thought that grumpy old man was a cliché. Not so.

The managing director and I recently decided to take our daughter for a week’s holiday. The boomerang child has been studying and getting good results, so we thought a treat was in order. She chose a tropical island sojourn and so off we went to Hamilton Island in the Whitsundays. The MD arranged a villa via a holiday home property management business and off we went.

I should stress that the accommodation we chose was privately owned and not managed by the people who run the island and most of the hotel and villa style accommodation. The management company, as it turned out, are based on the Gold Coast.

Our friends at Virgin flew us out of Brisbane with no glitches and no delays. Well worth a few extra dollars for reliability. The flight into the island did not disappoint and is surely one of the most magnificent a traveller can experience. Our transfer driver was waiting for us and the weather was perfect. I should have known this couldn’t last.

We were delivered to our lodgings on the boat harbour waterfront and started settling in. The property boasted 4 bedrooms, 2 with water views and had been selected because it allowed all of us to have a nice aspect from our beds. Sadly, the view from our daughters’ room was obstructed by a large defunct washing machine which appeared to have been retired to the terrace. Not a good look.

While I wondered what sort of genius expects a guest paying a very significant tariff to accept this the MD called my attention to the walk-in robe in the master bedroom. Quite a spacious area to be sure and just as well because the owner had stored a decommissioned outdoor setting in it. As such no clothes could be hung and we had to hunt for a place to keep everything.

A call to the property management company garnered a long list of reasons why the offending items away.

All sorted, let’s have a swim. The pool in the photos looked very inviting. Turned out the photo was very clever indeed. It made a corner shot of a spa look like a much larger swimming pool. Called the property manager web site and yep, it says swimming pool. Called the property manager......mate, where’s the swimming pool?

While on the subject of web site photos we made another interesting discovery. All the photos were taken from one angle. We soon worked out why when we discovered that the boat yard servicing the marina is right next door.

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While on the subject of web site photos we made another interesting discovery. All the photos were taken from one angle. We soon worked out why when we discovered that the boat yard servicing the marina is right next door. While I love beautiful boats, I get no real pleasure out of listening to them being craned from the water and having the barnacles ground off them. Turns out there are lots of boats in need of barnacle removal at Hamilton Island!

Not the end of the world. The weather’s pretty mild so a nice warm spa of an evening will do the trick. Sorry, it’s not heated. The owner cut off the heating because guests were using it and it was costing money. Ok, good to know.

Melbourne Cup at the Yacht Club the next day was pretty special. Yeah, I know, tough gig but someone’s got to do it! The atmosphere and view were lovely and given the occasion we hit the champagne. The champagne, being an equal opportunity beverage, waited until the next morning and hit us right back. You can imagine how impressed we were, as we nursed post cup headaches, to be greeted by much hammering and grinding emanating from the apartment above us. Back on to the property manager. Great response…no, that renovation was finished weeks ago. By day three the non-existent renovation had forced us to spend most of the day elsewhere and brought the MD to a state of emotion whereby she fluctuated between tears and homicidal thoughts.

In desperation we visited our building contractor friends on the floor above and took a short video which we emailed to the property manager. The response was breathtaking...............how loud is it really and maybe it doesn’t go on all day? To give them some credit they did seem to take the situation seriously and got on to the builders. Made no difference to noise but at least they tried. We were also offered another unit on the ground level with no view and a very very tired fit-out. Not exactly a compelling solution in a location where the view is everything.

Needless to say, we have suggested to the managers that units impacted by renovations should either not be made available for rental or the guests should be advised, and the tariff adjusted accordingly. We await a response to our request for a partial refund although we’re not holding our breath. I have avoided naming the property manager or the specific property in order to give the owner an opportunity to address our concerns. I suspect the MD has not been so kind on her Trip Advisor account.

So, what have we learned? One thing for sure. Be wary of any leisure accommodation that is managed off site by a faceless organisation that doesn’t know its product intimately. If this had been a management rights with an onsite manager, I am sure they would have known about the renovation and other problems and would have taken the unit out of the rental pool or at least made us aware of the issues. We would have had someone to talk to face to face and I am confident we would have had a much more pleasant experience.

The unit we stayed in is on the market for $3.6M…………….if you buy it let me know.

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