

11/16/2019

Hi,

Days thirty-two through thirty-four; Sydney!

**Day 32 (11/14/2019)** – We are closing in on our last few days in the southern hemisphere. Today it was a short drive from Huskisson to Sydney. Along the way we made two stops. First we stopped at a car wash to get rid of yesterdays National Park dirt. That only took us 35 minutes; I couldn't believe it. We were like third in line; they washed the cars by hand, then into a machine and if you paid enough, which I didn't, they dried the car by hand. I never saw anything so slow.

Next, at the recommendation of our B&B manager, we went off the beaten path a little and stopped at the Scarborough Hotel which is a beer garden that sits high on a cliff overlooking the Tasman Sea. The ride to the hotel and the hotel property were well worth seeing. The grounds were so nice that Joyce offered to buy our lunch, which we graciously accepted, and sat on the outside tables to eat. Very nice!

Back on the road again and everything went well until we got to Sydney. Ms Garmin got lost! She had me going in all kinds of directions; getting more and more frustrated all the time. Sydney had one way signed at almost every road making directions impossible. At one point we realized there was small print at the bottom of the signed that read; except vehicles under 6 ton. We never saw the small print; no wonder we were going around in circles. Once at the hotel we got the luggage out of the car and onto a cart where Joyce, with the help of the bellboy, got it to our rooms while Esther and I got back on the road to return the rental car; confusion again. Finally we got to the rental car place and returned the car. Now, we had to decide; taxi or walk back to the hotel? We decided on the half hours walk. It was a nice afternoon, only two short hills and partly through a park. I believe we got back to the hotel faster walking then we got to the rental car place driving.

We were finally back to the hotel, where Joyce was patiently waiting. We sat in our room trying to decide what to do next. We didn't have any wine left; the restaurant menu wasn't the greatest and the wine and food were too expensive, so we headed out looking for a place to eat. It was a struggle; Australians just don't serve American food. We finally found a restaurant across from the docks to have dinner. It turns out there was a Princess Cruise ship just leaving port so we got to eat and watch the ship leave. On our walk back to the hotel, Joyce and I had an ice cream cone; Esther abstained. That was our day!

**Day 33 (11/15/2019)** – A very busy day! We started our day with coffee and muffins at a café on the way to our Captain Cook Harbor Story two hour cruise. The views from the boat were beautiful; Sydney harbor is stunning. It is indeed a very beautiful city, especially for the water. During the two hours cruise, the speaker (I don't know what else to call him) discussed the history of Sydney and described all of the views we were seeing along the way. He did an excellent job. Esther and I together took 136 photos during the two hours; going to be tough to sort out. The cruise was a great start to our day.

On the cruise and from previous people we met, they all suggested we take the ferry to Manly, a 30 minute ride directly across the harbor, for lunch and to walk around; so we did. On the way over we noticed it was getting very smoky. We were concerned about Esther with the smoke, but she said it was okay, so we stayed, walked around, fund a place for lunch (we actually had our dinner), found the ice cream store and back to the ferry for our ride back. Manly is the narrowest stretch between the harbor

and the Pacific Ocean on a peninsula. We walked from one side to the other in a few blocks. On the way back we found the smoke was in Sydney as well. It has been very dry here and, like California, they have been struggling with forest fires. By five or six o'clock, the smoke was gone.

On the way back to the ferry, we purchased a bottle of champagne which we enjoyed in our room while we recovered from all the walking. I failed to mention that it was a fair walk between our hotel and the cruise and ferry. While finishing off the champagne, we tried to figure out what to do for our lunch/dinner without walking all the way back to the port area. Well, we headed out and found a hamburger place about half way; actually, a good hamburger. Since we have an all day tour of the Blue Mountains tomorrow, it was back to the hotel to re-pack our suitcases; less than 50 lbs.

**Day 34 (11/16/2019)** – Our last day and it was a busy one! We got up early and met the van for our tour of the Blue Mountains; 7:05am pickup. An hour and a half later we were in the Blue Mountains stopping at look out points. Although the mountain range is just a little over 3,000 feet, it looks much higher than that with high rock cliffs and expansive valleys. The valleys are full of eucalyptus trees which makes the valley floor look like mat from high above. Why are the Blue Mountains blue? **These eucalyptus forests emit a huge amount of oils into the atmosphere. When eucalyptus oils, dust particles, and water vapour combine, as the sunlight hits, it creates an optical illusion of a blue haze. The light allows the eyes to see the blue pigments in the atmosphere.**

While in the Blue Mountains, we next visited Scenic World. There we took the scenic skyway to the top of the mountain. It is the highest cable car in Australia and traveled 270 meters. From the skyway we took the scenic railway, 52° incline, down to walkways. There were three walkway options; short, medium and long. The medium, which we took, was about a 30 minute walk through a temperate rain forest. Years ago coal was mined in this area and remnants to the mining still existed. At the end of the walk we were at the entrance to the scenic cableway to take us the 545 meters back to the top. From there we met our tour drive, Lloyd, and our tour went on from there.

We made three additional stops on the tour; first for an included lunch, second to the Featherdale Wildlife Park where we spent an hour and fifteen minutes. It was a decent park, but having been to two other wildlife park and to Kangaroo Island, it was anticlimactic. From the park we were taken to a river leading into Sydney Harbor where we boarded a ferry back to the dock near our hotel. All in all, it was a very good day. The Blue Mountains, in spite of their only being a little over 3,000 feet, were spectacular. Most of our time in Australia has been along the coast; this tour has provided us a different prospective of the country.

Once back to the dock, I purchased a bottle of champagne and we had our last ice cream in the southern hemisphere on our way back to our hotel. Finally back at our room we toasted to our trip which we all agreed it was absolutely outstanding. We decided that with the big lunch and the ice cream there was no need to go to dinner.

Now back in our own rooms, it is final packing time; meaning meet the 50 pound suitcase limit, and get everything ready to leave for the airport in the morning.