

TRIP TO AUSTRALIA

MARCH 4 TO APRIL 3, 2014

We timed this trip so that we'd be in Australia at the beginning of their fall season, reasoning that had we come two months earlier we would have experienced some of the most brutal summer weather that the continent had ever known. Temperatures over 40°C (104°F) were common in the cities that we planned to visit: Sydney (in New South Wales), Melbourne* (in Victoria), and Adelaide (in South Australia); and

*Melbourne, for example, had a high of 47°C (117°F) on January 21; and several cities in the interior regions of NSW, Vic, and SA had temperatures of about 50°C (122°F) during December-January.

there were dangerous brush fires not far from populated areas. As it turned out, we were quite fortunate: typical daily highs were around 25°C (although Adelaide soared to 33°C several days after we left it) and there were only a couple of days of rain.

In my earlier travelogs, I paid tribute to my wife for her brilliant planning of our journey. So it was this time as well. In the months leading up to our departure, we (i.e., Lee) did yeoman (yeowoman? yo, woman?) work in these areas: (1) deciding which regions of Australia to visit; (2) scouring web sites, in consultation with the travel agency *Southern Crossings*, for suitable lodging; (3) negotiating with *Southern Crossings* (with the assistance of Stefan Bisciglia of *Specialty Cruise and Villas*, a family-run travel agency in Gig Harbor) concerning city and country tours, tickets to events, advice on sights, etc.; and (4) reading several web sites and travel books.

In the course of the trip, I took some 2000 pictures!! Only a relatively small number* have been uploaded

*By this I mean a mere 1500 or so. Well, I did say *relatively* small.

to my Picasa account: some of the rejected pictures were poorly focused; others were poorly lit; some were very very very very repetitious; and some showed the two intrepid travelers in a less than flattering light. On the other hand, one can never have too many pictures of koalas and kangaroos, right? You can view those that I've chosen to share at <http://picasaweb.google.com/ronmagid>. (The seven Australia 2014 picture albums are shown in reverse chronological order on the Picasa page; nothing that I can do will change that.)

TUESDAY, MARCH 4 TO THURSDAY, MARCH 6

From the dates shown above, it would appear that it takes two days to get to Australia. T'aint so, although it is a long trip. Our itinerary has us leaving Seattle at 2:25 pm on Alaska Airlines and arriving in Los Angeles at 4:57 pm; we then hang around LAX for over five hours before boarding a Qantas* flight at

*Qantas is pronounced as if the u were present (Quantas) and is an acronym of the initials for "Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services."

10:20 pm. Although this over-the-ocean segment lasts "only" 15 hours, we do not arrive in Sydney until **two** days later at 8:20 am. The reason? The eastern-most Australian states (New South Wales, Victoria) are on Daylight Saving Time and are 19 hours ahead of PST (the U.S. does not go on DST until March 8 at which point the time differential will be 18 hours). So, 10:20 pm on March 4 in Los Angeles is 5:20 pm in Sydney on March 5; and 15 hours later than that puts our arrival at 8:20 am on March 6. Got it?

But then, just to confuse everyone, South Australia (Adelaide, Kangaroo Island, etc.) is 18.5 hours ahead of PST. What's with the half-hour? Who knows? Maybe it's to keep the kangaroos and koalas happy.

One result of all this madness is that when we return from Melbourne to Los Angeles on April 3, we leave at 10:35 in the morning and arrive **the same day** nearly four hours earlier! This, it seems to me, is tampering with the natural order of things - no wonder the world is being visited by increasingly violent weather systems.

An illuminating discussion of Australia's geography would be helpful here, but I'm probably not the best qualified person to provide it. Nevertheless, let's give it a shot. Australia is surrounded on all sides by water; thus, it has no borders with other countries. It is shaped like a kidney or (if one wants to avoid mentioning body parts) a kidney bean. Like the lower 48 states of the U.S., it is more or less rectangular in shape. In size (2.97×10^6 sq mi), it's slightly smaller than the contiguous U.S. (3.12×10^6 sq mi). It makes do with three time zones (as compared to our four) and with seven states (as compared to our 48, if one ignores Alaska and Hawaii, something that I enjoy doing). Australia's eastern time zone consists of four states which, from south to north, are Tasmania (Tas), Victoria (Vic), New South Wales (NSW), and Queensland (Qld): Tas is an island off the southern coast of the mainland; Vic, NSW, and Qld are stacked one atop the other. The central time zone consists of two states: South Australia (SA) and Northern Territory (NT); their names reveal which is to the south and which is to the north, right? The western time zone has but one state, appropriately called Western Australia (WA); it is the largest of the seven, encompassing about 1/3 of the total area.



SA and NT not only have the weird half-hour time zone mentioned above, but it's also pretty much arbitrary (or so it seems) as to which states go on DST and which don't. Three of the four most eastern states (Tas, Vic, and NSW) observe DST but Qld does not. In the central time zone (where the half-hour confusion takes place), SA observes DST but NT does not. In the western time zone, WA is two hours earlier than Qld and, like it, does not observe DST. So ... from October 5 to April 6, when DST is (or is not) observed, the time in Tas, Vic, and NSW will be (say) 11:00; the time in Qld will be 10:00; the time in SA will be 10:30; the time in NT will be 9:30; and the time in WA will be 8:00.*

*Although I've just described the times in the seven Australian states, this account would not be complete if I failed to mention Eucla, a tiny locality (population less than 100) in WA, right at its border with SA; the time there is 8:45 and it does not observe DST.

For our trip to England and the subsequent Rhine cruise last fall, we used (for the first time) the Gig Harbor Taxi service run by Gloria and her daughter Cynthia. Everything went smoothly, so we arranged for one of them to pick us up at 11:15. Although the vehicle shows up on time on this rainy, cool day, the driver is neither woman but, rather, Ken who is Gloria's son. When I carry our suitcases to his car, the dulcet tones of Rush Limbaugh blast forth from his radio, polluting the entire neighborhood. I am about to ask him to shut the damned thing off, but he beats me to it by asking if I mind hearing Rush Limbaugh. I make it clear that I do mind, and so he turns it off. (The car also smells of cigarette smoke, but there's nothing that I can do about that.) To say that Ken is not very communicative would not be an exaggeration, although he does propound on new car engines that are being developed and that will get 100 mpg, but oil companies and car manufacturers are preventing them from being installed. Is this true or just a right-wing urban myth? Who knows?

We make excellent time, arriving at Seatac at 11:55. We get through the check-in at the Alaska counter fairly quickly; we had not printed our boarding passes the previous day because Qantas did not allow it. We also learn that our seat selection, done through Qantas, is not valid and that we'll not be sitting next to one another. The clerk explained that only Alaska can assign seats on their planes. So there! So we ask her to get us side-by-side seats on our April 3 return flight, which she does. At TSA security, I'm "rewarded" with pre-checking, so I don't need to empty my pockets, show the laptop and liquids, etc. Too bad because I really wanted to take advantage of the rule that says that the elderly (i.e., folks who are 75

or older, like moi) do not have to remove shoes and jackets. Lee, who looks like a terrorist, is required to go through the regular screening process. By 12:30, we get to Gate N2. Lee goes to Burger King for coffee and a chicken sandwich; I refrain, although I do take two bites of the sandwich and a couple of glugs of coffee.

Boarding for the 2:25 departure begins at 1:50. I have a middle seat on the Boeing 737 and Lee is directly behind me; from time to time, she pokes my head because ... well, just because she can. A strange (and even disturbing) incident: a man seated in front of me asks the flight attendant what the plane's destination is. She replies "Los Angeles" but he seems unsure and asks her to check his boarding pass. She assures him that it does say LAX, but he is still not convinced. Well, the doors close, we are pushed back and are air-borne at 2:38, so the man is now trapped, no matter if he wants to go to LA or not.

The plane is flying above clouds for most of the trip, at least I think so but I can't be sure because the woman in the window seat next to me closes her shade at 3:00 and promptly falls asleep. During the flight, Alaska offers several box lunches (for a price) but I'm cheap and take only a small package (free!) of pretzels and a soft drink. Shortly before landing, a flight attendant does a long (and very annoying) promotion for an Alaska Airlines signature card which promises all sorts of goodies such as free flights.

About thirty minutes before landing, my seat partner awakens and raises her shade, so I get to look out the window as we approach Los Angeles. There is lots of haze, but still one can make out the coastline and the channel islands. We cross the coast and fly westward over a huge warehouse district, then make a U-turn over Hollywood, and descend to the airport where we land at 4:42. After a very long taxi, we finally arrive at the gate at 4:55, right on schedule.

We get on a shuttle bus that will take us to the Tom Bradley International Terminal. Well, that was the goal, but at an intermediate stop the bus begins spewing smoke from the rear. The driver yells "Fire! Everybody off!" and although there is no visible fire we follow his order and wait for a non-flaming bus to take us the rest of the way. As we exit, another bus driver, standing on the platform, tells us "Don't worry. This happens all the time. It's just vaporization of the refrigerant." We check-in at the Qantas desk, get new boarding passes, and then go through security. Unlike the smooth passage through TSA security in Seattle, I get no concessions here (except that I'm allowed to keep my shoes on).

We make our way to the Korean Air lounge at 5:45, but it doesn't open until 7:00 (as Lee knew it wouldn't) so we sit in the main terminal lobby and wait. On the flight I finished the March 10 *TIME* and am partway through the February 3 *New Yorker* (I'm way behind because I saved the recent issues to read on the trip). While waiting for the lounge to open, we are entertained by phenomenal video displays on each of the walls, one of which is a full two-stories high. Sometimes there are ads, other times changing colors and shapes, nature scenes, dancers. But best of all is a ten-minute story of a Harold Lloyd/Buster Keaton type figure who scales the outside of an apartment building to reach his true love. It is done in the style of a 1920s silent movie, with shaky camera work and featuring stock figures like a policeman who is made a fool by the main character.

At 7:00 we make our way (again) to the KAL lounge (Lee has recently upgraded her Amex to Platinum Level, thus gaining access to a variety of airport lounges, although she has to pay \$27 to her traveling companion - moi!). The lounge is quiet, the ambiance is subdued, and there is a variety of comestibles available. I take a plate of egg salad, carrot sticks, and crackers; there is no American-style coffee available (only espresso is produced by the machine, but we also knew this ahead of time from online comments) but I know that we're going to be well fed and caffeinated once we get on the plane. At 8:40, I decide that I really do *need* some coffee; I'm about to get an espresso when an employee in the lounge directs me to a drip coffee maker that brews American-style coffee. Ah ...

The music piped into the lounge is interesting. No, it's not Korean favorites nor any other music from the Orient. Instead, it begins with American standards (Cole Porter, Jerome Kern, etc.) sung by Frank Sinatra and others of his ilk; but then it switches to classical and we get the first movement of Dvorak's 9th

symphony followed by the second movement of a Mozart piano concerto (not the so-called "Elvira Madigan" slow movement of the 21st concerto, much to my surprise), followed by a Bach keyboard work re-orchestrated for strings.

Finally, we make our way to the gate at 9:30 for our upcoming 15-hour flight to Sydney. Devoted readers (of which there are probably none) of these travelogues will recall that I have always been opposed to our paying exorbitant fees to fly business class on our various trips. One of my objections was that since I so rarely am able to sleep for an extended time on a plane it's a frivolous waste of money for me to have a lie-flat seat with extra leg room. Well, this time cooler heads prevailed and we did not choose to fly business class. But we did opt for premium economy which, compared with regular economy, has somewhat more leg room (40 in. vs. 31 in.) and butt room (19.5 in. vs. 17.5 in.). The plane that Qantas flies from L.A. to Sydney is an Airbus A380-800 which has two decks and a capacity of 371 economy seats, 35 premium economy seats, 64 business class seats, and 22 first class seats. That totals 492 people, not counting the cockpit crew and cabin attendants. The lower deck has the first-class cabin at the front of the plane and regular economy (with seats 3-4-3) behind it. The upper deck has business class seats (arranged 2-2-2) toward the front, premium economy (2-3-2) behind it, and a few regular economy (2-4-2) further behind. There are two jetways from terminal to plane: one for those sitting on the upper deck and another for those below. (That the first-class people have to "mingle" with the regular economy peons must rankle in some quarters.)

The seats are very comfortable, even if they won't recline more than about 15 degrees; there is a foot rest at each seat and each passenger is supplied with blanket, pillow, black mask (ooh, sex games??), and serious-looking headphones that envelop the ears. Because none of these are of interest to me, I always worry about where to stash them, but the A380 provides a solution: between the window seat and the wall is a very deep well, with a lid that can be latched, into which one can place all of the items along with books, magazines, laptops, and a koala or kangaroo (on the return from Australia).

At 9:45, the captain announces that the flying time to Sydney will be "only" 14 hrs 20 min. Champagne is offered and menus are distributed. At 10:15 the doors are closed and we are pushed back at 10:20. The intercom is very clear (i.e., one can hear the safety announcement, although without the whimsy of Delta or the near-nudity of Air New Zealand); the accent of the speaker seems to be English rather than Australian (or what I imagine Australian is). As was true of our landing at LAX earlier in the day, the taxi to the runway is very lengthy and we are not air-borne until 10:37. I resume reading the February 3 *New Yorker*, even though the individual electronic device at each seat has an excellent assortment of recent and classic movies, TV programs, games, etc.

At 11:30, dinner is served. (I realize that having a late dinner is considered fashionable, but surely this is pushing it, yes?). After a green leaf salad, I opt for roast chicken with carrots and mashed potatoes, followed by strawberry shortcake and coffee. (The menu lists "snacks" that are available at any time during the flight: pizza, fruit, cookies, chocolate bars but I don't indulge once dinner is finished.) Even though the coffee is served from a French press, it is much much too weak, a dismal end to an otherwise decent meal.

At 12:30, I decide to try to get some sleep. Alas, I awaken at 2:00. I keep my eyes shut, hoping for more sleep, and much to my surprise it comes; I don't awaken until 4:00. I do a bit of reading on the Kindle (one of the library books that I had downloaded from the Pierce County Library is Cara Black's *Murder at the Lanterne Rouge*, an Aimée Leduc murder mystery; Black is an author who was strongly recommended by Peter Gaspar and, later, by Lee. I feel drowsy around 6:45, so I close my eyes and don't awaken until 7:30. (All of these times are from my watch, still on PST.) For a person who ordinarily doesn't sleep for more than two hours on a long flight, this total of nearly six hours of shut-eye is most gratifying. So I decide to read again but my reading light won't come on. Damn! A flight attendant comes to the rescue and turns on my lamp by hand rather than with the button on the side of my seat.

At 8:30 am on March 5, I adjust my watch to Sydney time which is 3:30 am on March 6. We still have

about five hours of flying time ahead of us. I do some crossword puzzles and read some more of Aimée Leduc's misadventures. Breakfast is served at 6:00. After juice and a muffin, I choose the continental breakfast (fruit and cereal) and Lee opts for the hot breakfast (scrambled eggs, sausage, hash browns, roasted tomato). The coffee is still much too weak. Shame on them!

We land in Sydney at 8:17, right on schedule, and are at the terminal at 8:25. We clear passport control very quickly, but the clerk merely stamps (without collecting) the immigration questionnaire that we had dutifully filled out. After recovering our luggage, a customs clerk does collect the questionnaire (so our work was not in vain) and we told to stand in a line while a drug-sniffing dog* inspects our suitcases and

*In her journal, Lee describes it this way: "We are held up ... by an adorable beagle. Clad in a red coat embroidered 'Biosecurity,' this dude gets a doggie treat approximately every six bags he sniffs, so the process takes time."

lets us pass. We enter the arrival lobby and look for a Southern Crossings representative who is going to drive us to our hotel. We see a man holding a sign for Rob (sic) and Lee Magid - close enough. But before going to his car, we stop at an ATM and withdraw 300 AUD.

I had looked at Google Maps and was sure that it would be a fairly short ride to the hotel using a motorway for most of the trip. Our driver, however, shuns this in favor of very crowded streets and lots of stop lights. Maybe he knows that the expressway would be even slower, but maybe not. He is not the most talkative of people. Every question that I ask gets only the briefest (and seemingly defensive) answer.* But he

*The only more laconic person I remember came into my life in 1967 when I was between marriages and, therefore, rather short of funds (to say the least). I was in the habit of taking my evening meals (for free) at one or another of Rice's residential colleges. On this memorable night I was at one of the women's colleges (Jones or Brown, I don't recall). Ken Kesey (noted novelist, LSD-experimenter, and friend of the Grateful Dead) was in town, accompanied by his pals, The Merry Pranksters; they had arrived in their wildly colored VW bus. (You should look for pictures of this psychedelic miracle online - it is a sight to behold.) Well, Kesey and the Pranksters distributed themselves among tables in the dining room. A young man sat down at the table, already occupied by me and several Rice women, and proclaimed, "Name's Ramrod." End of conversation for the evening. An internet search when writing this journal reveals that his name was Lawrence "Ramrod" Shurtliff (1945-2006), described as "a psychedelic cowboy ... who once won a county fair blue ribbon in cattle judging."

does get us to the Hotel InterContinental. As we approach the hotel, he offers the useful information that the building across the street is the AMP Centre. When I confess my ignorance and ask him what AMP stands for, he replies that he thinks that the A stands for Australian. (A Google search does not reveal what the letters stand for - all that I learn is that AMP Capital is the owner of several buildings and office parks in Sydney.)

The Southern Crossings brochure had led us to believe that the driver would have a packet with our reservations and tickets, just as was the case in New Zealand in 2010. Well, he doesn't, but he calls his office and is told that the materials will be given to us by the concierge at the hotel. Which, in fact, is the case. To avoid the hotel's 25 AUD daily charge for internet service, we sign up for the InterContinental Loyalty Program. (Hell, I'd declare my loyalty even to save as little as 10 AUD.) Alas, they do not have a room ready for us, so we go to the hotel's bar/lounge where Lee orders a very expensive espresso (7 AUD, if I recall correctly, a little over 6 USD) while I sit and sulk. It's an interesting room; the lower sunken level has chairs, tables, and sofas; slightly raised are the bar, offices, and lavatories. Although the hotel is very modern, the original 19th century stone walls of whatever building was here are retained, rising three stories high.

Having waited for some time, it's now 10:45 and our room is still not ready. Where our luggage is is unknown, but we trust that it is under someone's supervision. So we go for a brief walk. The hotel's

location is excellent, less than 10 minutes from the famous opera house, the Harbour Bridge, and Circular Quay (pronounced Key - the second word, that is, not the first) whence all of the ferries arrive and depart, and a different large cruise ship is docked every evening. We come upon Aboriginal musicians, some playing percussion instruments, others the didgeridoo (a sound that one needs to hear first-hand* to truly

*How can one *hear first-hand*? That sounds like an oxymoron, eh?

appreciate ... or not), all of them painted in the wild displays common to the tribes. One of them, with a long scraggly white beard and red bandana, looks like someone who had fallen into a vat of melted chocolate and was then sprayed with random white paint - probably he's a banker or lawyer in his "other" life, but today he looks ... well, weird. Finally, we stroll through the district called The Rocks, which traces its history to the first colony of white settlers in 1788. Many of the buildings are historic (although not as old as 1788) and there is a variety of architectural styles; numerous gift shops, boutiques, restaurants, and taverns line the streets. We make a mental note to return to tour The Rocks Discovery Museum. Our bodies are shocked by the humidity, something we've not experienced in the Seattle area for months; at least the temperature is moderate. We pass through a scrum of school children (perhaps 7-8 years old), all wearing blue hats with flaps that protect the back of the neck; the boys are all in blue shirts and grey shorts, the girls in blue/white checked dresses. They remind me of Owen Meany (in John Irving's wonderful novel) who insisted that the nuns at his school, identically dressed in black habits that flap as they run, were penguins.

Our 23rd floor room is ready, at last. The first thing we do is turn on the air conditioning. After we unpack, we make our way to the Club InterContinental on the 32nd floor. (The elevator actually stops at the 31st floor, where the pool and exercise rooms are; there's a staircase to go up - a surprisingly large number of steps - but we will discover the next day that there is also a dedicated elevator.) From our room, there's a wonderful view to the east of the opera house and nearby parks (see Picasa) but the view is even better from the Club level and allows us also to see Circular Quay to the north and skyscrapers to the west. After complaining about the weak coffee on the airplane, all that one can get here is a "long black" and it is too strong for my taste. Nevertheless, there are also some nice cookies to eat along with the strong brew.

But my biggest complaint is not about the coffee but rather the "music" that is piped into the room. When we were in England last fall, specifically at Calcutts House in Ironbridge Gorge and, again, in the restaurant of the Airport Hilton in Amsterdam, there was this rhythmic semi-melody that I described this way in my earlier journal:

It's minimalist, of a sort, played by unidentifiable instruments, and having notes in a more-or-less rising scale, each of them repeated four times: 1111 2222 3333 2222 / 1111 2222 3333 2222 repeat and rinse. Is this generic breakfast room music for England and the Netherlands? Does it exist elsewhere in Europe? Who knows? K Robert Schwarz, in the liner notes to a Nonesuch CD, describes a 1973 Carnegie Hall performance of Steve Reich's *Four Organs* this way: "One elderly lady banged her shoe on the edge of the stage in an attempt to stop the music. Another member of the audience ran down the aisle, screaming 'All right, I'll confess!' Others applauded, hoping to curtail, not to encourage the performance."

Well, that same damned assault on the senses is piped into the Club's PA system, very loudly. It's not clear that these are actually musical instruments that are being used. My guess is that this is electronic music produced by a computer or synthesizer. Whatever ... it's awful. But I need to get accustomed to it because we'll encounter it many more times during our time in Australia. (Upon returning to the U.S., I try to find recordings on the internet that have this sort of sound, but come up empty. Too bad.)

Another failure: after having been assured by two Verizon representatives who answered my request for a Live Chat on February 3 and, again, on March 3, that I would have cell phone connectivity in Australia, I don't. In Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide as well as in smaller locations, the alleged global phone searches for a local network but fails to connect. Most mysterious of all, it searches for a few seconds

and then shuts off. All by itself. And then it comes on, all by itself. And then it shuts down ... So I try to get an answer to my dilemma through Verizon's Live Chat, but over about six days and about 12 hours, nobody answers. This is the third overseas trip in which my supposed global phone fails. At least Lee's ATT phone does have connectivity.

I begin to realize that there is no such thing as a single Australian accent. Today (and for the rest of our time in Australia) we hear a variety of accents ranging from upper-class British to lower-class Cockney. Nevertheless, there seem to be some universal vowel sounds. As we encounter them, I'll record them in this journal under the heading AusSpeak.

AusSpeak: The country's name is pronounced Austre~~ye~~lia, and aggressive is rendered as aggre~~ve~~ssive. A valiant attempt to catalog these sounds is available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_English. Of course there are many words different from ours, particularly for car parts (as in England): boot = trunk, bonnet = hood, windscreen = window, tyre = tire (at least it's pronounced the same), petrol = fuel.

We are pretty much exhausted after the flight, so we decide to have dinner at the hotel's Café Opera. It offers an excellent buffet: cold dishes (salad, shrimp, oysters) and hot (fish, chicken, beef) followed by a variety of desserts. The downside? It costs 75(!!) AUD per person, not including the wine. The other downside? The same damned music from Club InterContinental is also piped in here, but mercifully at a lower volume. Back in our room, we watch a half-hour news broadcast from ABC (that's *Australian Broadcasting Company*) with no advertisements, but we are getting drowsy and so go early to bed.

FRIDAY, MARCH 7

Damn! I awaken at 3:30 but do manage to sleep a little more but only until 4:45. So I get up - and what better thing is there to do than to try to contact Verizon about my non-working phone. After 1.5 hours, I give up. (I'll bet that they know that I'm the one requesting a Live Chat and, therefore, they're deliberately avoiding me.)

We ascend (with the use of an elevator, of course) to Club InterContinental for breakfast. There is a very nice buffet spread: cold items (cereal,* cheeses, breads, rolls), hot dishes (eggs, bacon, sausage,

*There are cold cereals available: muesli in bulk form or individual boxes of a variety of Kellogg's cereals, one of which is called Rice Bubbles even though it's identical to Rice Krispies and even has those delightful imps on the cover. Also available are Kellogg's Corn Flakes and other varieties.

porridge(!)), cold protein (ham, turkey, salmon), and sweets. The only thing that has to be specially ordered is the coffee and, as yesterday, it is the very strong long black. (Instead of asking for a second cup, we make some instant coffee in our room.) But the view of the city is spectacular, notwithstanding the rising sun that is reflected off the windows of an office building and directly into my eyes. And I hardly notice the incessant pounding of that awful music. OK, I'm lying. I do notice it.

Following breakfast, we walk to Circular Quay to purchase all-day ferry passes to Darling Harbor (28 AUD each) and, for later in the day, light rail and bus. It's a 24-minute ferry ride with three intermediate stops before we get to Darling Harbor and make a short walk to the aquarium. I take a disappointingly small number of pictures because most of the exhibits are indoors and no flash photography is allowed. I think we see a platypus (or maybe it's just a shadow) but it is so dark that my eyes can barely register it. The variety of animals is good (we especially enjoy the antics of the lettuce-eating dugong), but better are the aquariums in Atlanta, Chattanooga, Seattle, and Vancouver. (Lee also says that the Sydney aquarium was better when she visited it a few years ago. And the scientist in her can't resist noting that one of the sign boards reads "There are approximately 6,793 species of crabs." Approximately?) One other demerit - would you believe that the so-called music from the hotel's two restaurants is also piped in here?

We take the ferry across Cockle Bay (cool name!) to Pyrmont Bay (not a body of water but a neighborhood) and from there a light rail to the famous Sydney Fish Market. It's a huge place, but as we arrive shortly after noon it is very crowded not only with shoppers at the display counters but also with people eating lunch. The number of Asian faces (whether of tourists or locals) is extraordinary and most of these people are conversing in their native languages. We also hear a variety of European accents, although we can't always discern the country of origin. There are displays upon displays of fish and seafood, familiar and exotic. There are also displays of vegetables, fruit, cheeses, and breads. But there is no meat or fowl. Interesting, eh?

FUN FACT: Upon consulting the city map, we see that there exists a suburb named Woolloomooloo. That's eight O's, boys and girls. Woooo Hoooo! Or as Mel Allen would have said, "How about that!"

The day is getting warmer and more humid as we return via the light rail and ferry to Circular Quay. (It's a blessing that the fish market was air-conditioned, although not particularly well.) We walk to the hotel at 2:30 for a little rest, then take a 4:00 bus to Paddington with its Victorian terrace houses, iron gates and railings, and narrow streets. We stop in at Sabbia Gallery, known for its glass art. Most of the art currently on display is ceramics by Aborigines but when we tell the manager that we had seen a display of Australian glass art at the Tacoma Museum of Glass, she leads us upstairs to a storeroom where all of the glass art is stored, some on shelves, some in pull-out drawers. I'm allowed to take many pictures (see Picasa).

We return by bus to Hyde Park. Alas, it has begun to rain (but not too heavily, a good thing as neither of us thought to bring an umbrella) as we walk to Chinatown and the Golden Century restaurant, recommended by the hotel's concierge. The neighborhood sidewalks (mercifully, largely protected from the rain by awnings) are very thick with people, mostly Orientals. The clientele at the restaurant is about 75% Asian, a good sign I would think. The meal is good, but in all honesty (and one should always be honest) no better than the Chinese restaurant in Gig Harbor. But there are two amusing sights: the first is a long stream of waiters, each carrying a large watermelon, to some remote part of the restaurant, and the second is of waiters carrying a live crab or fish in a plastic bag - whether this is the actual animal that gets cooked once it arrives in the kitchen, or whether it is returned to its tank to live another day is not clear.

Upon leaving the restaurant, the rain has stopped so we walk to Elizabeth Street to take a bus back to our hotel. This bus either has no air conditioning or the driver didn't use it - whatever the case, we are rather soaked when we get off. We have to get up early tomorrow because we are to take a 7:30 tour to the Blue Mountains; fortunately, Club InterContinental opens at 6:30. We go to bed fairly early.

There's a nice surprise in the room when we return from dinner: a tray with a bottle of wine and fresh fruit, along with a note that reads "Dear Mr. Stone: I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you back to InterContinental Sydney as a valued Royal Ambassador." Other perks mentioned in the note are a free pay TV film, a complimentary newspaper (big deal - we also got one), replenishment of water at the time of turndown service (big whoop!), free high speed internet (yawn - we also got it by signing up - for free - for some sort of loyalty club). But best of all is "Reasonable consumption of mini bar beverages ..." (One wonders what "reasonable" limits one to.) The envelope is addressed to Mr. Terrence Stone, Platinum Ambassador. When I tell the desk clerk, the next morning, about this unearned surprise, he says that Mr. Stone had already wondered where his amenities were - and a new tray was sent to him. We're told that we should go ahead and enjoy the "gift" - we do eat the fruit, but leave the wine bottle unopened.

SATURDAY, MARCH 8

I awaken a few minutes before the alarm, which was set to go off at 5:30. We go to Club InterContinental just as they are opening at 6:30 and are down in the lobby at 7:30, waiting for the tour guide. He's a bit late (because of problems picking up other passengers) but he does arrive and leads us to a van that has seats for 12 tourists.* His name is Paul Steele and he does a wonderful job, combining the roles of driver

*In her journal, Lee alleges that there are two gay couples on board. Compared to me, she is either more perceptive or more bigoted - you decide.

(often on some difficult roads), tour guide, commentator, and humorist.

AusSpeak:

- Paul uses an expression that we'll hear many more times: "Good on ya" (whereas we might say "Good for you"). There are also interesting vowel pronunciations: **m^oybe** for maybe, **Wⁱles** for Wales, **nⁱme** for name, **mⁱne** for main, **ke^ye** for quay, and **lⁱce** for lace (this latter when he describes the wrought iron gates, as we leave town, as Sydney Lⁱce) so it's not just Paddington that has this sort of architecture.
- Many times (on the TV news, by people we meet) we'll hear something like "Sydney is different **to** Melbourne." (In America, we'd replace **to** with **from**, right?)

We drive through The Rocks and Peter gives a strong recommendation to raise a pint of beer at the Lord Nelson pub. (He'll make the same pitch when we return to Sydney in the late afternoon - could it be that he's in the pub's employ?) We drive across the spectacular Harbour Bridge (the one that we photographed yesterday) and through North Sydney into the countryside. He mentions that the "bridge climb" (which we saw groups of people doing yesterday) costs a cool 200 AUD, cameras are forbidden, and it is a difficult trek. It's very tempting ... but, no, we'll pass. As he drives through North Sydney, he says that we're about to see the U.S. Embassy. Some passengers seem eager to see it, but (of course) it has to be nonsense - and so it is, as we pass a McDonald's. (My notes are unusually illegible at this point - I blame the bouncing bus - but I think that Paul says that there are more McDonald's per capita in North Sydney than anywhere else. I tried to get confirmation of this claim online, but failed.)

During the drive, Paul relates information about Australia's history. As above, my notes are extremely difficult to read (damned bouncing bus!) but here's what he tells us ... I think:

During the last ice age, Australia was connected by a land bridge to New Guinea and to some of the Asian archipelagoes. It is believed that Australia's Aborigines arrived either over land or by sea, perhaps 15,000 years ago (according to one scenario) or 40,000 years ago according to another. In the 1600s, Dutch mariners arrived from Indonesia, hoping to trade, but found that the native population had nothing of trade value - and so they left. In 1770, Captain Cook arrived, charted the eastern part of the continent, and recommended that England colonize the territory. In 1788, a fleet of British ships arrived at Botany Bay (south of what is now Sydney); on board were convicts and tradesmen, about equal numbers of each. Botany Bay was too shallow, so the fleet traveled to Port Jackson (now Sydney harbor) and set up a penal colony. The Blue Mountains (really a plateau rather than a mountain range, with a highest peak at 3900 feet) were explored and crossed by European explorers in 1813 and found to be a rich source of coal and shale. Beyond the Blue Mountains is the Great Dividing Range (tallest peak 7310 feet) which is the third-longest land-based range in the world (2,175 miles long and between 100 and 200 miles wide).

As we are traveling through the western suburbs of Sydney (a working class neighborhood) Paul tells us that housing prices are making it difficult for young families to own a home. Sydney, itself, is just too expensive to buy (people tend to rent), but even in this working class area the median price of a new home is over 500K AUD. A specific example (from a real estate web site): in Strathfield (one of the western suburbs), the average household weekly income is 1,470 AUD, but the median house price is 1.5 million AUD.

At 8:20, after some 43 km, we are at our first destination: Featherdale Wildlife Park. There are birds of all kinds, reptiles, kangaroos running loose everywhere, wombats (asleep in a cave with only a butt showing), and (of course) koalas. The kangaroos have no fear of humans - in fact, they are quite aggressive and are eager to eat from one's hand the grains that can be purchased in a small bag. One koala is brought down from a tree to pose with tourists (such as Lee and I) who also are allowed to pet him/her/it. Other

koalas can be spotted in the low trees and some are scampering across the ground.

There is a Tasmanian devil in an enclosed area who runs around the perimeter of the habitat at an astonishing rate. We learn that these animals are suffering from a type of cancer that is spread from one animal to another by biting on the cheek. For this reason, the animals in captivity are kept apart from those in the wild and are safe from the cancer; when all of the wild animals die off, the domesticated ones will be released into their natural environment. Which will make this little devil happy because it's clear that he does not like being pent up. (It's also very difficult to get a picture of him, he is so fast as he rounds the curve and runs toward me.)

HIGHWAY SIGN: WRONG WAY - GO BACK

We leave Featherdale at 9:10 (even though most of us would gladly have stayed longer) and begin a 120-km drive through the Blue Mountains to our second destination, Scenic World. During the drive, Paul gives us some more history of the continent. Here are the highlights:

Australia's population is about 23 million, with the highest concentrations of people in the large southeastern cities (Sydney 4.6 million, Melbourne 4.1 million, Brisbane 2.0 million, and Adelaide 1.2 million) and in Perth (1.7 million) on the west coast. It's not clear if this is myth or fact, but supposedly the word kangaroo came into the English language when Aborigines were asked what the animal is called and they responded "kangaroo" (which translates either as "What are you talking about?" or "I don't understand you"). There does seem to be agreement that "koala" comes from an Aboriginal word that means "animal that doesn't drink water." In fact, koalas sleep some 18-20 hours a day, using that time to digest the eucalyptus leaves that they've eaten. The leaves do not have a lot of nutritional value, so great quantities of leaves are eaten in a given day. And the animals have a very low metabolism. Hence the long periods of sleep. Koalas are related to wombats: the animal's pouch opens from the bottom, not the top.

More AusSpeak: aible for able, veegetable for vegetable, meen for men, conceentric for concentric, shile for shale

Unlike Featherdale which seemed so natural, even though it wasn't, Scenic World (where we arrive at 10:20) is more like an amusement park; it also requires that each of us pay an admission fee if we want to take full advantage of it. But it does have some spectacular rides and views. We start with the "Scenic Skyway," an enclosed cabin (glass-bottomed) suspended from a cable that proceeds from one mountain top to another, 270 meters above the Jamison Valley. Paul says this is the oldest valley in the world; alas, it is shrouded in mist, so we fail to see much of the valley or of the Katoomba waterfall. We then walk to the "Scenic Railway," which plunges downward to the valley floor. From there, it's a brief nature walk with Paul, past ancient trees, plants, and deserted coal mines. And finally, it's the "Scenic Cableway" in which each car holds 84 people and ascends 545 meters from the valley. After all that excitement, we convene in the shop where we drink coffee or sodas before proceeding to the next destination.

And that is the Waradah Aboriginal Center, where we arrive at 11:30 and stay for 45 minutes. First, there is a family group (father, daughter, and two sons) who entertain us with song and dance, along with explanations of the Aboriginal culture, body paint, jewelry, and creation myths. One legend, which I fail to record, concerns the first person who made and played a didgeridoo: the tale is long and involved and, certainly apocryphal. We then drive to the nearby Blackheath Golf Club where the restaurant, having received our orders placed earlier on the bus, brings huge plates of food. I had checked chicken parmesan, but who knew that it would be accompanied by french fries and a large salad?

Another short drive (4 km) and we are at Govett's Leap overlooking the Grose Valley and its magnificent waterfalls. (The name honors William Romaine Govett, a surveyor who came to this place in 1831.) A somewhat longer ride (30 km) takes us on a beautiful drive to the Mt. Banks picnic area with its spectacular views of the valley down below, and then 10 km to the Blue Mountains Botanic Garden, where we spend 20

minutes (probably 19 minutes too long). Our driver/tour guide, who must be exhausted but doesn't show it, now drives about 100 km back to Sydney and to the various hotels where we are staying. We arrive at the InterContinental at 5:00, right on schedule.

Because we are tired and our stomachs are still full from the afternoon feast, we simply go to Club InterContinental where we have some hors d'oeuvres, snacks, cheeses, and wine. We spend the evening reading and using the computer. Back in our hotel room, I write the following in my notes: "If I can read anything written on the bus, it will be a miracle!"

SUNDAY, MARCH 9

(An accident will befall one of the intrepid travelers later today. Stay tuned.)

We have breakfast, again, in Club InterContinental. The price is right (free!) and the view is incomparable. We then walk to the Art Gallery of New South Wales, just across the street and through the Royal Botanical Gardens, where we arrive at 10:15, shortly after their opening. The principal exhibition is Afghanistan Hidden Treasures, but we eschew (gesundheit!) it in favor of the Australian art, which is spectacular and very modern. The ground-floor lobby has enormous wall-mounted paintings in vibrant colors - I don't recognize the artists, but the Picasa pictures will reveal the excellence of the works. And also on this floor are the paintings of Australian artists from the 19th to 21st century - the art is extremely compelling, as (again) the Picasa site will reveal.

We then join a tour, led by one of the docents, of Aboriginal art. We had already seen some of the works on our first go-around, but she leads us to others and had interesting stories to tell about them. Then continuing our traversal of the museum, non-Australian artists are also on display: Francis Bacon, Pablo Picasso, Max Beckmann, Ernst Kirchner, Georges Braque, Karl Appel. We have a snack in the museum's café and then walk across the park toward The Hyde Park Barracks Museum, about 0.5 km away.

As we cross the main intersection and turn right on Price Albert Street, we are on a brick sidewalk. One of the bricks, maliciously and with *intent*, jumps up and trips me! I do a magnificent four-point landing, my camera flying out of my hand and my watch scraping on the bricks. Witnesses award only a 9.5 for my graceful dismount (the Russian judge is especially hard) but, *mirabile dictu*,* I do not break the skin on my

*I've told this story before, but it's worth repeating here. One of the English professors at UT was so impressed by a paper that was turned in by a student who had been struggling all semester that he wrote *mirabile dictu* ("wonderful to relate") at the bottom of the page. A short time later, his department head called him into the main office and said that a student had filed a complaint because his teacher had written "miserable dick" on his paper. True story. I think.

palms or knees, nor do I tear my pants. But I do clobber my knee, badly. Lee helps me up and I sit on some stone steps for a while to recover. The knee hurts, but I can still walk, so we proceed (one of us limping) to tour The Barracks.

Designed by a convict and built by convict labor in 1819, the building served as a dormitory for male prisoners (men and boys). Its use as a prison ended in 1848; and since then the building has served as an immigration depot for women seeking work as domestics, as a lunatic asylum for women, and as law courts and various government offices. It was taken over by Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales in 1992 and restored as a museum that reflects its early history. We are on a guided tour by a young docent who tells us the details of the early use of Australia as a penal colony, the treatment of prisoners (most of whom worked on building projects for the government during the day), and the eventual; assimilation of the non-violent prisoners into the community. The guide tells us that while some of the prisoners were hardened criminals, others had been arrested for only minor offenses: sleeping on a city street, spitting on the sidewalk, holding up ant-Putin signs (oops, scratch that one). I hobble up and down the stairs, trying to

keep up. Inside we view displays of artifacts from the time (a cat of nine tails, for example), the original walls, the hammocks in which the favored inmates slept, etc. I ask our guide if the modern descendants of these prisoners take pride in their heritage or try to hide it; he answers that for a long time, they denied their history, but now most of them embrace it.

We make our way along Macquarie Street, past the federal courts and the old Sydney hospital, back to the hotel. The knee is not hurting more than it had nor is it hurting less. This evening we are having dinner with old acquaintances Greg and Vicki. Greg is Australian, but did a post-doc in the U.S. at Minnesota when Lee was a visiting professor there in 1986-7; Vicki was an American-born grad student in the same research group. She grew up in Kingsport, TN where she and Greg married (we attended their wedding). They've lived in Australia for decades: he is professor of chemistry at University of Sydney and she is professor of chemical engineering at University of New South Wales. Greg suggests that we meet at Manta Restaurant on Finger Wharf* which is not far from our hotel.

*Its address is 6 Cowper Wharf Road Woolloomooloo NSW 2011! Our lifelong (or at least three-day-long) wish to be in the Sydney neighborhood with the eight O's is to be fulfilled. Wooooo Hoooo!!

Now it's not just because my knee is hurting that I'm *kvetching* (because I began voicing these complaints well before my close encounter with the sidewalks), but I'm a little (actually more than a little) put out that they are only willing to spare a couple of hours for us instead of meeting us earlier in the day and either inviting us to their home or taking us on a tour of the city. I'm also a bit peeved that not only are they bringing their high-school aged twin daughters, Lauren and Petra, to the dinner, but they've chosen a relatively expensive* restaurant, knowing that Lee had offered to treat Greg and Vicki (and now their

*It's an à la carte menu, and most of the main courses are in the range 45-55 AUD. With appetizers, wine, and dessert for the girls, the bill is astronomical. Oh, yes, although tipping is not the norm in Australia (often one just rounds up or leaves, at most, 10%), there is a 10% surcharge for eating there on Sundays because, it is alleged, they have to pay their staff more for working on the weekend.

offspring) to a nice meal. And, finally, although they could not have known about my bruised knee ahead of time, they could have offered to drive us back to the hotel after dinner. They do not, so we take a taxi.

It should be only a ten-minute walk across the Royal Botanic Garden and across the M1 roadway to the restaurant, but my knee is hurting and some of the forks in the path are not well-marked as to help us figure out which way to go. I stop and ask some college-age Chinese students, who have limited English and who discuss at length among themselves, which direction to walk. They point one way, then after a bit they run after us and tell us, no, go this other way. Well, we do get to the restaurant after 20-25 minutes. And even if the knee were not hurting, we know that we cannot return this way because the park's gates are closed at sundown.

We have an outdoor table, just out of a direct line to the setting sun; a couple who are sitting just one table away from us, spend their time using menus to shield them from the sun. Despite my jaundiced view (described above) we do have an enjoyable time. The girls are interesting to talk to, if a bit shy (or are they bored?). And Vicki and Greg do their best to explain Australian customs and practices to us, as well as trying to justify the strange sports that Australians love to play, particularly cricket (of which a great deal more, later in this journal) and Australian Rules Football (which we have watched, with equal parts of confusion and amusement, on U.S. sports channels). Lee asks Greg if the roads from Wilpena Pound (where we'll be from March 17 to 19) to an Aboriginal village* four hours to the north, are manageable

*As part of the package put together by Southern Crossings, we were supposed to visit Iga Warta by airplane (piloted by someone other than I). Just two weeks before we left the U.S., this excursion was canceled because the plane no longer had landing rights at the village. So we explored the possibility of going there on our own, by car.

with a rented ordinary sedan. He says that he has a colleague who knows the area well and that he would let us know in a day or two. To nobody's surprise, he doesn't come through with the information.

PUN ALERT: In reply to a question from Lee, Greg says that the dugong is a kind of manatee. Ron says, "Oh, the hu-manatee." (Yes it's weak, but it's the first one of the trip - and besides my knee is really hurting. Better puns are coming later in this journal. I hope.)

The taxi takes us back to our hotel at 9:15.

MONDAY, MARCH 10

It was a good night - I get about nine hours of uninterrupted sleep despite my painful knee.* The day is

*Realizing that my knee pain is not getting better, I take two ibuprofen (which Lee has cleverly brought with her). And I'll continue taking these for the next few days.

sunny and bright and warm. Following breakfast in Club InterContinental, we make our way to Circular Quay to purchase tickets for the ferry and admission fee to Taronga Zoo, where we arrive shortly after 10:00. A small cable car takes visitors to the main entrance which is at the top of a significant hill. As one strolls from exhibit to exhibit, one is also descending the hill, eventually reaching the level of the ferry pier. One of our first stops is at a koala exhibit, a spiral boardwalk with several eucalyptus trees, each housing one or more of the much-too-cute animals. We spend a great deal of time photographing the tree huggers, who seem totally oblivious to our presence.

Next, we encounter the tree kangaroo (with its inordinately long tail) which has situated itself on a perch and seems quite unwilling or unable to move toward us. Then, on the ground all about us are grey*

*The larger red kangaroo (some are over 6 feet tall) lives in arid regions further inland than the grey and is more aggressive. Male red kangaroos often fight for territory or females by a form of boxing in which an animal balances on its tail and kicks its opponent in the stomach.

kangaroos and wallabies. "What is the difference between a kangaroo and a wallaby?" I hear you ask. Well, here is Wikipedia's treatise on this question - see if you understand it better than I do:

Kangaroos and wallabies belong to the same taxonomic family (*Macropodidae*) and often the same genera, but kangaroos are specifically categorised into the six largest species of the family. The term wallaby is an informal designation generally used for any macropod that is smaller than a kangaroo or wallaroo that has not been designated otherwise.

By the way, macropod means large foot, certainly an accurate description of these animals that move across the ground by leaping with their huge feet, assisted by propulsion from their short front legs, and using their substantial tails for balance. Wikipedia has a more detailed description:

Kangaroos are the only large animals to use hopping as a means of locomotion. The comfortable hopping speed for a red kangaroo is about 20–25 km/h (13–16 mph), but speeds of up to 70 km/h (44 mph) can be attained over short distances, while it can sustain a speed of 40 km/h (25 mph) for nearly 2 km (1.2 mi). This fast and energy-efficient method of travel has evolved because of the need to regularly cover large distances in search of food and water, rather than the need to escape predators. To move at slow speeds, it uses its tail to form a tripod with its two forelimbs, then raises its hind feet forward. Kangaroos are adept swimmers, and often flee into waterways if threatened by a predator. If pursued into the water, a kangaroo may use its forepaws to hold the predator underwater so as to drown it.

The new-born of any marsupial (kangaroo, wallaby, koala, possum, wombat, Tasmanian devil) is called a joey. The females are involved 100% with mothering: they may have an older joey out of the pouch, a younger one in the pouch, and an unborn one in the uterus; we are told that the female is capable of delaying the birth of a joey, but I've not found confirmation of that, nor have I found confirmation that the milk produced by the mother varies with the nutritional needs of the joey as it gets larger. When born, the animal looks as much like a kangaroo as you and I do - it is blind, hairless, and only a few centimeters long. It latches onto one of four teats in the pouch; after about 200 days, the joey emerges from the pouch.

PUN ALERT: Lee (pointing): "A wallaby!!" Ron: "Wahl, ahl be!"

Next we see a surprisingly *inactive* Tasmanian devil and many beautifully colored birds (including a kookaburra, celebrated in the Australian nursery rhyme that begins "Kookaburra sits in the old gum tree ...") There is a platypus in a dark enclosure (no flash photography allowed), so I fail to get a picture. Alas, there are no wombats and no echidnas but we will see the latter animal in a few days on Kangaroo Island and the former much later in this trip. What we do see, damn it, are two visitors to the zoo wearing hats with the hated New York Yankees lettering. How can people stoop so low as to be glorifying the evil empire? We stop for lunch (sandwich, chips, and soft drink) at the Taronga Food Market, then continue downward, past the elephants, monkeys, and finally seals, penguins, and otters (which can be viewed from above or below the water in an enclosed area that is air-conditioned, *Gott sei dank*).

After the 2:15 ferry back to Circular Quay, Lee walks back to the hotel while I limp southward, about 1 km, to the intersection of George and King Streets, looking for the Telstra office. The concierge at the hotel had told me that the Telstra staff might be able to figure out why my phone is not finding a local carrier. There is no office located at the place marked on my map! So I stop in at a nearby bank where I'm told to go a few stores to the right. It's still not there, but a concierge at an office building tells me that they've moved from King Street to George Street and she points to the location across the street.

There is a line at the help desk, I'm very hot from the walk, and there is no air-conditioning in the store. Finally, I reach the front of the line, only to be told that they can't help me, that Verizon needs to unlock the phone. (This after being assured by my live chats with two Verizon representatives that my phone will certainly work in Australia.) The clerk did say that he could sell me another SIM card, but he doubted it would help. (As do I, given that there is a new SIM card in the phone that was given to me when I complained that I had no connectivity in England and Germany last fall.) I limp another 1 km or so back to the hotel, arriving around 3:15, dripping with sweat and miserable at having no usable phone. Not that I really need it (Lee's ATT should suffice) but it would be nice to be able to call her if, at some point, we got separated. And the walk didn't do my knee much good. Sigh.

There are numerous banners on the downtown streets, advertising the up-coming baseball game between the Dodgers and Diamondbacks. A misguided decision by Major League Baseball was to open the 2014 season, a week ahead of the other teams, on March 22 and 23 in Sydney. Many dollars, both Australian and American, were expended in converting the Sydney Cricket Ground to a baseball field. Grass was planted, fences were erected, stands were built, but of great concern (and insult) to the locals is that MLB brought in its own infield dirt. "Say what, mate, our dirt isn't good enough?" Well, apparently not. Several players are, how shall we say it, less than enthusiastic about this adventure, given that it causes a shortening of the typical spring training regimen - in fact, several pitchers, afterwards, would complain of sore arms, but whether that was caused by the lack of training or just to the tendency of modern pitchers to complain at the slightest twinge is not clear. (Oh, yes, the Dodgers won both games, 2-1 and 7-5. I found the official box scores for both games - the attendance at Game 1 was about 38,000; the attendance at Game 2 is officially listed as "not given.")

After I finally cool off, we go to the Club for a light snack. To nobody's surprise, that damned techno type music is being played. But what I didn't expect was that it would also be piped into the Telstra office. Life is cruel, in so many ways! My guess is that we'll hear this sort of "music" many more times before we leave Australia.

AusSpeak: The word *wound* has two different meanings in English: it is either the past tense of the verb *to wind* or it is a noun or verb indicating an *injury*. Americans (and other right-thinking patriotic people) pronounce the words differently: *wowned* and *wooned*, respectively. But Australians (well, as least one Australian, but I can't recall who) pronounce them both as *wowned*. And so, a sentence like "We wound the clock" would be ambiguous, right?

At the concierge's suggestion, we go to Alfredo, an Italian restaurant on Bulletin Place (strange name, eh?), about 0.5 km from our hotel. The location is in what could best be described as an alley; the building is alleged to be the oldest commercial building still in use in Australia. According to the restaurant's web site:

The name "Bulletin" is derived from the fact that in those days, the Herald read the events of the day in the nearby park (today Macquarie Place) very close to Governor's Palace (today Loftus Street). It is rumoured that Mary Reiby was the mistress of the governor, which allowed her anything.

In fact she collected wool at Bulletin Place which she traded for rum with the arriving ships. As you know, rum at the time was used as currency for trading. In brief, she accumulated great wealth and later became a banker.

The maître d' is very chatty and is assisted by two servers. One reason that he is so talkative is that we are the only guests when we arrive at 6:00, but when others show up he does spend equal time chatting up the other tables. When he learns that we're from Seattle, he says that Seattle is the home of a very famous radio program in which the comedian (whose name he can't recall) shouts the catch phrase, "Hello Seattle!" Well, maybe, but we know nothing about it. The food is highly enjoyable. The walls are filled with caricatures, drawn by Enrico Caruso, of famous opera singers and composers: Rossini, Puccini, Gigli, Callas, Verdi, and a "selfie" of Caruso as the clown Canio in *Pagliacci*. Are they originals? Probably not.

After a while, two priests take a table. The younger one is dressed in typical clerical garb: black shirt and white collar; the older has a white shirt and white collar under a non-clerical sport jacket. The owner, Alfredo himself, greets these arrivals profusely and kisses the hand of the older priest. As we're leaving, we ask the maître d' about this. He says that the older priest is the Cardinal of Australia(!) and that the owner, Alfredo, is very religious. As we leave, Alfredo kisses Lee's hand. She says that she'll never wash the hand that was kissed by the lips that kissed the hand of the Cardinal. Silly girl.

On the TV news, later that evening, we learn that the older priest is Cardinal George Pell who confounded nearly everyone by saying that the Catholic Church *should* be sued by children who had been sexually abused by a priest. (Perhaps he's being sly. In the next morning's *Sydney Herald*, we read "But Cardinal Pell's views do not yet open the floodgate for victims to sue ... A major restructure of the church in Australia to make it a 'suable entity' as well as legislative change in each state would be required to give Cardinal Pell's words practical effect.")

Whew! We take it easy in the evening. I finish reading the Cara Black novel on my Kindle. Tomorrow I'll start something else.

TUESDAY, MARCH 11

After several excellent nights of sleep, last night I woke up many times and had trouble falling asleep. I don't think that the knee is at fault, but I continue taking ibuprofen. I call the front desk to have a week's worth of laundry picked up and washed (at an exorbitant cost). When we have breakfast in the Club InterContinental (I eat light because I'm feeling sated from last night's dinner), we see yet another large cruise ship in port. It's too bad that we won't be here for a few more days because the Queen Mary will arrive on March 13.

There's still no Verizon connectivity, so I use Lee's phone to check our home voice mail. There are two

messages from RightSource saying that they've tried to contact my primary care physician, Dr. Bernardo, for a refill approval but they've received no reply. I try to access MyChart (the new Franciscan messaging system) but am unable; apparently the system is down. But so is the web site for St. Joseph Medical Clinic and Franciscan Health - all use fhshealth.org, so contact to all of them fails. I'll try again later.

At 9:15, we take the 555 bus (free!) to The Strand Arcade* and QVB (Queen Victoria Building). We enter

*This is on George Street, just half a block from where I walked yesterday in an ill-fated attempt to find out why my cell phone wouldn't work. So why did I walk whereas we take the bus? I have no idea.

the Strand on George Street and walk the full length of the ground floor to the exit on Pitt. It's very much an old-timey place, what with its tile floors, fancy chandeliers, ironwork lace railings, etc. We then walk a short distance to QVB (built in 1898, remodeled in 1984) where we explore all three floors. The QVB has an ancient elevator (it's there for show, only; there are modern escalators). As at The Strand, there are tile floors, boutique shops, old-timey restaurants and cafés, stained glass windows, a spiral staircase with wrought-iron handrails. But it has other features unique to it, such as a clock, suspended over the atrium, that has little doors that open and close and figures that move as the hour chimes; a small ship circles the clock every minute; there are panels related Sydney's early history. There is a second huge clock, attached to a replica of Balmoral Castle; it has no moving parts (except, of course, for the clock's hands). We have a snack at one of the eateries on the tiled walkway.

It's another short walk to The Great Synagogue (dating from 1878). The place is locked up tight. Who knew that tours were only on "Tuesdays: 12 noon on the first and third Tuesday of the month" (we are here on the *second* Tuesday of the month). There's actually a charge: \$10.00 for adults, \$7.00 for Senior Citizens and \$5.00 for children. Interesting - we've been in countless churches and cathedrals in Europe and New Zealand and I don't recall having had to pay an admission. But please, no snide remarks about Jews and their aggressive raising of funds. Please. There's a plaque on the front door honoring "The Rev'd Alexander B. Davis ... Chief Minister for 41 Years From 1862 to 1903." Now wait just a frigging minute! I realize that there are all sorts of "flavors" of Judaism, ranging from Ultra-orthodox to Reform, but none of these (I repeat NONE) has "ministers" who use the title "Reverend."

And now, it's another short walk to St. James Church, an Anglican church dating from 1824. It has a quiet and distinguished charm, quite different from the soaring cathedrals in (for example) Strasbourg and Köln from last summer. We walk back to George Street for the 555 bus which takes us to our hotel. The day is very warm, but we are amazed at how crowded the streets are: cars, buses, taxis, motorcycles, and pedestrians, most of them (apparently) locals who are shopping or just window-shopping. Isn't anyone at work today?

UNCHARITABLE COMMENTS ABOUT AUSTRALIANS (but that doesn't make them any less true):

- Sad to say, but very few Australians look like Hugh Jackman, Eric Bana, Cate Blanchett, or Nicole Kidman - in fact, they tend not to be a very good-looking people. Perhaps it's because they're all descended from convicts? Or maybe it comes from living south of the Equator or because of the intense sunlight* (even in winter) and strong UV radiation levels? Or maybe it's because they bequeathed all of

*Not a fun fact: Australians have the highest incidence of skin cancer in the world. For this reason, school kids not only all wear sun hats, even in the winter, but these hats have a protective flap to prevent the rear of the neck from burning.

their cuteness to koalas and kangaroos?

- The method of handling cutlery at the dinner table looks strange to us, but it's the same as what one sees in England. The fork is held in the left hand, "upside-down" (i.e., with the convex surface up). The knife is held in the right hand. One function of the knife (the one that we're accustomed to) is to cut up meat or vegetables or whatever. But then ... the piece of meat or whatever is speared on the fork and, with the fork still held "upside-down" the knife is used to push items onto the upper surface: mashed potatoes,

vegetables, sauce or gravy, whatever - and when the fork is holding as much as it can, the user then raises it to his/her/its mouth without spilling anything. Amazing!

- I recall remarking, last summer, at the number of dogs that we saw, both in cities and towns and in the countryside in England. In contrast, dogs are very rare, at least in Sydney. About the only dogs that we see are service dogs. This does not reflect well on the good people of Australia.

CHARITABLE COMMENTS:

- One very good thing about Australians, at least from our point of view: they don't hate Americans! You might recall that shortly after the attacks of 9-11, most of the world had a very warm view of the U.S. and showed great sympathy for our horrendous loss. This good will, alas, was squandered by President W and his hench-persons Cheney and Rumsfeld when they invaded Iraq. Maybe it's because Australia is so far away, but the U.S.'s disastrous adventure in Iraq did not sour their population's view of us.

- For pedestrians, the walk signs at intersections last a very long time, long enough that it's not necessary to begin walking as soon as signaled and to race across the street. The walk signal is accompanied by an audible gong that sounds for the full time.

We return to our room where we read (I begin another Kindle book, Jamie Ford's *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet*) and use the computer. I waste another block of time hoping that Verizon will answer my request for a Live Chat. We go to Club InterContinental (for coffee, snacks, and that awful electronic music - you'd think that I'd have become accustomed to it by this time, but that has not happened).

At 3:30 we walk to the Rocks Discovery Museum, housed in an 1850s warehouse, which tells the history of the city from pre-European times to the present. There are artifacts from the days before the English arrived and from Sydney's early days as an English colony and prison. From there, we got to a craft shop located in the old Coroner's Court; Lee had bought a wall-hanging here some years ago, but nothing appeals today except to see the great wooden doors to the courtroom and the separate rooms for "female witnesses" and "male witnesses." (Would you believe that that same damned music is being piped in here? Well, believe it!)

We visit a couple of art galleries* in the Rocks, marking time before our 6:00 dinner reservation at Fish at

*Most notable is the Billich Gallery. Charles Billich, born in Croatia in 1934 but living in Australia for decades, produces phantasmagorical paintings that combine sports, dancers, architecture, scantily-clad women, and politics in a style that does not vary from canvas to canvas. On the wall are citations indicating several awards that he's received, several from truly obscure organizations. Photography is not permitted, so take a look at <http://billich.com/>

the Rocks, about 0.5 km from the museum. We have an excellent meal: I have a light salad followed by a whiting fillet in beer batter with chips (I eat only about half to avoid the indigestion that I had in England when I ordered fish and chips at a pub); Lee has an Asian salad with Moreton Bay bug tails (see p. 47 for an explanation) followed by barramundi stuffed with prawns and vegetables. At an adjacent table is quite a scene: a woman and two men (both bald), all elderly (although, who knows, maybe younger than I?). The older of the two men, looking much like Charles Laughton in his later days, talks constantly. The woman (his wife or the wife of the other man or neither) has orange hair (not natural, I suspect) and deep red lipstick, applied (it would seem) with a paint brush. All three are overweight; the talkative man has a cane that he uses when he needs to move his bulk. And he engages in this stream of consciousness, telling about his life, his adventures, his children, his businesses, his financial successes and failures, etc. etc. etc. Yes, it's rude to eavesdrop, but he is louder than anyone else in the restaurant (including Lee who is sitting just a few feet from me).

Because my knee is hurting, we choose not to walk back to the hotel. Instead, we hire a taxi to take us there. Tomorrow morning, we leave for the airport to fly to Adelaide, so we do our packing this evening, being "careful" not to have dangerous liquids in amounts of more than 3 oz in our carry-ons.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12

We are up at 5:30 for an early breakfast and a taxi to the airport for our 10:00 flight. I'll miss the terrific view from the ClubContinental but not its music. No sir, not its music. Unlike the street route followed by the driver who brought us from the airport to the hotel, this driver picks us up at 7:30 and hops right onto the M1 expressway. Everything goes smoothly and we clear security by 8:00. (Catching a domestic flight in Australia is very much more relaxed than what we go through in the U.S., whether it's a domestic or international flight.)

The Qantas plane is a Boeing 737. We board shortly before 10:00; push back is at 10:07 but then there is a very long taxi before we are air-borne at 10:20. Because Adelaide is on the bizarre half-hour time differential, I adjust my watch (hoping that I've moved it in the correct direction). Many of our fellow passengers are young rugby players, heading home after a tournament, some of them with boxes of Krispy Kreme donuts (to give as presents?)

The weather when we arrive is mild and breezy. We walk to the Hertz office for our rental car (a Toyota Camry, which is a bit bigger than I feel comfortable with; Lee thinks that they made a mistake and gave us a larger car or that we got some sort of upgrade). Because my knee is hurting and, mostly, because I'm concerned about driving on the left side of the street with a right-hand steering wheel, I gladly invite Lee to drive to our hotel, the Hotel Majestic Roof Garden. It's close to the airport (about 6 km) and the city streets are easy to navigate. (We find the GPS that came with the car annoying,* so I shut it off.) The hotel is several steps down from our Sydney hotel, but it's serviceable and it does have valet parking which we

*The female voice that is barking instructions like a drill sergeant does not have an Australian accent, much to my dismay. Instead, the accent is what I would describe as "American-gruff." If the programmers had wanted an American accent, they could have chosen the dripping-with-magnolias-and-corn-pone Southern or the no-accent-to-speak-of Midwestern. But, instead, the voice reminds me of a no-nonsense 5th grade teacher, much like the nasal voice on the subway at Atlanta's airport that warns "The train is leaving the station. Stay clear of the doors."

take advantage of since we'll not need the car for a couple of days. Most of our complaints about the hotel are about the housekeeping: no wash cloths (unless one calls and begs), no drinking glasses for the bathroom, micro wafers of soap, a refuse bucket left on top of the toilet, a cleaning rag left on the bureau.

The hotel's location is excellent, close to restaurants, museums, the University of Adelaide, and shopping streets. It's only about 0.5 km along North Terrace and past the university to reach the South Australia Museum where we arrive at 3:00. The collection ranges from archaeology to anthropology to mammals to exploration - Lee enjoys it much more than I do, partly because my leg is really hurting. I sit to rest while Lee roams the exhibits, taking pictures of Aboriginal art and artifacts. We have a coffee and snack in the museum's restaurant, under the watchful eyes of whale skeletons.

Nearby, we take pictures of several statues: Matthew Flinders (1774-1814), a British explorer and cartographer who was the first person to circumnavigate Australia and to identify it as an island; Sir William Lawrence Bragg (1880-1971), who won the Nobel Prize in physics for x-ray crystallographic investigations; and The Honourable Dame Roma Mitchell (1913-2000), the first Australian woman to be Judge of the Supreme Court, Chancellor of the University of Adelaide, and Governor of the state South Australia. We walk past the State Library, the National War Memorial, Government House (for South Australia), and Parliament House on the way to the Adelaide Festival Centre (we have tickets for performances there tomorrow and on March 16), where we sit by the River Torrens and observe the behavior of the many many black swans, geese, pelicans, and other birds.

Across the river is the newly remodeled Adelaide Oval, a multi-purpose outdoor stadium for Australian Rules Football, cricket, and concerts. The amount of government financing that went into the renovation is controversial, as we'll learn tomorrow, but everyone is excited about the inaugural event: a Rolling Stones

concert scheduled for an up-coming weekend. (About this, more on p. 21.) We walk back along Rundle Street (pedestrians only), crowded, buskers everywhere, and stores ranging from upscale to *dreck*. We ask the hotel staff for a dinner recommendation. They suggest Amalfi, an Italian restaurant, just a block away on Frome. (We also ask the desk clerk to make a reservation for us at Red Ochre where we plan to go on Friday.)

Amalfi is unbelievable! We have no reservation, but they seat us as long as we promise to vacate the table by 8:00. No problem. To say that the place resembles a zoo is to downplay how crowded, noisy, and busy it is. But it all works. Every server brings exactly what we (and our fellow diners) have ordered, rapidly and with good cheer, all without colliding with one another or with the customers, and without dropping a tray. I order a salad and then ragu with veal; Lee has a salad and scallopini with veal. (Mine is too much for me to finish, so Lee helps out.) We also enjoy glasses of pinot gris. Many of the clientele would appear to be university students, with large numbers of Orientals among them. (This was also true of the ethnic makeup where we walked today.) "Organized chaos" I call it when I congratulate the manager on the excellence of the operation. We walk back to the hotel where I make coffee in the room and we read until bed time.

THURSDAY, MARCH 13

It's another pleasant, sunny day. According to the iPad, it's now 56° (that's F, not C) with an expected high of 77°. Breakfast is similar to that at the InterContinental. I have only cereal, bread with peanut butter and jam, and coffee (filter coffee, that is, not the much-too-strong long black). Lee has selections from the hot breakfast and also invests 2.50 AUD in a long black. There is new-agey outerspace music piped into the breakfast room, but not the awful rhythm/melody of the past few days. Are we now out of its evil reaches? Not a chance.

At 9:00, Jeff* from "Tour Around Adelaide" picks us up for a tour of the city and environs; he is driving a

*Who woulda guessed? Jeff has dual U.S./Australian citizenship. He was born in 1956 in Lafayette, LA to American parents who had met at LSU. The family lived in Adelaide from 1958 to 1971 because his father was hired to do gas exploration here. Jeff moved back to the states, went to high school in Austin, and got his bachelor's degree at UT-Austin. He still has family (brothers, sisters, and his mother) in the U.S. And he impresses us by being able to shift into a good ol' boy drawl.

Toyota Land Cruiser. As we proceed, we also learn about the history of the city and about Australia's political system. Adelaide, with a population of about 1.3 million, is the capital of the state of South Australia. Designed by surveyor-general of South Australia, Colonel William Light, the city proper is approximately a square, one mile on each side, surrounded by parks and forests on all four sides. Outside of the greenery are vast suburbs, still considered part of the city.

This coming Saturday is election day in South Australia and Tasmania (but not the rest of the country). Voting is mandatory - people are fined for not voting, although it's also true that if you pick up a ballot on election day and then discard it, you're counted as having voted. Well, at least the law does force you to go to a polling place. (So why would you discard the ballot?) There are two major political parties: Liberal*

*The word Liberal, spoken with a sneer by right-wing politicians in the U.S. (and run away from by left-leaning politicians who are, in fact, liberal although they deny it), has a very different meaning here. But let's be clear that calling the Liberals the right wing does not make them anything like the Tea Party crazed lunatics or the mainstream GOP. They are, what might have been called in the U.S., at a long-ago time, Rockefeller Republicans - i.e., capable of listening to reason.

(which, confusingly, is on the right) and Labour (on the left); the Green Party is a minor player and perhaps there are others. Until a few years ago, Labour was the majority, both nationally and in every state, but a recent shift to the right has left South Australia and Tasmania as the only states with Labour governments.

Predictions are that that will change with Saturday's elections, but do read further to learn the outcome.

The form of government is a constitutional monarchy: that is, there is a written constitution for governing the country but the head of state is Queen Elizabeth II (or whoever holds the English throne). A few years ago, a referendum was held to determine if Australians wanted to leave the Commonwealth. Even those who are ardent anti-monarchists voted against the separation, perhaps because this would have required rewriting the constitution such that there would be a new head of state (perhaps a president) whose powers would have to be defined distinctly from the head of government (premier or prime minister). The vote was overwhelmingly in favor of remaining part of the Commonwealth.

The national government (in Canberra which is located in Australian Capital Territory, much like D.C.; i.e. not part of any state) and each state government is built on a parliamentary system: whichever party has the majority of seats (or, failing that, can form a coalition to gain a majority of seats) names the Prime Minister* in the national parliament or the Premier in each state. And to confuse things even more, the

*This does not mean that the person does not have a name. Rather, the federal parliament consists of a House of Representatives (the lower house) and a Senate (the upper house - well, what did you expect?). The House of Representatives has 150 members, each representing an electorate of about the same number of registered voters; the Senate has 76 members, 12 each from the six most populous states, 2 from Northern Territory and 2 from Australian Capital Territory. It is the House of Representatives that selects the Prime Minister. Each of the individual states has a similar legislative structure with two houses of Parliament and a Premier.

Queen of England names a Governor-General for the country and a Governor for each state. Wikipedia explains the function of the Governor-General this way:

The Governor-General is President of the Federal Executive Council and Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Defence Force, as well as viceregal representative in the Australian Capital Territory. The functions of the Governor-General include appointing ambassadors, ministers, and judges, giving Royal Assent to legislation, issuing writs for elections, and bestowing honours. The constitution grants the Governor-General a wide range of powers, but, in practice, they follow the conventions of the Westminster system and responsible government and, with rare exceptions, act only on the advice of the Prime Minister of Australia or other ministers or, in certain cases, Parliament.

Beyond constitutional functions, the Governor-General has a ceremonial role: He or she hosts events at either of the two viceregal residences—Government House, Canberra, and Admiralty House in Sydney—and travels widely throughout Australia to open conferences, attend services and commemorations, and generally provide encouragement to individuals and groups who are contributing to their communities. When travelling abroad, the governor-general is seen as the representative of Australia, and of the Queen of Australia, and is treated as a head of state. The governor-general is supported by a staff headed by the Official Secretary to the Governor-General.

The Governor-General, beside the relatively meaningless functions described above, does have one ultimate power: he or she can fire the prime minister and appoint a new one. Again, we turn to Wikipedia for details on the one time that this occurred:

The 1975 Australian constitutional crisis (often known simply as "the Dismissal") has been described as the greatest political and constitutional crisis in Australian history. It culminated on 11 November 1975 with the removal of the Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam of the Australian Labor Party (ALP), by Governor-General Sir John Kerr, who then appointed the Leader of the Opposition, Malcolm Fraser, as caretaker Prime Minister.

Whitlam's Labor government had been elected in 1972 with a small majority in the House of Representatives, but with the Opposition controlling the Senate. Another election in 1974 resulted in

little change. While the Whitlam Government introduced many new policies and programs, it was also rocked by scandals and political miscalculations. In October 1975, the Opposition used its control of the Senate to defer passage of appropriation bills, or supply, which finance governmental operations and which had been passed by the House of Representatives. The Opposition stated that they would continue to do so unless Whitlam called an election for the House of Representatives and urged Kerr to dismiss Whitlam unless he agreed to their demand. Whitlam believed that Kerr would not dismiss him, and Kerr did nothing to disabuse Whitlam.

On 11 November 1975, Whitlam intended to call a half-Senate election in an attempt to break the deadlock. When he went to seek Kerr's approval of the election, Kerr instead dismissed him as Prime Minister, and shortly thereafter installed Fraser in his place. Acting quickly before all ALP parliamentarians became aware of the change of government, Fraser and his allies were able to secure passage of the appropriation bills, and Kerr dissolved Parliament for a double dissolution election. Fraser and his government were returned with a massive majority.

The events of the Dismissal led to only minor constitutional change. The Senate retains its power to block supply, and the Governor-General the power to dismiss the Government. However, those powers have not been exercised again. Kerr was widely criticised by ALP supporters for his actions, resigned early as Governor-General, and lived much of his remaining life abroad. Though Whitlam and Fraser later reconciled, Kerr, who died in 1991, continues to be reviled in some quarters.

On the tour, I ask Jeff if Australia, given its allegiance to the British throne, confers titles. He said that it does not, but on March 25 (less than two weeks from now), Prime Minister Tony Abbott will reinstate the awarding of titles for "those who have accepted public office rather than sought it; and who can never, by virtue of the office they have held, entirely return to private life." There are to be no more than four of them at any one time. The outgoing Governor-General, Quentin Bryce (also the first female to hold the position), will made a Dame and the incoming Governor-General, Peter Cosgrove, will be made a knight. This will cause an uproar among the anti-monarchists and others who reject the idea of honorary titles. Most interestingly, we will read in the newspaper on April 3 (just before leaving the country) that when Abbott surprised everyone with his announcement, he said "On my recommendation, her Majesty the Queen has amended the Letters Patent constituting the Order of Australia." Letters Patent are documents signed by the Queen and are public documents, but apparently nobody has seen this document nor can anyone attest that it was issued before Abbott's announcement rather than after. According to the article, "After days of silence, the PM's office said 'the documents' had been signed by Her Majesty on March 19. Government House said it had not seen the Letters Patent or any copy of them." Hmmm. Maybe the song was right, "There is nothing like a dame ..."

Our tour guide, Jeff, begins the excursion on the western side of the city. I take pictures of the recently built South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (with the unpronounceable acronym SAHMRI), which locals have labeled with such epithets as the cheese grater, the space ship, the prickly pear, and the shingleback (a lizard found on the Australian plains). My photo at Picasa shows only one view, but many more images of its exterior and interior, not to mention the details of its construction and the layout of its laboratories, can be seen at <http://tinyurl.com/lwxnh7u>. Next to it, construction is underway on the new Adelaide general hospital.

We swing around toward the east and pass the Adelaide Oval (mentioned earlier on p. 18). An enormous sum (about 600M AUD) of government money was invested in its renovation. There are great hopes that its official opening on March 22, featuring a concert by the Rolling Stones, will put the electorate in a more generous frame of mind. But recall that Robbie Burns warned us that "The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft agley" (that's ScotSpeak, not AusSpeak) and, so it came to pass that the concert was canceled because next week, on March 17, it will be announced that Mick Jagger's girlfriend (*girlfriend* for a 50-year-old?), Laura BAMBROUGH, had committed suicide. So the official opening will be delayed for another week and the inaugural event will be an Australian Rules Football game.

We visit St. Peter's Cathedral, seat of the archbishop of the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide. It is a classic structure (begun in 1869), both inside and out. While there, we are "treated" to an organ recital. I use quotation marks because the organist is not playing melodies: rather, he's testing the various keys and pedals and stops, creating something not unlike (which is a chemist's way of saying "like") that awful sequence of notes we heard all over Sydney. Right behind the cathedral is the 1840 meeting house of the Religious Society of Friends (i.e., Quakers). We swing by the neighborhood of North Adelaide where the wealthy Adelaideans* live, the most prominent (notorious?) of whom was Rupert Murdoch. His house is

*This is the proper term, but it sounds to me very much like the yodel heard in the 1920s popular song by Jimmie Rodgers: "She's long she's tall, she six feet from the ground/She's long she's tall, she six feet from the ground/She tailor made, lord she ain't no hand me down/Oh-di-lay-ee-ay, di-lay-dee-oh, de-lay-ee." Right?

there but he moved away long ago. He had inherited the *Adelaide News* from his father in 1923 and turned it eventually into the publishing empire called News Corp, which purchased British newspapers (*News of the World*, *The Sun*, *The Times*) and, later, American media outlets such as *New York Daily News* and Fox Broadcasting.

We drive through somewhat more modest residential neighborhoods where we can admire the iron lace gates and fences. Some houses have what are called bush fences, made from dried brush and grasses from the outback region. Apparently these are not built anymore because the materials are disappearing.

We stop for a coffee in a delightful café without outdoor seating. A neighborhood butcher is selling "drunken chooks" which Jeff explains is marinated chicken. Then it's through some more modest neighborhoods, wooded areas, St. Peter's College (a very expensive boys' boarding school), the National Wine Center, the Botanic Gardens, and finally to Adelaide's Central Market, a bustling place with foods of every type (bread, fowl, meat, fish, vegetables, fruit,* etc. etc.) for sale. My favorite display windows

*In the fruit display there are what are considered "bush foods" including glacede quandong (look it up), wattlesseed (ditto), and lemon myrtle.

feature baby goat legs, well-hung porterhouse (please, no jokes), diced alpaca, and diced camel. Who knew? You can enjoy the pictures (and salivate over the goodies) at Picasa. Jeff returns us to the hotel a little after 1:30.

An interesting story, related by Jeff. Even more abundant than McDonald's fast food restaurants are Hungry Jack's. Despite its name, Lee had already concluded (based on color scheme, style of logo, and other visual clues) that it was really Burger King. (That the menu includes the whopper clinches the argument.) Part of the story is related by Jeff, and part I learn from Wikipedia. In 1971, Burger King planned to expand to Australia, but learned that there was a small takeout food store in Adelaide of the same name. The owner was quite willing to relinquish the name ... but only for a price. (Lee and I have different recollections of the money involved - and I can't find the story online - so I'll relate Jeff's tale using my remembered numbers.) Apparently the man was greedy and, realizing that he was dealing with a huge corporation, set a steep asking price of 12M AUD. Burger King countered with 1M AUD. Unsatisfied, the man insisted on more, maybe not as much as 12M but certainly more than 1M. During these negotiations, Burger King's corporate board asked themselves just how important it was to keep the name and, concluding that it wasn't worth it, they withdrew the 1M offer. The owner of the takeout shop got nothing (except retention of the name all for himself).

What Jeff did not tell us was this. The Australian franchisee selected by Burger King, Jack Cowin, was given a list of possible names from which to choose. Burger King's corporate owner Pillsbury already sold a pancake mix called Hungry Jack, so Cowin chose that name and added the apostrophe s. Things went along smoothly for a couple of decades, but in the 1990s Burger King tried to dissolve their contract with Cowin on the grounds that he was not expanding to Western Australia, South Australia, and Queensland at the rate that they had agreed upon. Burger King tried to void the franchise contract and take over all of the

existing Hungry Jack's. By this time, the copyright on the name Burger King had expired, so American Burger King tried open their own chain of restaurants under the name ... you guessed it ... Burger King; these were to be associated with Shell service stations. The court cases are complex, but in the end Burger King lost all of them. (If your mouth is watering and you want to read more of the details, be my guest: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burger_King_Corporation_v_Hungry_Jack%27s)

AusSpeak: white for wait, bite for bait, precedent for precedent, geeven for given, nile for nail, incorreect for incorrect, and beyecon for bacon.

AUSTRALIAN SPELLING: Consider defence, authorised, colourur, flavourur, harbourur, labourur, centre, litre, metre, etc. just as is done in England.

At about 2:00, we make a dinner reservation for this evening at Andre's Cucina, just two blocks south of the hotel. We then walk to Adelaide Arcade (on Rundle Street's pedestrian mall), much smaller (no surprise) than the two arcades we visited in Sydney but still enjoyable. Above the entrance to the arcade is a coat of arms, flanked by an emu and a kangaroo; some online research reveals that it is reminiscent of the country's coat of arms, but with distinct differences; I don't know what (if anything) it represents, but it is colorful and impressive. We have a pastry and coffee in the arcade, then invest needless time trying to find the tourist information office: after stopping at a hotel and two shops for instructions, we finally locate it, but not on the street where we were assured it was. On the pedestrian mall, I see two men with black shirts bearing the New York Yankees name, written out in full. If only these innocent folk knew how very very wrong it is to celebrate the evil empire in such blatant displays.

We return to the hotel at about 4:00. Tonight we're going to see a performance of Chekhov's *The Seagull* at the Adelaide Festival Theatre. Dedicated geek that I am, I had borrowed the play from the Gig Harbor library and read it before leaving for Australia. I also downloaded it (in a different translation) onto Lee's laptop and I read Acts I and II this afternoon, but did not have time to finish it.

At 5:20 we walk to Andre's Cucina. I have a salad and cavatelli with blue crab. A table for 20, right near us, begins to fill. The noise from the people greeting each new arrival is actually welcome to us because it covers up that damned, incessant, annoying, grating (you know what!) over the P.A. system. We finish a little too early to head to the theatre, so we stop in our hotel lobby and wait until 7:10, then walk to the festival theatre (about 1 km away). There are election posters everywhere for local candidates in Saturday's election.

It takes us a while to figure out where the performance is (there are several venues in two separate buildings) but finally we locate the correct one. Because our tickets told us to arrive at 7:45 and because the seats are general admission, we move toward the door to the theatre around 7:40. Others arrive ... and arrive ... and arrive. But the doors do not open to admit us. The reason? A different performance is just ending and it takes time to clear the audience out. By the time we get in (around 8:00), we have been pushed, shoved, spindled, and mutilated, often by innocent-looking Australian women of a certain age who behave as if this were a rugby match. And we thought that French women were rude!

The performance space is rectangular: along the two long sides are the seats (unreserved) which people fill up starting with the seats closer to the front. But even from the last row, the venue is small enough that sight lines and hearing are excellent. Actors enter and leave from the short sides of the rectangle, either on the left or right. One "cute" shtick - as people are finding their seats, action is occurring on stage. Masha, the daughter of the owner of the farm, is taking lawn chairs from a stack and putting them in place for the high society types who will be sitting in them. She has heavy boots and a powerful marching walk. She also throws down each chair with a huge crashing sound. She does not like her job or her station in life - that's clear. Periodically, she stops to inhale some snuff. Late arrivers who are still making their way to their seats are startled by the noise on the stage. The performance is very good, if also truncated: the four acts of the play, which I would guess could take a good three hours to perform, is cut down to two acts and is over in under two hours.

We then walk back to the hotel at 11:00. The streets are pretty much deserted (a surprise, considering that the university is right here) and my knee is telling me that it's very unhappy. When we go to the next performance at the festival on Sunday, I'll want to take a taxi back to the hotel.

FRIDAY, MARCH 14

It's a bit overcast, but there's no rain. We've really lucked out.

We drive north and then northeast (about 75 km) to the Barossa Valley, a key wine-making region. Our first stop is at the large, commercial Wolf Blass Winery in Nuriootpa. (Wolf Blass, a young German wine maker, came to Australia in the 1960s). Ron, as we well know, *don't know nothin'*, about wines, but Lee tastes the cabernet sauvignon and is not impressed. Besides, they don't cooperate with other wineries to pool their sales and ship the wines to the U.S.

We then drive to the tourist information office in Tanunda, 9 km to the south. The clerk is very informative. She tells us about WineFlite, a shipping company that collects bottles from a number of participating wineries and ships them to the U.S. (for a substantial price, I might add); she makes a photocopy of the wineries that they represent and their prices. (I do not witness the following, myself, but Lee assures me that it's true. The women's bathroom has the classic female figure posted on the door, but it has breasts and pubic hair graffiti!)

Our next stop is at Artisans of Barossa, also in Tanunda. It represents a group of seven small wineries that have no tasting rooms (called cellar doors) of their own; at Artisans, visitors can taste wines from the several producers. They feature mostly red wines. Lee samples wines from John Duval (*Plexus*, a blend of viognier and two others), Massena (*Eleventh Hour*, a shiraz), and Teusner (*Eden Valley*, a cabernet); the first she rates Excellent, the second merely Good, and the third Yes!! We (i.e. Lee) buy eight bottles.

It's a bit over 20 km to the east to get to the town of Keyneton and the Henschke Winery. It's in a beautiful setting, surrounded by unusual trees and plants. There are also large blue containers of freshly picked grapes, ready to be ... (whatever it is that they do to convert grapes into wine). In addition to the eight bottles (from three wineries) that we purchased at Artisans, we purchase sixteen more and arrange to have them shipped to Gig Harbor by WineFlite.

Although my knowledge of wine is, shall we say, limited, I do know chocolate. So our next stop is at Melba's Chocolate Factory, 55 km to the southwest, almost back to Adelaide. This is a working factory and it's fascinating to watch the people and machines at work as well as to sample the vast varieties of candy for sale in the enormous show room. We buy some bags of chocolate for dessert at the hotel, but this place does not serve coffee. However, right next door, is the Woodside Cheese Wrights and they do sell coffee. We then take our coffee back to the chocolate factory, walk its aisles, and take lots of pictures.

But we are not finished with wine. Our next stop is at Bird in Hand Winery, also in Woodside. Before we left the hotel this morning, we tried to determine if the hotel clerk had made our reservation for Red Ochre for tomorrow evening. Somehow, we're unable to connect to the hotel, using Lee's cell phone, so the winery lets us use their land line. The hotel clerk is useless and argumentative - they made no record of whether they had called in the reservation nor are they willing to call the restaurant while we have them on the phone. So the nice people at the winery call Red Ochre for us and confirm our reservation.

And from there, it's just 12 km further to the southwest to the town of Hahndorf,* where we arrive at 5:30.

*When I first heard this name, I thought it was Ponndorf. This would be meaningless to non-chemists (and, in truth, to *most* chemists) but it is part of a "name reaction" called the Meerwein-Ponndorf-Verley-Oppenaur Equilibration, a great favorite of grad students in Bill Doering's research group at Yale in the early 1960s. Why the interest? Well, the reaction, itself, is interesting and its mechanism and subtle features had been elucidated by Doering's group years earlier. But mainly, my fellow grad

student Mait Jones and I appropriated the words Meerwein Ponndorf and turned "him" into a mythical post-doctoral researcher whose function in life was to torment one of Doering's secretaries. The full story is too long to tell here, but you can read about it in the two sets of reminiscences (written by Jones and me) that are linked to <http://web.utk.edu/~rmagid/index5.html>. And what makes this even more germane to life at Yale in those days is that Lee and I passed (but did not visit) the Basedow Barossa Winery; Otto Basedow was a German post-doc in Doering's group, probably the only one of about ten from that country who did not distinguish himself during his days in New Haven nor go on to great fame and distinction when he returned to Germany.

Now, we are looking for dinner, not more wine. Founded in 1838 by Lutherans from the Prussian town of Kay, the town retains much of its Germanic influence: churches, homes, businesses, many of them in a European architectural style. We walk along the main street, trying to decide where to eat and we finally choose the very popular (judging by the crowd inside and out) Hahndorf Inn (established in 1863). We each order a Hofbräu lager and a "trio of wursts" (bratwurst, brockwurst, and weinerwurst), served with German potato salad, a large pretzel, and three kinds of mustard. Even though we'd eaten only a little chocolate since breakfast, neither of us is able to come close to finishing the dinner.

Finally, we complete the loop by driving 25 km on the highway back to Adelaide. Either on the car radio or the hotel room TV, we learn that polls suggest that the Liberals will defeat Labour in Tasmania in tomorrow's election; and they are also leading in South Australia. A few seats are too close to call. Stay tuned for further results (p. 32).

SATURDAY, MARCH 15

Today is the Ides of March, if anyone is interested (or even if nobody is interested). It is decidedly overcast and looks as if it will rain (but, as it turns out, it doesn't). Again, I'm not hungry at breakfast (just cereal, toast, coffee). We walk to the Adelaide Festival Office (off Rundle Street) to exchange vouchers for the actual tickets to tomorrow night's dinner at Jolley's Boat House. (This was part of a package, put together by Southern Crossings, for people who are also going to see *dirtsong* at the Adelaide Festival Theatre).

My leg is still hurting, so in the late morning we stop at Globe Medical Clinic, one long block from our hotel, hoping to see a doctor. No appointments are available today (they close at 1:00) but I do get one for Monday morning at 9:00 am. (An alternative would have been to walk-in at the hospital, but the clerk at Globe said that this could involve a long wait.)

We walk along North Terrace, Lee to the Migration Museum and I to the Art Gallery of South Australia. We agree to meet in the café at the South Australian Museum at 1:00. I walk through the art museum from about 11:50 to 12:55; when I find Lee at the assigned meeting place, she tells me that the Migration Museum does not open until 1:00, so she spent the hour in the South Australian Museum's gift shop and at the Antarctic Exhibit on the third floor. The art museum was a real treat. I enjoyed the Australian artists (both Anglo and Aboriginal) of the 19th and 20th centuries (see my pictures at Picasa) and the edgy, modern art that was part of their "Dark Heart" exhibit (associated with the Adelaide Festival). There was also a smattering of pieces by Europeans (Rodin and Henry Moore, for example).

We share a sandwich (turkey, cream cheese, cranberry) at the South Australian Museum café. Lee now returns to the Migration Museum and I tour the Antarctic exhibit that she had discovered earlier today. Of great interest is the expedition undertaken by Sir Douglas Mawson (1882-1957), a geologist and amateur explorer. In 1911, he set out on a quest to reach the magnetic South Pole. It was an ill-fated mission; one member of his party died when he fell into a crevasse; several dogs also died in the accident. Mawson and the remaining member of his party turned back to base camp; his companion died on the way after both of them had gotten ill by eating dog meat. When he finished the 100-km trek to base camp, he learned that the other parties in the expedition had left on a ship just a few hours earlier. He had to endure a full year, alone, until explorers returned the next summer. Well, he lived another 40 years, pursuing a relatively sedentary life as an academic.

I return to the hotel at 1:45 and Lee gets back at 2:30. I use the hotel's washing machines and dryer to do my laundry. Later, we take a taxi at 6:00 to Red Ochre Restaurant in a beautiful setting on War Memorial Drive. Not only does it get excellent ratings on TripAdvisor but our friend Kelsey Cook strongly recommended it based on his visit several years ago. We share an appetizer that is *The Red Ochre Tasting Platter*. The description on the menu is to die for: "Woodside goat's curd noisette, liquid beetroot & young cress; Barossa Valley quail terrine, citrus salad & muntries cherry; tiger prawn tail, lemon aspen wasabi mayonnaise; crocodile fish cake, somen noodles & lemon myrtle chilli jam." No, I don't have any idea what these words refer to, but the server tries to be "helpful" by mumbling what each pile of food represents as her hand hovers over the plate. (At least she doesn't point with her pinky, as did so many wait-persons in England last fall and in the wonderful Herman Koch novel *The Dinner*.)

For my main, initially, I was going to swallow my reluctance to eat cute animals and order the Orroroo Kangaroo Fillet, but I learn that the "spiced carrots" that come with it have cumin. So I switch to something that sounds safer (even if I don't understand it): "*Gawler River Young Organic Chicken*: prosciutto wrapped, soft herb stuffing, confit leg, sweet potato, toasted cashews, spinach puree, cranberry & native apple pickle." Whew! Please forgive me if I don't say what Lee has, but suffice it to add that the server's pointing hand is put into good use for both my main course and Lee's.

For dessert, Lee has a special that's not on the online menu, so I can't describe it in full, but it was essentially another tasting platter of several desserts, one of which is on the posted menu as "*Wattleseed Pavlova*: meringue rolled in a macadamia nut & native spice crust, passion fruit sorbet & lemon myrtle poached fruits." (Hey, wasn't the lemon myrtle also in our appetizer? Yes it was.)

When we arrived at 6:00, the place was nearly empty but it quickly filled. One table of 14, right near us, has a somewhat low class gang (based on their accents, rude behavior, walking around, and loud voices); on the other side of the room is a table for six: prosperous looking men and women, but they resembled sun-tanned American golfers or Realtors or (worse) lawyers.

We call for a taxi to return us to the hotel. It had rained a bit while we were eating, but the rain ends by the time we get the taxi. So the only time we got rained on during this trip, so far, was in walking to the Chinese restaurant in Sydney.

SUNDAY, MARCH 16

It rained during the night, but today the sky looks ok - there's sun, but also some clouds. It's difficult to predict what will transpire. I had mentioned (p. 16) that my attempts to reach MyChart or anything related to Franciscan Health in the Tacoma area by internet failed; the message seemed to imply that the servers were down. By email, yesterday, I asked Bill Gurley if he could connect; in fact, he did so without difficulty. He explained the problem this way: "It's possible that it is a DNS issue (domain name server) there in that part of the world. DNS is what resolves the IP name to an IP number." No, I don't understand, but he then sends me a number to insert in the URL that will allow me to connect. And it works! Two days later, he suggests another method of getting through, which he calls "more involved" and "interesting." I'm not brave enough to try it, nor will I describe it here lest some unsuspecting folk among you decide to take the plunge.

After breakfast, we get the car at 9:00 and head south (some 80 km) toward Victor Harbor on the Fleurieu Peninsula.

AusSpeak ON THE ROAD:

- When on the open highways yesterday and, again, today, we note the following: what we would call the *passing lane*, they call the *overtaking lane*; and both buses and trucks have signs on their rears that say "Do not overtake when vehicle is turning."
- My favorite road sign (I fail to get a picture of it today but will be able to upload one to my Picasa files later

on this trip, see p. 32) is the following:

DROWSY DRIVERS
DIE

I can't tell if this is a commentary or a command. But we drive on.

- We see a number of signs that say STOP CREEPING. For a while, we think it may have to do with keeping some invasive plant species out of the environment, but Lee discovers later on that it's to discourage drivers who, either without realizing it or with malice aforethought, gradually increase their speed over the posted speed limit. A photo of one of these signs is posted at Picasa.
- We see numerous signs suggesting that there will be koalas crossing, kangaroos crossing, wombats crossing, etc. etc. And I suppose that they the signs are accurate because, although we encounter no live animals crossing the road (at least today), we do see lots of dead kangaroos and wallabies on the side. Apparently, the "approved" procedure, if one hits and kills an animal, is to get out of the car and drag the carcass to the side, leaving it as a delectable meal for crows, snakes, whatever.
- In more rural areas, we see signs advertising the sale of "pony poo"!

We encounter a brief heavy shower, then bright sunshine as we arrive in Victor Harbor at 10:45. It is a tourist destination during the summer months, but even now as we move into fall the streets are crowded with visitors. One of its interesting features is Granite Island, which is connected to the mainland by a causeway that can be traversed on foot or by a horse-drawn tram. As we walk about the harbor area, we encounter not only the horses that pull the tram but also camels! Yes, camels! Indeed, there are feral camels in the center of the country, but those that we see are quite tame and are ready to give rides to children.

We walk to a Sunday fairground (really a flea market) but most of the merchandise on offer is *chazerai*.*

*Although usually used to refer to food, this distinctly non-Australian word is defined - according to a useful web site - as: "This is the stuff you win at the arcade, literally anything of little value, cheap, worthless trinkets. Junk. When your kids come home from the arcade and show you the 2 plastic snakes, 8 jeweled rings, 3 mini-superballs, and the Chinese finger trap they won and selected so carefully as they cashed in their 172 tickets, you say, 'Take all that chazerai off the table. Get it out of here.'" And for them what ain't familiar with Yiddish pronunciation, the opening **ch**azerai is pronounced as if you were gargling while saying **ch**romatic.

From here, it's but 18 km east to Goolwa, a port on the Murray River; I drive this leg. I have no recollection of why we have come here nor do I have any pictures or written notes to remind me. So we now swing 35 km to the northeast and to the town of Strathalbyn, where we arrive at about 12:30. My leg is really hurting as I get out of the car. We're looking for a place to have lunch and settle on the Strath Corner Bakery, un-air-conditioned (of course) with the doors wide open. I have a sandwich, Lee has a meat pie; both of us have coffee. Afterwards, we stroll about the town. On today's drive, I also discover a nice classical music station on the radio. Based in Adelaide, its signal is strong wherever we drive today. It's part of ABC whose TV news station we first encountered in Sydney.

Lee is driving now. Some 45 km to the northwest (and just 15 km from Adelaide) is Mount Lofty, which we reach at about 2:30. We get some nice photos of the valley and of Adelaide, but it is misty and the pictures are not very good. By 2:45 we're back in the hotel where we relax and read until our next adventure.

Which comes at 5:00 when we walk to Jolley's Boathouse, a restaurant on the south shore of Torrens River, not far from the Adelaide Festival Theatre. It's a pricey restaurant, but our meal, a *prix fixe**

*In the *Knoxville News Sentinel*, the paper of record in the town where we survived for 36 years, a restaurant reviewer once wrote about a new establishment's "pre-fix" dinner. Noted.

two-course offering (with some choice allowed), is already paid for as a promotion for the theatre. The "rule" is that one can choose from two (of three) categories: entree, main, dessert. Lee and I both have a salad (figs, Gorgonzola, walnuts, rocket) followed by the same main course (caramelized pork belly with

pickled papaya, chilli-peanut rice noodle salad, and jam). (By the way, if you'd like to be startled, go to the restaurant's web site and listen to what transpires: <http://www.jolleysboathouse.com/>)

It's a short walk to the theatre. Unlike three days ago when we had trouble figuring which venue in which building was the one where *The Seagull* was being performed, this time we know that we are in the large auditorium, a rather beautiful and spacious venue with comfortable seats, good sight lines, and (probably) good acoustics (although everything that we heard was electronically amplified, so it was hard to tell what an unamplified voice or instrument(s) would sound like). Our seats are excellent: row A in the Dress Circle and, unlike the Chekhov, they are reserved.

Several weeks ago when planning our trip, I expressed reluctance at going to see *dirtsong* featuring The Black Arm Band, described as "a flexible music and theatre company focussing on the expression of Australian Aboriginal experience and identity." Several of their shows can be viewed online and these videos convinced me that this was not the kind of music I wanted to spend my Sunday evening listening to. But then I relented and agreed to accompany Lee. Well, I was right. What we have is a very poorly lit (presumably on purpose) stage with musicians and singers, some Aboriginal and some Anglo, singing and talking and telling stories in English (sometimes) but more often in one or another of the many Aboriginal languages. Well, the audience (minus one!) love it. And the performance lasts "only" from 7:30 to 9:00.

As I had said (with regard to getting from the Chekhov performance to the hotel), the walk is fairly long (about a km) and the streets are relatively dark and empty, so this time we take a taxi. Also my leg is really hurting. Because we are going to check out of the hotel tomorrow morning and make the long drive to Wilpena Pound, and because I want to go to the doctor beforehand for a 9:00 am appointment, we pack our suitcases in the evening before going to bed.

MONDAY, MARCH 17

Again I limit myself to cereal, toast, and coffee. Although it rained overnight, by the time I walk to the Globe Medical Clinic the streets are only slightly wet but the air is warm and heavy. The physician is Dr. Meredith Barrett, a general practice doctor who impresses me as very competent. She had been a physics major in college, then went to med school. She takes my history, examines my leg, moves it up/down and left/right, tests it for strength against her hand pressure, and concludes that there is no broken bone but probably a strain of the medial collateral ligament. She urges me to give up the ibuprofen that I'd been taking and change to paracetamol (same as acetaminophen), 500 mg tablets, maximum 4 g per day. I tell her that the 500-mg dosage of acetaminophen is now being discouraged* in the U.S., but she still wants me to take it.

*While typing up this travelog, the FDA issued yet another warning against the 500-mg dosage; for example, see: <http://tinyurl.com/kg9ejt>

She says that I could get a knee brace if I wish. And she urges me to stay off the leg as much as possible (which can prove difficult when one is on vacation).

We check out of the hotel and head north. Google offers three routes, all about the same length (450 km) and the same estimated time (5 hr 15 min). We choose the inland route (going through Clare), but plan to take the route that's partly along the water for our return. On the way, we fill with petrol: 39.0 L for 451 km which is 11.6 km/L or 27.3 mpg. The cost is 1.56 AUD/L for a total of 60.86 AUD which at an exchange rate of 1.0 AUD = 0.90 USD is equivalent to 1.43 USD/L or about \$5.40 a gallon.

Lee drives the first 130 km to just south of Clare; she encounters some heavy rain on the way. I am amazed that Adelaide's classical FM radio station is still strong, although we will lose it after just a little while more. We arrive in Clare at about 1:30. It's a pleasant town. We stop at Wild Saffron sandwich shop where I have a ham-and-cheese toasted sandwich and Lee has a chicken baguette.

I drive the next 100 km. North of Clare, the highway changes to one lane in each direction and the surface

becomes rough; at least it's paved - the rental car company told us NOT to drive this car on unsealed, unpaved roads. As we continue north, the lush vegetation that covered Adelaide becomes noticeably sparse. Trees are separated from one another by considerable distances and the scrub brush resembles what we see in the desert southwestern U.S. Eventually we start seeing mountain ranges.* Along the

*Fun fact: according to Lee, the peaks of the Flinders Range were originally higher than the Himalayas. Do I believe her? You bet I do.

barren road, we count five dead kangaroos or wallabies in various states of decomposition. There are occasional cows and sheep in the fields.

COMMENTARY ON AUSTRALIAN ROADS AND DRIVERS

- In the cities (Adelaide, Sydney, and others I assume), nearly everyone speeds up when a traffic light is about to change from green to red; often they go through when it's already red. This is especially true of taxi drivers for whom the red light seems to be just a pesky annoyance.
- Many drivers in the cities have no regard or sympathy for pedestrians, especially for those who are hobbling along because they may have hurt their knees in Sydney. Even when one is in a pedestrian crossing lane and the walk light is not only illuminated but also beeping, many drivers try to intimidate the walker by pulling up as close as possible.
- But on a positive note, just as we saw in England last fall the roads are very clearly marked. Signs about exits, curves, speed limits, etc. are large and clear and are displayed in plenty of time. Often there are overhead banners indicating which lane to be in (at a complicated intersection or interchange) and this information may then be repeated in big white letters on the pavement.

Lee takes over the driving. In Hawker, just 55 km from our destination, we stop at the Jeff Morgan Gallery. Lee wants to see the celebrated panorama painting of Wilpena Pound, but because it costs money I remain in the gallery and wander among the Jeff Morgan nature paintings (mountains, lakes, animals, etc.), many with religious themes, that are on sale as large oil paintings, smaller prints, greeting cards, postcards, neckties, samplers,* and probably dozens of other formats. I take over driving the final 55 km to Wilpena

*I borrowed this idea from Tom Lehrer's song *Smut*, which has the memorable lines: "Bring on the obscene movies, murals, postcards, neckties, samplers, stained-glass windows, tattoos, anything! More, more, I'm still not satisfied!"

Pound Resort, where we arrive at 4:45.

The resort is very rustic and the air is filled with swarms of pesky flies as are the pathways with ants and lots of "roo poo" (i.e., scat). Yecch. Our room is adequate: two twin beds (together), full kitchen (if one wants to prepare meals), combination bath/shower. The restaurant menu is simple and limited. We order a Coopers ale (local); I have chicken schnitzel with mushroom sauce, not bad. They also charge for internet use: 10 AUD for 1.5 hours, one device only; and the only wi-fi spot is in the restaurant. So we set up the laptop for use after we finish eating. There are three grey kangaroos or wallabies (one of them pregnant) on the lawn outside the restaurant, just minding their own business and completely ignoring the guests with their cameras.

On the drive, at about 3:00 my leg really began to hurt, so I took a paracetamol. By evening, the pain is as bad as it's been, so Lee suggests that I take two caplets. If this doesn't help, I'll need to go back to the ibuprofen, despite Dr. Barrett's warning.

TUESDAY, MARCH 18

We go to an early breakfast at 7:00 so as to be ready for our scheduled tour, "Time Travel & Gorgeous Gorges," which is a replacement for the cancellation* of the aboriginal village tour at Iga Warta. The hot

*As I mentioned on p. 12, it was on February 24, just one week before our departure from the U.S., that Southern Crossings informed us that the tour had been canceled because the local tribe had cut off access to the landing strip that our flight would use. Apparently the tour company had known of this for several months but hadn't bothered to see if any tours (i.e., ours!) had been booked. We considered driving the four hours and 250 km to Iga Warta, but much of the road was going to be unpaved and this is forbidden by our rental car contract. So, discretion being the better part ... etc., we opted for a four-wheel drive guided tour of the Flinders Ranges National Park.

breakfast food has not even been set out, so we settle for a cold meal of cereal, toast, and coffee. The tour begins at 7:45. There are two other couples (one from Adelaide, the other from East Hampton (Long Island) in the four-wheel drive vehicle, driven (with great expertise) by tour guide Michael.

According to Wikipedia:

Wilpena Pound is a natural amphitheatre of mountains located 429 kilometres (267 mi) north of Adelaide ... in the heart of the Flinders Ranges National Park. The Pound is the most northern point with access via a sealed road in this part of the Flinders Ranges.

As the drive begins (in a rugged Toyota Land Cruiser), we pass an open field with several families of kangaroos who seem to be as curious about us as we are of them. Alas, a little further on is a kangaroo who had had a close encounter with a car; one large carnivorous bird is making a meal of the carcass. After about an hour of driving, we enter Brachina Gorge whose trail (opened in 1994) is called "A Corridor Through Time." Michael takes us to a partly covered enclosure with a series of sign boards (see Picasa) about the history, geology, and biology of the region.* Michael provides an oral commentary that is more

*(The following is liberally borrowed - i.e., plagiarized - from the sign boards.) The Flinders ranges began about 800 million years ago as a depression. Over the next 300 million years, a 10-15 km thickness of sediment was deposited. The mountains merged some 500 million years ago, but weathering and erosion gradually reduced them to their relatively modest heights. The mountain-building forces led to spectacular folding in the Flinders Ranges. The fossil record in the rocks tells the story of evolution from bacteria and algae to animals and animals with shells.

informative than the printed boards. While we are viewing the sign boards, Michael relates the story of Reg Sprigg (1919-1994). Here is what Wikipedia says about his discoveries:

Sprigg was sent by the South Australian government during 1946 to inspect abandoned mines in the Ediacaran Hills, to ascertain whether old mines could be reworked profitably using new technologies. When he discovered the fossils, apparently while eating his lunch, he realised that they were very ancient, either of Early Cambrian, or possibly even of Precambrian age. He submitted a paper to the journal *Nature*, but it was refused. He traveled to London and presented his findings to the 1948 International Geological Congress, but failed to excite either interest or belief. Subsequent work by Prof Martin Glaessner at the University of Adelaide demonstrated that they were indeed of latest Precambrian age. Although Precambrian animal fossils had been reported before, they had not been accepted universally as organic. This discovery resulted ultimately in the definition during 2004 of the Ediacaran Period, the first new geological period created in more than one hundred years.

We stop about six additional times to view other information boards and overlooks.

PUN ALERT: (This is not mine, but Michael's) In referring to a particular geological feature, he says "It's sedimentary, my dear Watson." It's now my sad duty to prick (you should pardon the expression) the bubble, but Sherlock Holmes never said "Elementary, my dear Watson." I learned this in the introduction to the Arthur Conan Doyle novel that I'll be reading in a few days and also by checking at: <http://www.snopes.com/quotes/signature/elementary.asp>

Those pesky flies (or their close relatives) from Wilpena Pound Resort have followed us here (or have

radioed ahead to their cousins). It is difficult to even open one's mouth, lest several of the darlings enter it. Suffice it to say that even with our mouths shut, they do love to attack inside ears, noses, and eyes. This becomes especially acute when we stop for a refreshment: Michael opens the rear of his vehicle and sets out tea, juice, and sweet rolls, all of which are very much to the taste of the flying battalions.

Michael tells us about the river red gums that, as a survival strategy, can shed huge living limbs. In memory of those who were in the wrong place at the wrong time, the trees have been dubbed "widow makers." Michael talks about the flash floods that can engulf the region. There is very little rain over the course of a year, but it falls so suddenly that the ground cannot absorb it; and, thus, a few mm of rain can lead to extraordinary floods that can cut off entire communities from one another for several days. I take lots of pictures, not only at our various stops but also from the moving vehicle, of the trees, cliffs, brush, etc. Some of the chasm walls remind me of the angled striations in the rock face as one drives on I-75 north from Tennessee into Kentucky. Pictures much better than mine can be found at various web sites, for example: http://www.pbase.com/billrobinson/flinders_ranges_south_australia and <http://www.yktravelphoto.com/places/highlights-of-the-flinders-ranges-national-park/821>

My description of the tour pales in comparison with Lee's, which goes on for some eight densely packed handwritten pages. Well, at least someone was paying attention! So you'll not learn from me about the French tourist who was trapped in a small Toyota for 16 hours nor about the time that Michael in his 4-wheel van, filled with tourists, had to be towed out of the mud nor about the graders that come along after a flood and just carve out new "roads" nor about the historic floods of biblical proportions nor ... *Tant pis* (which is French for "auntie is taking a leak.")

The roads are often strewn with small boulders and the passage along them is difficult. I'm glad that we have an experienced driver who knows the territory; and a vehicle whose engine, transmission, and tires do not all rebel at once. Near the resort at the end of the tour, we see a wild emu who barely stops running long enough for me to take a picture. Upon our return, we walk to the general store to buy admission tickets to Old Wilpena Station, the site of a very pastoral early settlement. We return to our room to cool off in the air-conditioning, then venture out at about 4:30 into the heat (it had been cool in the morning, but that was then and this is now) to tour the Station. Accompanying us on the tour are, of course, our flying insect friends.* (Why we bought tickets, I have no idea. Nobody is present to collect them or to even make note

*I had brought a spray bottle of OFF, purchased years ago and, therefore, of unknown efficacy. We anoint ourselves with its elixir. Either its potency has worn off or Australian flies enjoy its aroma, but whatever the reason it provides very little protection.

of our presence.)

At 5:30, we return to our room and wait there until dinner time. The dining room, by the way, is called Poddy Dodger's Bar. One of the wait-staff explains that a poddy is an unbranded calf and a dodger is a rustler, one who makes off with the calf. This evening I have tagliatelle with mushrooms, salad, and of course a Coopers Ale. We also do some internet work in the restaurant (where the wi-fi signal is found).

My poor leg is really rebelling today.* I've given up the paracetamol and am now taking ibuprofen again,

*I'm not the only Magid who is suffering. Poor Lee developed diarrhea yesterday and still has it today. When we get to Kangaroo Island, we'll learn the probable cause of her ailment (see p. 35).

six of them today. In the evening, I finish reading Jamie Ford's *Hotel at the Corner of Bitter and Sweet*. Although a work of fiction, it is set in Seattle in 1942 and is an accurate depiction of the forced expulsion of the entire Japanese community (and confiscation of their homes and businesses) to camps in Idaho and elsewhere.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19

The morning is crisp and clear, with no clouds. We have breakfast: this time we're there late enough that both hot and cold items are set out, but I stick to cereal, toast, and coffee. We check out of the hotel at 8:45 (to the accompaniment of birdsong* all over the place) and plan our return trip to Adelaide via the

*Well, I suppose it's "birdsong" but there is one call, which we think is coming from a raven-like bird, that sounds like the crying of a human baby or an animal in pain. This is supposed to attract a mate?

coastal route through Port Augusta and Port Pirie (although we'll be alongside the water for only short stretches). As we leave the resort, we pass a large number of emu who (unlike yesterday's) seem willing to pose for photographs. And as we drive, the day rapidly begins to warm up.

AusSpeak: In the breakfast room, we hear a variety of accents. Some sound like upper-crust British, others like Cockney. For example, "nice day" is rendered as "noice deye."

At 10:45 we're in Port Augusta where I take some pictures of buildings along Main Street. On the road, we encounter something new: when there is a construction vehicle tethered to another behind it (we see these all the time in the U.S. where Lee calls them calf-and-cow), the rear of the second vehicle carries the sign ROAD TRAIN. (Seems descriptive.) In Port Pirie, we see a four-wheel drive with two in-your-face messages on its rear window: a decal that says SHOOT FERALS and another that is a map of Australia sporting the words FUCK OFF, WE'RE FULL. Because the classical music FM station from ABC is too weak this far north, we listen to another ABC channel that consists of news and talk. Substantive, non-opinionated talk, so unlike the rants that we hear in the U.S.

Of course, it's not all non-opinionated because several politicians are interviewed concerning the results (or not) of last Saturday's election. It seems that neither Labour nor the Liberals have a majority. Labour leads by one seat, but there are two Independents who have not said which party they're going to caucus with. Negotiations (and bribes?) are in progress. This is reminiscent of what happened in the Washington State Senate two years ago: the Democrats won 26 seats and the Republicans 23, but two Democrats decided to caucus with the Republicans, thus changing the balance of power to 24-25. One of the turncoats was "rewarded" by being named Majority Leader. What the other one got, I do not know.

Lee drives the first 150 km to Port Augusta. We buy petrol (without filling up because we're trying to return the car to Adelaide's airport Hertz with a nearly empty fuel tank): 20 L at 1.559 AUD. I drive the next 140 km. The A1 is a good road, usually just two lanes but at times becoming a four-lane highway. The speed limit is increased to 110 k/hr.

A building on the roadside has the sign PROOF AND EXPERIMENTAL ESTABLISHMENT UNIT. What they do in there, I have no idea. The good news is that while Lee is driving I manage to snap a good picture of the DROWSY DRIVERS DIE sign that I first mentioned on p. 27.

AUSTRALIAN RADIO: As we continue south to Adelaide, I'm able to pick up the ABC classical radio station. I find the following curious. Two days ago, they played the Samuel Barber "Adagio for Strings" in a version for string orchestra. (Classical music buffs know, of course, that it was originally the second movement of a string quartet, but the tone is so mournful and passionate that it is now played by large bodies of strings at all sorts of sad events, such as the funeral of an assassinated leader.) Today, we hear it again, but in a version for a capella chorus. We also hear various works by Aaron Copland. The Australians seem to like indigenous music of the U.S.

We get to our Adelaide hotel, the same one we had vacated just two days ago. In the afternoon, I do another load of laundry and I begin reading the Kindle version of Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet*. Lee and I have really enjoyed the Benedict Cumberbatch-Martin Freeman versions of several Sherlock Holmes stories on PBS and it occurred to me that I had never read a word of any of these books. We walk to Scoozi for dinner (a nice, but simple, pizza place).

THURSDAY, MARCH 20

We are up early, at 5:30, have breakfast at 6:30, and check-out of the hotel at 7:00. The reason for the rush: we need to turn in the rental car and get to the check-in counter for Rex (Australia's regional airline) for a 9:30 departure. The flight to Kingscote on Kangaroo Island takes but 30 minutes and uses a small propeller plane. Thus, there are severe restrictions on luggage (weight and number of articles). The good news is that the airline will store our large suitcases in Adelaide and hold them until we return from Kangaroo Island. Security is absolutely minimal, essentially non-existent.

ANOTHER UNFAVORABLE OBSERVATION: In her journal, Lee writes "It must be said that Australians love to jump queues! At the airport belt where stuff goes through to be scanned, the Aussie dude behind me is determined to cut in front and separate Ron and me. Basically, he gets a body-check. Considering the line numbered 5-10 people, this is pretty nuts!"

We head to Gate 10 which seems to be "ground-zero" for numerous short-distance flights. Thus, there is a constant barrage of announcements, VERY VERY LOUD ANNOUNCEMENTS, on the P.A. system, including a variety of pre-boarding calls, more pre-boarding, last minute warnings, better hurry because the doors are going to close, this is your last chance, this is really truly your last chance ... for flights to such metropolises as Mount Gambier (where we'll be in four days, but by car), Port Lincoln, Whyalla, and (most intriguingly) Coober Pedy, a desert town some 850 km north of Adelaide that is so hot in the summer (temperatures often exceed 45°C (113°F)) that (according to Wikipedia) "... many residents prefer to live in caves bored into the hillsides ('dugouts'). A standard three-bedroom cave home with lounge, kitchen, and bathroom can be excavated out of the rock in the hillside for a similar price to building a house on the surface. However, dugouts remain at a constant temperature, while surface buildings need air-conditioning."

A sign at the airport lists items that may NOT be taken to Kangaroo Island. These include "bees, bee handling equipment, and honey products" (no worry there); "potatoes for consumption or planting" (not on our list); "foxes, rabbits, and declared weeds" - this has to be the weirdest collection of dissimilar items ever.

At times, the flight departures are so frequent that there are dueling LOUD announcements on the P.A. system. When physicists talk about destructive interference they probably have this in mind. At 9:10, we are invited to descend to tarmac level (44 steps, I need to keep this in mind for when we return to Adelaide) and then onto a bus that takes us to the plane, some 500 feet away. The plane is a Saab 350 two-engine turboprop with 33 seats, arranged two on one side of the aisle, one on the left. Lee and I have adjacent seats in the exit row. The doors close promptly at 9:30 and we began a lengthy taxi and are finally in the air at 9:45. Despite the very short duration of the flight, the sole attendant (having finished the safety instructions, etc.) manages to disburse the following: small plastic glasses of water at 9:50 on her first pass a package of Mentos at 9:52 on her second. Then, she collects the glasses at 9:55 on her third pass, and we are on the ground at 10:08.

Kingscote is a mere 74 miles from Adelaide (as the Rex flies) although one can also make the trip by ferry. This would be advantageous if one wanted to have a car on Kangaroo Island, but considering the primitive quality of some of the roads it's probably best to leave the driving to experienced tour guides with their four-wheel drive vehicles. We are met at the airport by Graeme (who prefers to be called Speedy and whom I, mistakenly, call Jeff until corrected later in the day). He is a very personable and humorous man,* relatively young (I'd guess mid 40s) who, with his wife, runs a farm on the island. His vehicle is a Land Rover (much

*Lee contends that he looks exactly like the character Police Constable Penhale in the TV show Doc Martin. From this I know nothing, having watched (under protest) just one episode of this program in my entire life. The fact that the actor playing this part had a Spanish father makes it less than likely that he'd look like an Australian, but what do I know?

like the one that Michael had in Wilpena Pound). The plan is to proceed to a full day of touring the island;

we'll not be delivered to our hotel until 5:00. After a while, we learn that "Escape Tours" (for which Speedy works) is owned by Paul and Mandy, who also own Seascope on Emu Bay, the B and B that will be our home for the next three days; more about them and it later when we arrive there.

Another couple, whom Speedy had picked up at their hotel earlier, travel with us: Younes (from Algeria) and Marianne (from Switzerland); he is a physician with an excellent command of English; she works in some sort of health field and speaks very little English but understands a bit more. I try to impress her with my superb command of French, but she seems immune. Although they are a couple, they actually live separately most of the year in their two countries.

Kangaroo Island, with a population of some 4,400 people and 80,000 sheep is approximately rectangular; its two long sides (along an east-west axis) are about 93 miles long and its short sides (on the north-south axis) are from 35 to 50 miles long. The land area is 4,400 km² (1,700 mi²) and the coastline is 336 mi long. It does not take a mathematical genius to calculate that the population density is 1.000 per km² for people (and a remarkably repetitive 18.181818..... per km² for sheep). The English explorer Matthew Flinders landed on the island in 1802 and was followed shortly by a Frenchman, Nicolas Baudin, who circumnavigated the island. There were no people living on the island until the Europeans arrived.

Kingscote, where the airport is located, is in the northeastern corner of the island. (More precisely, it's in the northeast corner of the large part of the island which is separated from a much smaller blob - clearly resembling a pimple that has burst open - of land off the eastern end, tenuously connected by a narrow land bridge). Our first stop today is Seal Bay Conservation Park on the southern coast near the midpoint from west to east (or, for that matter, from east to west), where we arrive at 11:00 and remain until 12:15. Speedy takes us down a steep pathway with sand and some brush on both sides to the beach where there are hundreds of seals* (pups with their mothers and adult males doing dominance displays).



*More precisely, they are sea lions. One distinction between them and seals is that they have larger flippers that allow them to propel themselves on land as well as in the water. For more information than I care to impart, see <http://nmlc.org/2011/06/whats-the-difference-between-seals-and-sea-lions/>

When one sees isolated pups on the sand, it's because their mothers have gone to sea to find food; they can be gone for up to three days. The colony numbers about 1,000 but, because of the large numbers who have been fishing for one or two days, there are "only" about 300 on the beach at any one time. The waters are calm, a surprise given that no land mass separates us from Antarctica. It is a hot day and the sun is very intense; that plus my aching knee make walking on the sand difficult and leaves me exhausted and dripping with sweat as we make our way back, across the sandy beach and up the steep incline to the gift shop and, eventually, to the car.

A short distance to the west is Little Sahara (on Vivonne Bay) which, as the name implies, is a desert region with sand dunes and scrub brush. Speedy shakes his head over the fact that brain-addled teenagers have been given permission to "surf" down from the high dunes; it's not clear who would have the right-of-way in the event of a collision between a surfer and a walker. It's hot and my knee is aching, so I go only partway with the intrepid explorers (Speedy, Marianne, and Younes); they climb to the top of a dune because ... well, as George Mallory said of Mount Everest, "Because it's there." Lee stays with me as we seek some shade on the side of the car.

Fearful that we're going to starve, Jeff aka Graeme aka Speedy stops to get lunches that have been prepared for our party by someone named Pam at the tour company's office. (Yesterday, they had made a mistake and had not taken note of the fact that Marianne is a vegetarian. Today they are more careful. They've even noted that I have an allergy to cumin.) Jeff loads the coolers of food and drink on top of the Land Rover and we drive almost due north to Parndana Wildlife Park (where we arrive at 2:15), located in almost the exact center of the island, from west to east and from north to south. While the four tourists

wander among the animal cages, Jeff sets up lunch for us in the picnic area. There are many interesting birds, some in cages and some on the loose; kangaroos and wallabies (sharing open spaces with chickens and roosters, go figure); kangaroos also populating open areas outside of the fences; and, of course, koalas in the trees. We see a quokka, described in Wikipedia as "the only member of the genus *Setonix* ... a small macropod about the size of a domestic cat." Now you know. There's also a sign warning "Quokka does bite!" We think we see a wombat - at least we see the furry backside of an animal who is buried headfirst into a cave. The weirdest bird? For sure, the cassowary, a huge wingless bird with brilliant fluorescent coloration along its neck, wattle, and head.

Well, after 45 minutes of this, we're hungry, so we find where Speedy has put out the food. It is a (much too) elaborate spread, hardly what one thinks of for a picnic in the U.S.: chicken, salad, tabouli (sans cumin), bread, wine, lemon cheesecake. From 3:00 to 3:45, we stuff ourselves. Burp! But then it's time to move on. When Younes, the physician, asks me about my knee and how I've been treating the pain, he gets quite agitated about my use of ibuprofen, cautioning me that it can cause liver damage. He recommends paracetamol (as did the Adelaide doctor) but I counter with the new information coming out in the U.S. suggesting that the 500 mg dosage of the latter is also not good for the body. Oh, dear, what to do, what to do? One other piece of medical information, this one from Speedy. When Lee admits to having had diarrhea for the past two days, he says that it was undoubtedly caused by the plastic container that Lee used to put sauce on her meat pie at Strath Corner Bakery on March 16; he contends that these containers are not cleaned on a regular basis.

We drive directly north to the north shore and then to the west for Western River Cove. It's a beautiful spot, but again with the leg hurting I let the rest of them go down to the beach while I stay up above and take lots of pictures. From there, it's only a few miles to the east to Snelling Beach,* again very beautiful

*Speedy drives the Land Rover on the beach and then tells us a story about his most embarrassing moment. He had caught three salmon in these very waters but, just before heading home, he decided that he wanted a fourth fish for a friend. Having shed his wading gear earlier, he opted for the quickest way to go back into the water, in his swimming trunks. Afterwards, to avoid getting water on the seat of the Land Rover, he removes said garment. His wife says, "You can't do that - what if a policeman stops us?" "No worry," says, Speedy, we're only 10 km from home." At this point his wife's eyes cast downward and she starts laughing. "Was the water really THAT cold?"

but not kind to "crippled" visitors. It's now about 5:00 and Speedy is driving back toward the two inns that we visitors are lodging at, but on the way he stops because he has spotted a koala in a tree. Being the great tour guide that he is, he climbs the tree part way and pounds on it to get the koala to move. Even with my little pocket-sized camera, I get some nice pictures. Another 15 minutes down the road, Speedy spots an echidna on the side. He jumps out and stations himself between the animal and the woods to keep it from escaping and motions wildly for us to come look. One small problem (and this had been true all day long), the child-proof locks on the Land Rover prevent us from opening any of the doors. So he runs back to let us out. By this time, the echidna has moved and buried its snout in a termite mound. Nevertheless I get some pictures and Lee gets to pet him.

It's now after 6:00 (and we were due at Seascapes at 5:00), so Speedy drives first to Molly's Run, the B and B where Younes and Marianne are staying, and then to Emu Bay (on the north coast, far to the east, not far from Kingscote) where we have a reservation. We are greeted by Mandy Brown. (Her husband Paul will show up later). It's a beautiful place, laid out with all rooms having a view of the beach and water, and with a huge living room/dining room that leads to an outdoor deck, also with a view. I've posted pictures at Picasa. Like Speedy and his wife, Mandy and Paul had been farmers (sheep, specifically) on a farm that Paul inherited from this father. They sold the farm and bought this B and B from another couple.

Seascapes has three guest rooms; the other two are occupied by a South African couple (Yvonne and Darren) and their two sons (ages 10 and 12). She is a Methodist minister who sports a very short haircut (perhaps by choice or perhaps because she had had chemotherapy). He travels a great deal about the globe as a financial planner. The two boys are engaged in the conversation, up to a point; the older one

conveys a sophisticated world view, but one wonders how much of it is put on. The boys are home-schooled. The conversation at the dinner table ranges widely from politics to government to politics to government, etc. etc. There are more agreements than disagreements, fortunately. And the meal is excellent, prepared mostly by Mandy, assisted by Paul who arrives sometime after we do. We eat a salad of cherry tomatoes, halloumi cheese and asparagus (I do my best), then whiting, potatoes, coffee, cake, and ice cream.

FRIDAY, MARCH 21

It's a sunny day and it's supposed to be cooler than yesterday. My knee still hurts - I'll take Younes's suggestion to switch from ibuprofen to paracetamol to see if it will help. Breakfast is at 8:15 - cereal, yoghurt, bread, cheese, juice, coffee. I turn down the offer of something hot. The South African family checks out and Mandy makes ready for today's arrivals. Speedy shows up in his Land Rover, accompanied by Greg Snell, a 20-something Canadian who had won a contest ("the best job in the world") to spend a year in Australia as a Wildlife Caretaker; he'll accompany us today, take lots of pictures, and make notes for his report. He has some very serious cameras and has posted some truly brilliant photos of animal and scenery at his web site: <http://www.greggoesglobal.com/>

In a mirror image of yesterday's scenario, we're now the "seasoned veterans" who go with Speedy and Greg to pick up the new arrivals at the airport: Linda and Bill from Westchester County, N.Y. She's a retired 6th grade special-needs educator, he owns a company that does technical and marketing suggestions for a variety of large companies. The seating arrangement in the SUV needs to change. Lee had the third row of seats all to herself, yesterday, while Marianne and I sat in the second set of seats and Yunes sat alongside the driver; but today, Greg has taken over the entire rear of the vehicle because he's got all of this gear and needs to be entering things in his computer as we travel; in deference to my wounded knee (*pace* Dee Brown) I get to ride shotgun; so Lee and Linda (who is ... buxom) and Bill (who is ... well, large) are squoooshed together on the middle seats.

As was done yesterday, the new arrivals' luggage is loaded in the car and we set out on today's adventures. Our first stop (at 11:15) is the enormous Flinders Chase National Park, which fills the entire western part of the island, from north shore to south; at 327 km², it is nearly 10% of the land area of the island. A devastating fire in 2007, caused by lightning, destroyed a huge expanse of vegetation, but it's gratifying to see how much of it has grown back. We are heading toward Cape du Couedic on the southern shore, but stop at the Bunker Hill for views of the shore and of a nearby lighthouse.

From there, we make our way to the Fur Seal Lookout. To say that it is windy is akin to saying that the ocean is wet. In fact, it is very windy (as a picture of me at Picasa will attest). There is a lovely boardwalk (no plodding through sand today) down to the water's edge, from which we see that fur seals on the rocks and in the water. The wind is blowing, the surf is crashing, the seals are barking and braying, and my knee is hurting. But I persevere! The two most striking sights are (1) the froth and foam as crashing waves are channeled between rocks and (2) a rock formation called Admirals Arch, a testament to the power of wind and water (again, see Picasa).

We leave at 12:45 and arrive at Remarkable Rocks (also on the southern shore) at 1:00. I think that "Remarkable Rocks" is an insipid name, but in fact these rocks are quite remarkable. All of us have seen rocks, eh? But these are truly ... weird, almost as if they don't belong on this planet. The colors and shapes and, especially, their huge mass are breath-taking. I would have loved to have explored in/around/over/through them but my knee suggests, quite forcefully, that I should take a seat while the others cavort (to the extent that 60-somethings can cavort); of course the young and limber Greg is like a mountain goat, climbing and maneuvering over the rocks, damn him!

PUN ALERT: Many of the rocks are covered with red lichen. Lee: "Is that lichen?" Ron: "I'd liken it to a summer's day (as Shakespeare might have said)."

FOLLOW-UP PUN ALERT: Lee: "Lichen is a composite of algae and fungus." Ron, singing: "What's it all about, algae?"

We leave the site at 2:00 and arrive 15 minutes later at the Rocky Rivers Rangers Station in the national park. Here is where Speedy reveals a talent beyond what one expects for an experienced tour guide/driver/raconteur. He is a formidable chef. And so in addition to the many plates and bowls of salad and bread and veggies that he puts out, he grills some delicious steaks. With wine and soft drinks and coffee, it seems a shame to leave, but at 3:45 we do so. After a half-hour drive, we stop to take pictures of the Cape Barren geese, a rather rare animal that is found only in South Australia. Further on, we encounter many yakka trees (also called grass trees) that grow very slowly (about one inch per year) and can survive for several hundred years. The grass starts at ground level and, as the trunk grows upward from there, the grass moves up along with it. One of the mature trees, estimated to be 600 years old, has been dubbed Tina Turner, as the Picasa picture will make evident.

Thirty minutes further and we come upon several members of an extended kangaroo family. We are still near the south shore and in the Kelly Hill Conservation Park, most famous for its caves (which we do not explore because (a) it's getting late and (b) nobody even mentioned them). We drive through Vivonne Bay for pictures of the water and wharf.

A remarkable sight, that we'd seen several times earlier in the day and that I finally manage to capture in a photo, is the display of individual mailboxes in the rural areas. To make them kangaroo-proof, people have resorted to some imaginative enclosures: a bird house, a refrigerator, an oven, a washing machine. Speedy drops Greg off in Kingscote and delivers the four Americans to Seascape Lodge at 6:30. Mandy prepares another delicious dinner: an entree, then salmon, potatoes, salad, and dessert.

SATURDAY, MARCH 22

After breakfast, our new tour guide (Chris) gathers Lee and me. (Linda and Bill will be going with yet another guide, Greg (not the young Greg from Canada, although he also goes along), to see many of the sites that we had seen the first day. Chris is an expert bird watcher; he's already published one book about the birds of the island and is working on another.

Our first stop is at Emu Bay to see ... not emus, but pelicans. There are but a few here, but we'll see dozens more later today. We leave there at 9:50 and half an hour later we're at the Emu Ridge Eucalyptus Distillery, a little inland and south of Kingscote. It was founded in 1991 by Larry and Bev Turner, who discovered that they could not make a go of sheep farming (as the price of wool decreased); so they revived an old industry: they use eucalyptus leaves to produce the oil after much boiling and several distillation steps. According to a video promo, the oil is "... a very basic health product. It's great for the body and all sorts of cleaning. It's anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, it's good for all sorts of colds and insect bites. It dissolves all sorts of sticky things and removes oil-based stains." (Does anyone remember the classic Dan Akroyd-Jane Curtin "fake" commercial, years ago on *Saturday Night Live*, when he sits down for some cake and he compliments her on the delicious dessert topping to which she says that's it's also an excellent floor wax?)

As the Picasa pictures that I've posted from the company store reveal, this store sells not only eucalyptus oil (in bottles marked POISON) but also eucalyptus hard candy, native honey, olive oil, lemon cordial, eucalyptus soap, lavender oil, tea tree oil (also marked POISON), and eucalyptus body-crème (pretty fancy, eh?) Oh, yes, there's also emu oil that comes from a gland near the ... well, the hither portion of the bird's anatomy. In fact, there is a neurotic (or so it seems) emu in a nearby fenced in area, who races back and forth, rubs against the metal fence, and seems terribly distressed.

Chris now heads to that section of Kangaroo Island that looks like a pustule (see p. 34) at the far east that has a tenuous connection to the mainland (and could be a separate island if sea waters continue to rise). We pass a model of The Independent, built in 2013 as a replica of the first ship constructed in South

Australia; in 1803 the original ship set sail and was never seen again. We are now in the area called American River, named to commemorate the American crew who built *Independent* in 1802.

Chris points out several trees called drooping she-oak. We had seen them over much of the island. He tells us how to distinguish the male tree from the female; the females have nuts that are quite visible as drooping balls,* whereas the males do not; they also differ in color. He also said that the nuts of the tree

*Quite different from humans, eh?

are eaten by the glossy black cockatoo. (Did I mention that Chris is fascinated by birds?) There are nice views of the shore from Muston Lookout, and then we're down at the shore at noon and in the middle of dozens of pelicans, some on land, some in the water, some in the air. Who cannot remember the wonderful poem, attributed to Ogden Nash (and at least two or three others) - and in a form that resembles the following, but may be different: "Behold the might pelican, his beak holds more than his belly can."

At 1:45, we are approaching the Cape Willoughby Lighthouse at the eastern tip of the peninsula. While we get a guided tour of the history (it was Australia's first lighthouse, built in 1852) and of the different fresnel lenses, Chris busies himself setting out lunch on the deck adjacent to the lighthouse office. Lee and another couple* accept the invitation to climb the lighthouse stairs; my knee and I beg off. Our lunch is only

*They are 20-something Australians. Lee is astounded to learn that they've never heard of Flinders or Boudin. That would be akin to Americans who are ignorant of Columbus or Washington.

slightly more modest than the feasts of the past two days: beef roll, potato salad, green salad, dessert.

We depart at 3:15 and head toward Pennington Bay. On the way, we need to stop because a flock of sheep have escaped from what seemed to be a secure area and are meandering across the road. Shades of Scotland! I take pictures of the departing ferry and then it's back to the mainland and Duck Lagoon. There's a hide where one can spy on birds without being seen. Because my leg is hurting, I don't accompany Lee and Chris to a second hide, and maybe it's a good thing I don't because it's there, Lee thinks, that she is bitten by chiggers. (The nasty eruptions will appear in a couple of days, just as was true years ago when this happened to her.) And finally, we are back at the B and B at 6:00.

Linda and Bill are back from their tour. And there are new guests, also Americans, Terry and Gary from someplace near San Francisco. They are not "our" kind of people: he's somewhat gruff and uncultured and she's voluble and brassy. Like Linda, she is a retired school teacher. They'd already been through Melbourne and give us some suggestions about places to eat (they name two restaurants, neither of which we will eventually choose) and things to see (we *will* visit the Queen Victoria Market). Lee's description of Terry: "She talks endlessly - basically for both of them - and with little to say." Tsk, tsk, so judgmental!

Linda and Bill are doing an itinerary similar to ours. Whereas we're going to drive along the Great Ocean Road from Adelaide to Melbourne and, after a few days there, fly to Tasmania, they're going to fly to Melbourne, rent a car and do part of the Great Ocean Road, then spend a few days in Melbourne before flying to Tasmania. Although we do not connect with them in Melbourne (except by email) we will see them twice in Tasmania. (Bill recommends a book by Ari Shavit *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel*; when I get back to Gig Harbor, I request a copy at our local library.)

Conversation at dinner is more restrained than it was when only Linda, Bill, and our hosts were with us last night, but so be it. Our meal consists of shrimp cocktail, lamb chops, broccoli, cauliflower, salad, and panna cotta.

SUNDAY, MARCH 23

It is a cloudy, cool morning. Following breakfast, Paul drives Linda, Bill, Lee and me to the Kingscote

Aerodrome (a word one doesn't often encounter but this is its designation on signs) at 9:30. The plane loads at 10:10 (there is zero security, none, nada!) and leaves a little earlier than the announced 10:30 departure; in fact, it's wheels-up at 10:23. We have a bumpy approach through clouds to Adelaide where we land at 10:48, well ahead of schedule. My concern, based on our departure from Adelaide, that we'd have to ascend the dreaded 44 steps to the terminal, turns out not to be valid; instead from the tarmac, we do not enter the terminal directly but have a long walk outside, completely around the terminal, to get to baggage claim. And, as promised, along with our small suitcases from Kangaroo Island, the large suitcases that we had stored with the airline are also delivered. Such is not the case with Linda and Bill: one of theirs arrives but the other does not. (As we will learn later in Tasmania, the airline was terribly apologetic for having temporarily lost the bag; apparently the destination tag had fallen off.)

Well, we certainly know where the Hertz counter is, having been there twice in the past few days. Our rental is more to my liking, a somewhat smaller Toyota Corolla. We ask the clerk to program the GPS for our three destinations: the hotels in Mount Gambier, Apollo Bay, and Melbourne. I intend to use the device, once I can figure out how to operate it and, more important, to silence it when needed.

We are, of course, experts on getting through Adelaide and into the countryside as we begin the 430-km first leg of the trip. We're eager to do the Great Ocean Road (about which we've heard so much) but we also know that this first leg and part of the second leg is not along the water. In Murray Bridge at 1:00, we stop at a McDonald's for a pastry and coffee. It is hard to distinguish this from an American town: we also could have chosen KFC, Subway, and Hungry Jack's (née Burger King). Lee drives the first 190 km, I do the next 140 km, and Lee finishes up. There is some rain, intermittent, along the way. The scenery does not warrant a description here because it is so ... lacking in interesting content. (A contrary opinion: Lee writes that "the scenery is gorgeous." Well, as the French say, *Chacun à son Goût*, loosely translated as "[Elio] Chacon [an old New York Met] is standing in his son's goo").

AUSTRALIAN RADIO:

- On the way, we hear a female commentator on the radio who is convinced that men "get things done" in the two places that women aren't allowed: the barbershop and the bathroom. (Yes, we do get things done - e.g., a haircut ... and other "stuff" - but that's not what she meant.)
- Fans of Australian Rules Football are called "footies."

We arrive at Colhurst House at 5:30 and are greeted by Patty, the resident manager, and her "assistant" Mr. Smith, an adorable Smithfield Kelpie mix. She shows us the layout of the public areas, where we can get some coffee and cookies, and then to our room. The room is spacious and the furnishings are nice, nothing special, but what is beyond belief is the bathroom area (see Picasa). It is enormous. At the entrance is a stone sculpture, a kneeling naked woman; and then there are the shower stall, the bathtub, the sinks, etc. Even the skylight has designs painted on it.

We ask Patty for a recommendation for dinner and she suggests The Barn, about a from her 15-minute drive outside of town. The restaurant is attached to a modern guest house, which looks very plush. And the food at the restaurant is excellent. I have a prosciutto-wrapped chicken breast and Lee has filet mignon. Our tummies full and our sensibilities satisfied, we return to our room and (still in pain) I finish reading the Kindle edition of *A Study in Scarlet*, two days before Amazon is going to snatch it from my device. The book surprises me in that the middle section goes back some 40 years to Utah at the time that Brigham Young was leading his party to "the promised land" - three of the characters in London, 40 years later, were involved in great unpleasantness in Utah. It's clear that Conan Doyle had no love for (and probably deep hatred of) Mormons and everything about them. Fascinating!

And I make a startling discovery before going to bed: I've consumed all of the paracetamol that I had bought in Adelaide. I still can't tell if it's doing my knee any good, but tomorrow morning we should find a pharmacy before leaving town. Greg Snell, the young Canadian who tagged along on two of our Kangaroo Island tours, told me that one can purchase a combined paracetamol-codeine tablet over the counter (i.e., no prescription required); he takes them for migraines and offered me one. Ooooh, I've got a dealer for my illicit drugs!

MONDAY, MARCH 24

It's a sunny, cool morning. We are the only guests, so we have the breakfast room to ourselves. I have a fresh fruit bowl (a mixture of summer fruits like watermelon and canteloupe), cereal, toast, and coffee. Patsy offers to make some eggs or other warm item, but I stick with the above. Lee, however, does accept the offer of an egg.

As we are carrying our luggage to the car, a frightening thing occurs. Suddenly, from behind, a man on a moped zooms up the driveway, his motor (I mean the moped's motor) at full throttle, nearly hitting us. Is he a terrorist? A man suffering from road rage? A hotel clerk claiming that we stiffed them at an earlier stop? No. He is the postman, as we discern when he slips some mail into a slot and zooms away, again nearly hitting us. I realize that U.S. postal workers are bound by their motto: "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night ..." but it seems that Mount Gambier postmen might add "... nor people checking out of inns" to that list. I've omitted the most striking aspect of this close encounter with death: his outfit. Like the person pictured on this bicycle, he is wearing a blindingly yellow slicker. Unlike the person shown here, our man is sporting an identically-colored rain hat with a flap down the back to protect against rain, sun, bird droppings, whatever; and, of course, he has brilliant fluorescent yellow pants to complete the outfit. Is this an affectation only of Mount Gambier postmen? Nope. In a few days we'll see a similarly attired mail deliverer when we're driving south of Melbourne. Because I'm not quick enough with the camera to record either sighting for posterity, I've "borrowed" this picture from the internet.



I decide that it's time to come to terms with the GPS, so I look at what it suggests for the leg from Mount Gambier to Apollo Bay, some 340 km away. It offers distance and time estimates for four options: Fastest (344 km, 4:09), Economical (342 km, 4:12), Easiest (344 km, 4:11), and Shortest (326 km, 7:18). Now, I grant you that 326 km is shorter than the other three, but how in the hell can anyone consider an estimated time of 7:18 also shorter, I ask you? (This is no aberration: for the longer first leg from Adelaide to Mount Gambier, the Fastest, Economical, and Easiest times were all 4:50, but the Shortest was a stunning 10:15.)

We do find a pharmacy in town and, as Greg had promised, I am able to purchase the 500-mg paracetamol-8-mg codeine mixture (called panadeine) without a prescription, although I do have to specifically ask for it and, if I recall, reveal what country I'm from. Lee, always on the lookout for tourist destinations that must not be missed, learns that Mount Gambier is proud of its Umpherston Sinkhole! Well, who wouldn't be? So, of course, we pay it a visit. It's in a lovely park, but the walk to the sinkhole is a bit long so I lag behind while Lee (and camera) go to see it. According to a web site, "Umpherston Sinkhole, also known as The Sunken Garden, was once a cave formed through dissolution of the limestone. The sinkhole was created when the top of the chamber collapsed downwards. Now the topsoil down on the floor of the cave forms the perfect environment for the sunken garden. Originally beautified by James Umpherston around 1886, the sinkhole is open at all times and from dusk each evening the area comes alive with possums as they venture into the floodlit gardens to feed."

But we are not finished with Mount Gambier, no sirree. The city is also proud of Blue Lake. There's a road that goes all the way around the lake with various access points at which one can mount a few steps to get a nice view. We do. And it is, indeed, very blue (as the Picasa pictures will reveal). (Before going to the sinkhole, we fill with petrol: 1.539 AUD/L which is approximately \$5.35 per gallon); 37.55 L for 454 km is 12.09 km/L x 2.352 = 28.4 mpg.) Lee writes, "As we head out of town, we see a large flatbed semi, loaded with concrete blocks, a huge L plastered on the cab." They let a learner drive this?

AUSTRALIAN RADIO:

- A guest on a talk show says that 43% of Australians have at least one parent who is foreign born. "We are a nation of immigrants," she says.
- Most of the time, we are listening to one or another of the ABC (Australian Broadcasting System, I

assume) stations. The strongest signal is the one that is all news, interviews, and conversation (with no ads!!). Every thirty minutes, there is a five-minute segment for headline news. It is always introduced by an over-blown and pompous fanfare, much like what many of us experienced, lo so many decades ago, when movie theaters showed MovieTone Newsreels. For those who won't admit to being old enough to have seen/heard these gems, take a listen to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1Gt6hPuMaw>

On the drive south, we see three "formerly alive" kangaroos on the side of the road and one lucky emu who crosses the road right in front of the observant driver of a Road Train who applies his brakes and allows the animal to live for yet another while. The drive is pretty uninteresting - nothing of note to look at, no tourist attractions to distract us, and no views of the sea ... yet

Lee drives all the way to Port Fairy, about 155 km. We have now passed from South Australia to Victoria, so we need to re-set our watches ahead or back (who really cares?) by 30 minutes. It's a pleasant town with some interesting storefront architecture, which I capture on film. We have lunch at Rebecca's Café: Lee has a lemon tart, I opt for carrot cake; we both have coffee; I also take two of the panadeine caplets purchased in Mount Gambier. Stoked up on narcotics, I take over the driving and finally, at about 2:20, we are on what is officially called The Great Ocean Road. If truth be known, I'd rename it "The Pretty Good Ocean Road" because much of the time one is considerably inland and even when near the water the views are really no better than what one sees off the coasts of Washington, Oregon, California, and Maine. At 2:45 we reach The Bay of Islands and snap many pictures of the water and of the rock formations in it.

In Port Campbell National Park is a tourist attraction called London Arch. Its original name was London Bridge, because of its similar appearance to the famous one over the Thames. In 1990 the bridge collapsed. The pictures to the right, "stolen" from the internet, show the before-and-after of the natural feature. There's a juicy story that accompanies the collapse of the bridge. A couple had walked across the span just before the collapse; they were then stranded until a helicopter came to rescue them.



This was "big news" in the area and was covered in all of the local newspapers, radio, and television. The only problem? The couple were married, but not to each other. The spouses of the pair were, it is reliably reported, not at all happy with the sudden fame of the ill-fated pair. What's the famous line from Sir Walter Scott's poem? "Oh, what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive!" This seems like a warning to philandering couples. But do you remember the next lines, as imagined by one J. R. Pope: "But when we've practiced quite a while, how vastly we improve our style!"

Nearby is the Loch Ard Gorge, named after a clipper ship that ran aground in 1878. Only two of the 54 souls on board survived. Pieces of the ship (or what one is told are pieces of the ship) can be seen from land, but who knows if they're not random pieces of wood that just washed up on the shore. Another major tourist attraction along the road is The Twelve Apostles,* a set of limestone stacks, at one time twelve in

*According to Wikipedia, "The site was known as the Sow and Piglets until 1922 (Muttonbird Island, near Loch Ard Gorge, was the Sow, and the smaller rock stacks were the Piglets) after which it was renamed The Apostles for tourism purposes. I don't know about you, but I prefer the original name.

number but no longer. Because of wind and water erosion, there are but nine stacks (or eight, depending on how one counts). Nevertheless, we snap lots of pictures of all of these natural wonders (see Picasa).

After about 100 km of my dangerous driving (well, it's not *that* bad, but I do have problems with the right-hand drive and staying on the left-side of the road, all compounded by my lack of three-dimensional vision; and did I mention my drug-impairment?). So Lee takes over and gets us to our inn, Captains at the Bay, in the town of Apollo Bay at 6:30. Here the GPS really works well, because its voice says "destination is on the left" as we drive down a street; and "destination on the right" after a U-turn along the same street. Not

believing the electronic machine, we park on a side street and go to the office. We learn that the GPS was correct and that there was a small sign and driveway right where we were told was our destination.

Our room, alas, is upstairs (three flights, 24 steps) which is quite a haul for someone with a bum knee and heavy suitcases. The room is adequate, but does have two novel features: (1) the bathtub is on a ledge, right near the bed; and (2) around the wall behind the bathtub are two sinks (that's a nice feature) with overhead lights that are motion-activated. Most of the time, this causes no problems, but if one gets up in the dark of night and makes his/her way to the toilet, the lights helpfully come on; and then, just when one is entering the room where the toilet is located, they go off again, plunging the hapless person into complete darkness. Even more annoying: if one is standing at the sink and brushing one's teeth, apparently that's not enough motion to keep the lights from going off.

One other annoying feature: they charge \$12 for two hours of internet usage. If this were really for two hours of online time, it wouldn't be so bad; i.e., one could use it for 15 minutes, go away, come back later for 30 minutes, go away, etc. But no! Once the two hours begin, the clock ticks on to the end even if one is not logged on. This is a truly dumb way to set things up.

We plan to drive to Casalingo, an Italian restaurant, but some idiot's truck is blocking our exit from our assigned parking place. Having seen a Japanese man mount the stairs as we descended, we assume that he is at fault, so Lee climbs the stairs, knocks on his door, and is rudely informed that he is not the responsible party. Meanwhile, I'm resting my knee at the bottom of the stairs when a workman, who's painting the hotel, walks by. "Oh, is that your car? Sorry mate. I'll move mine right away." So we make it to the restaurant and it's pretty good; Lee has linguine; I ordered saltimbocca, but am informed that it's not ready to be served so I switch to some sort of duck dish.

Upon our return to the inn, an American couple has just pulled up and tried to check in. There's a sign telling late arrivers (after 6:00!!) to check-in on their own, and telling them where the room key is. The woman asks if we know of a place to have dinner (it's now nearly 8:00). I tell her that we were happy with where we went, but she'd have to hurry because it looked as if the restaurant were going to close down. Several days later, we'll run into the couple at Melbourne's Queen Victoria Market.* She tells me that they

*This sort of thing happens more often than one would expect. The most notable example occurred during our New Zealand trip in early 2009. Another couple staying at The Masters Lodge in Napier on the North Island were from Alabama, but it turned out that he had grown up near Knoxville and, in fact, it was his family after whom a suburb called Halls Crossroads was named. Six days later and 430 km away, now in Christchurch on the South Island, we see this couple in our hotel lobby. Later that day, we are in a small town 100 km from Christchurch and, you guessed it, we run into them again.

did find the restaurant and that the owner delayed closing until they'd eaten.

TUESDAY, MARCH 25

It is a bright sunny day, relatively cool. In the breakfast room, the sound from a local radio station is being piped in. We eat to the accompaniment of car ads, local weather, mattress ads, Lady Gaga songs, etc. Is this better than the techno-music that I've been complaining about? It's a toss up. But they do have a nice assortment of foods; I have cereal, toast, scrambled eggs, bacon, and coffee.

Here's a suggestion for an enterprising electronics whiz who wants to make a fortune. We need a *universal charging device* for the numerous devices that we carry with us when we travel. As it stands, I now pack a plastic bag that holds the chargers for the camera, laptop, shaver, cell phone (from Verizon, even though it doesn't work), and Kindle; and Lee has the chargers for the iPad and her cell phone (ATT, which does work). On top of this, there are the converter plugs for adapting U.S. configurations to Australian. And there are various cables (e.g., for connecting the camera to the laptop). Wouldn't it be nice to be able to charge and/or cable all of these things with one device? Yes it would. Please get working, you geeks out there.

We check out of the hotel at 9:30. Much to my surprise, the idiot hotel employee who was blocking our exit last night is, in fact, one of the owners. Today we'll continue along the Great Ocean Road, finally reaching Melbourne some 190 km away. Lee had read in a tourist guide at the hotel that on Grey River Road in the town of Kennett River (in Great Otway National Park, just 25 km from Apollo Bay) one is likely to find koalas in trees. Oh yeah? Well, we have to check it out. We find Grey River Road and begin driving up a road of considerable elevation; I have some doubts, as the road becomes increasingly less paved and more filled with gravel and sand. But we do see lots of people walking along, staring into the trees; undoubtedly they have read the same tourist guide.

After a while of very slow driving, we decide to get out of the car and walk. My knee says no, but my desire to see koalas inspires me. And finally, above a gaggle of tourists who are giggling with glee, is a koala, high up in a tree. I'm amazed that my camera actually captures an image of the animal among the branches and leaves. We walk a little further uphill but find no more koalas, so we return to the center of town (assuming that Kennett River even qualifies as a town or, if it does, if it even has a town center). And just as we re-join the main highway, there is a solitary tourist aiming his camera into a rather low tree. So we stop the car. And there, just a few feet away from us, is another koala. A crowd soon gathers around us, but I stand my ground and snap away, even getting a picture of the little beast urinating and defecating at the same time.*

*The witty Lee (taking care not to offend the animal by specifying its gender) has written about this in her journal: "S/he pees, poops, and eats leaves." As in the amusing book by Lynne Truss, omitting the first comma changes the meaning as well as suggesting something anatomically unlikely, even for a koala.

Pulitzer Prize for photo journalism, here I come. We stop for petrol but put in only 15.0 L at a cost of 1.589 AUD ≈ \$5.52 per gallon. Driving on a little further, we note that there's a gaggle (is that the word?) of tourist buses (and, obviously, of tourists) in the town of Lorne. We stop the car and Lee gets out to investigate. She takes pictures of several Oriental families feeding ducks and white cockatoos.

A road sign that we see very often is "Drive on the left in Australia" with a little pictograph for them what caint read good. Lee surmises that these are for the benefit of Americans and Europeans who fly into Melbourne and immediately rent a car for driving the Great Ocean Road. At a little after 1:00, we arrive in Geelong, a moderately large city (population about 230,000); the name is pronounced with a soft G, much like the French word *jeux*, and is an Aboriginal word for the region. It was (and is) a center of manufacturing and shipping and the site of ... (I'm so excited!!) ... The National Wool Museum, which (of course) we have to visit. I manage to find a free parking space (which, I later discover, is supposed to be pay-and-display - but still we don't get a ticket) and we tour the museum. There are elderly docents to relate the history of raising sheep and bringing them to market; there is a huge 1910-built Axminster Jacquard carpet loom that is cranking out a large floor rug having an elaborate design; and there is a re-created mill worker's cottage, ca. 1940. We stop at the museum's Black Sheep Café for coffee and a pastry before moving on. (Would it annoy you if I related that the sound system in the café had that damned repetitive music that has been tormenting us throughout the trip? Well, I don't care if it's annoying - I'm mentioning it anyway.)

My knee is acting up, so I head to the car while Lee walks a couple fo blocks to the shore to take many pictures of the beach, the buildings, a carousel, and the amusing bollards that are painted so that they resemble soldiers, band musicians, swimmers, and others. She also takes a picture of something that has intrigued us: there are Target stores in a various cities (there are over 300 in the country) that we've visited, but for some reason the large Target sign (with its red-and-white bull's eye) always has a period after the name. Various web sites suggest an explanation. Despite the similar color scheme, printing style, bull's eye logo, and merchandise, this is an Australian-owned store chain that has no connection at all to Target in Minneapolis. Weird, eh?

I drive the remaining 75 km to Melbourne. We are on the M1 motorway and as we near the center of the big city, we find ourselves in a horrendous traffic jam, all lanes blocked and moving very slowly. On top of this, the damned GPS voice keeps yelling at us that we're on the wrong road, that we've missed our exit, and that we should make a U-turn as soon as possible. On an eight-lane highway?? It's a good thing that I had consulted Google maps when we were still in Apollo Bay and knew exactly where to exit the highway and

how to reach the Crown Promenade Hotel, so we eventually pull the plug on Ms. GPS, an action that Dave Bowman would have applauded as he pulled the plug on the evil computer HAL in 2001. (When we get to our hotel room, I discover what had gone wrong. In Adelaide, when I gave the Hertz attendant the addresses of the hotels in Mount Gambier and Apollo Bay so that she could program them into the GPS, I also tried to give her the street address of the Crown Promenade, but she said "No bother, mate, I've got it memorized." Well, she didn't! I don't know which hotel's address she had typed in, but it's a good thing that I ignored the GPS's insistent instructions and warnings.)

We arrive at the hotel at 4:15 and check in. It's a nice modern place, except that it's part of a three-hotel complex whose centerpiece is a huge casino that operates 24 hours every day. The other not-nice feature is that they will give only 24 free hours of fast internet (like the other places we've been, this means 24 hours continuous from the time one logs on), *but* if one is willing to accept a slower download speed (i.e., no movies) we can have it for free. As we have no intention of downloading movies, we quickly take them up on the offer.

Because it's been a tiring day, we decide to have dinner in Mesh, the hotel's ground-floor restaurant and the same place that we'll visit for breakfast during the next couple of days. When we enter the restaurant, my soul leaps with joy (OK, an exaggeration, but ...): not only do we *not* have the pounding techno-music but in its place a piano sonata by Mozart. Ahhhh, peace and quiet. Alas, my bliss is shattered because after a few minutes the Mozart is replaced by VERY LOUD rock music. I ask our server if there's any chance that she (or the manager) could switch back to the Mozart? No. So then I ask can the volume at least be turned down. "That I can do" and so she does. When she returns to the table, I say "You did so well with the volume - how about now changing to the earlier sound track?" "Not a chance. You have to choose your battles." The meal is good: I have a salad of beets, chick peas, and walnuts followed by roast chicken (accompanied, I assume, by veggies and potatoes, but I don't recall nor did I write it down).

Back in the room, I do an internet search for something that Greg Snell (on Kangaroo Island) had told me about. We were discussing the bizarre nature of popular sports in Australia. He acknowledged that he, like I, could make very little sense of cricket. He did tell me that American writer Bill Bryson had written a dyspeptic commentary on cricket and he recommended that I try to find it. And so I do. It comes from a 2000 book, *In a Sunburned Country*, that Bryson wrote after an extended visit. Some enterprising soul, who had only casual regard for spelling, punctuation, and the avoidance of typos, copied the section about cricket and posted it online. And here it is - enjoy! http://www.wandererscricket.com/Yank_view.html

Bryson also can't resist revealing some of the weird names for Australian towns and cities. He writes, "Then, having nothing better to do, I leafed through the index and amused myself, in a very low-key way, by looking for ridiculous names, of which Australia has a respectable plenitude. I am thus able to report that the following are all real places: Wee Waa, Poowong, Burrumbuttock, Suggan Buggan, Boomahnmoonah, Waaia, Mullumbimby, Ewiyamartup, Jiggalong and the supremely satisfying Tittybong." Well make fun if you wish, Mr. Bryson, but we in America can boast of Soddy Daisy (TN), Bird-in-Hand (PA), Bulls Gap (TN), Beaverlick (KY), Unalaska (AK), and not far from where we now live Sedro Woolley (WA).

Today is the day that my three-week Kindle loan of four books ends. Presumably they'll be plucked out of my machine when I least expect it. But, by not connecting the Kindle to the laptop, I think that I can defeat the filthy snatcher. And so I boldly begin reading the fourth book I had checked out from the Pierce County Library, *Nemesis* by Jo Nesbø. This will be my third Nesbø book and the second in the series devoted to his detective Harry Hole. Lee has read many more of them and has recommended them to me.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26

Breakfast is served at Mesh Restaurant, the place where we had dinner last night. The good news is that the loud rock music is gone. The bad news is that it's been replaced by you-know-what, except that this version involves only two pitches: AAAA BBBB AAAA BBBB ... *ad infinitum*. I choose to have the cold breakfast (although we are eligible for either cold or hot): cereal, toast, cheeses, cold cuts, and coffee. I ask

at the desk if there's a physician associated with the hotel - I want to have my knee examined and Lee would like to get a professional opinion on the chigger bites from Kangaroo Island that are continuing to erupt and itch. I make an appointment to see Dr. Sam Birman at 2:30 in the Sofitel Hotel.

At 8:30, Sacha of "Oceania Tours and Safaris" meets us in the hotel lobby. His accent is unrecognizable (at least by Lee and me) but he says that he's a native Australian, half Aboriginal and half Anglo. He was named after a French film director and actor, Sacha Guitry. Why, is not made clear. In contrast to the city tour of Adelaide, this one is most *unsatisfying*. One reason is that because of morning congestion, he avoids traffic jams by going down alleys. Thus, we don't see most of the buildings in the city. We go through Chinese, Greek, Japanese, and other ethnic neighborhoods, then to the north of the city and past the university and Queen Victoria Market, then through the law district and the financial district, then further south past the Melbourne Sports and Entertainment District where one finds the cricket ground, an arena for basketball and hockey, an oval (for goodness knows what), and the Rod Laver Arena (where the Australian tennis open is held) ... Rarely does Sacha stop (or even slow down) to allow picture-taking.

OK, he does make a few stops. The first is on Lygon Street at Brunetti's, a chi-chi confectionaire and café for both take-away and sit down meals. Why is this part of the tour? Ask Sacha. Then we drive through a nice residential neighborhood with iron lace (of the type we first saw in Sydney) and then we're at St. Patrick's Cathedral, begun in 1854 to serve the mostly Irish immigrants. It's a beautiful place, both inside and out. While we are there, an orchestra and chorus with solo singers and a speaker are practicing performances of some liturgical works.

The only interesting tidbit from his patter relates to the naming of the city. A seminal event occurred in 1835 when John Batman, a prosperous farmer and businessman, struck a treaty with the Aborigines who lived in what is now Melbourne. The treaty was eventually annulled, but citizens decided to honor the man by petitioning Queen Victoria to call the city Batmania. Cooler heads prevailed and it was named after William Lamb, 2nd Viscount Melbourne.

The tour ends at about 1:00 and we're none too sad. We then take the free tram that circles the inner city (and that we'll use many times) to the Ian Potter Centre, located in Federation Square, which houses the Australian portion of the art at the National Gallery of Victoria. It's an excellent collection and features many of the 19th and 20th century native artists whom I encountered in Adelaide. Of course we look for and find a café for a coffee and pastry. After refreshments, we stop briefly at Kina Galleries, off the main lobby of Federation Square; their literature had led us to believe that they'd have a glass collection similar to Sabbia (p. 8), but the show room is blocked off because the new exhibit doesn't open until tomorrow.

MORE UNCHARITABLE COMMENTS ABOUT AUSTRALIANS:

- Americans are accused of being pushy and boorish, but there is a man at the museum café, seated a good five tables away from us, who talks so loudly that I cannot hear Lee. So there!
- During our short time (so far) in Melbourne, we make the same observation that we did in Sydney (p. 16). There is a dearth of dogs on the streets. When one considers that most Australians descended from subjects of His/Her Royal Majesty and that true Brits are dog lovers (in the cities, towns, and countryside, dogs are seen everywhere), it's most strange that this habit has not transferred across the ocean.
- Many Australians (we also noticed this in Sydney, Adelaide, and other places) have strong body odor. (Oops, I mean odour.) What do they think they are: French?

We hop on the free Circle Tram, but make the mistake of getting off one stop too far, for our 2:30 appointment with the Dr. Birman. First we need to find the Sofitel Building, part of which is a hotel and the rest business. I ask a doorman where Dr. Birman's office is and he leads us to a corridor off the main lobby where physicians, lawyers, accountants, and other professional people have offices. Dr. Sam, as he's called by his receptionist, looks like he came right out of central casting from a group of "my" people in Brooklyn. This image is belied, alas, by his Australian accent. His office walls have posters signed by some of his famous patients who, I assume, needed medical attention (or re-supplies of their drugs) when performing in Melbourne. He has signed posters of Mike Jagger, Bon Jovi, the Fleetwood Mac band, and a cartoon drawn by and signed by Bill Hanna (creator along with Joseph Barbera of such beloved cartoon

figures as Yogi Bear The Flintstones, the Jetsons, and others.) Although he doesn't ask me to supply a signed publicity photo (damn!), he does wonder if we have family in Melbourne. It turns out that some Magids (are they related to me?) are the developers for the numerous Westfield Shopping Centres across Australia and New Zealand; one of the largest, Fountain Gate, is southeast of downtown Melbourne and is situated on ... wait for it ... Magid Drive!

I tell him the sad history of how I fell more than two weeks earlier in Sydney, what the doctor in Adelaide found, what medications I was taking, etc. After examining me, he concludes that I do not have any broken bones, but just to play safe he sends me to an imaging clinic across the street; I return to his office with several x-ray images and he is satisfied that there are no breaks. He recommends that I go to a stronger medication called Panadeine Extra (500 mg of paracetamol and 15 mg of codeine) plus an anti-inflammatory called arcoxia. As with the lower strength panadeine, this one requires no prescription, but the arcoxia does. I get the panadeine at the pharmacy next to the x-ray clinic, the other at a pharmacy downstairs from Birman's office (the first pharmacy was out of the arcoxia). As for Lee's chigger* bites

*Both Lee and I had been bitten by chiggers when we lived in Knoxville. I guarantee that the result of these bites is intense itching for days over a wide area. There's a product I bought in Knoxville in the 1980s called, if memory serves, ChiggBeGone (or something like that), but Birman concludes that Lee needs no medication. When I told my old grad school friend, Tony Vellturo, that I had been bitten by chiggers, he chided me and said that they are called chegroes. Noted.

these seem to now be under control, but she decides to let him examine them and give his professional opinion. Interestingly, he had never heard of chiggers but a quick internet search, while we were in his office, let him know that they are found in Australia. The cost of all of this medical attention? Surprisingly little: 75 AUD for my office exam and 50 for Lee's; 90 AUD for the x-rays; 10.60 AUD for the panadeine*

*Oh, yes, the panadeine extra comes in a box labeled Mydol (not the same as Midol in the U.S.); among its many uses is control of menstrual pain. That's good to know, just in case ...

extra and 10.30 for the arcoxia. Were we getting such services in the U.S., I'd bet that we would have spent well over \$500.

We take the circle tram back to the stop closest to the hotel (actually, we make the mistake of getting off one stop too early) but it's still a bit of a hike past the train station and across the river to the hotel. My knee is hurting more than it has, so our walking progress is very slow. And on top of this, it has begun to rain. Fortunately we get only a few drops before we reach the safety of the hotel.

As I mentioned earlier, our hotel (and its two siblings) are connected to an enormous casino. To reach most of the restaurants and shops in the complex, it's necessary to walk through the casino for its full length - and what a depressing sight, it is! Mostly middle-aged men and women, almost lifelessly pulling the levers on the slot machines or listlessly watching the roulette ball or helplessly asking for one or more cards to be dealt, these actions do not inspire one to lofty thoughts. But we do make it through the gambling den to reach a Chinese restaurant that receives good reviews: Lucky Chan. In fact, it is quite good: I have sweet corn soup with crabmeat (delightful!) and lemon chicken. The only downside: the waiters hover over our table, eager to snatch a plate or glass as soon as we seem to have finished with it. The other downside: we have to retrace our path through the casino to make it back to the hotel after dinner.

In the afternoon and early evening, we had made email contact with Linda and Bill, the couple whom we met on Kangaroo Island. They are staying at the Hyatt, which is actually quite close to Dr. Sam's office. They plan to visit the Queen Victoria Market tomorrow morning, as do we. We make a tentative arrangement to meet there.

THURSDAY, MARCH 27

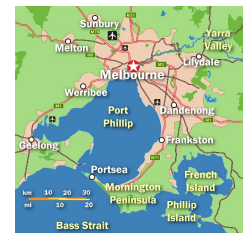
Again we have breakfast in the hotel's dining room: cold for me, hot for Lee. I also receive an email from Bill saying that he's going to spend the morning working and that they'll not get to the market until the afternoon, after we've already left. We retrieve our car from the valet parking and drive to Queen Victoria Market. The parking lot is huge, but the heavy rain impels us to get as close to the market as possible. Penny-pinching Lee has read that if one leaves the parking lot before 10:00, there's no charge. Good for her.

We enter through a non-food area, devoted to cheap souvenirs, kangaroo hides, vases, clothing, luggage, and assorted *tchotchkes*. It's a flea market, that's what it is. But then we enter the building with the edibles and it is a wonder! Display case after display case of meats, fish, fowl, fruits, cold cuts, vegetables, cheeses, breads, sweets, etc. If one lived in Melbourne, how in the world would one decide which of the many many beef sellers or fish mongers or ... to patronize? Among the more unusual items are kangaroo mince, young female pork chops, diced rump (the animal is not specified), banana prawns, raw bugs,*

*Here's Wikipedia's explanation: "Slipper lobsters are a family of decapod crustaceans found in all warm oceans and seas. Despite their name, they are not true lobsters, but are more closely related to spiny lobsters and furry lobsters. Slipper lobsters are instantly recognisable by their enlarged antennae, which project forward from the head as wide plates. All the species are edible, and some, such as the Moreton Bay bug and the 'Balmain bug' (*Ibacus peronii*) are of commercial importance."

kangaroo fillet and kangaroo topside, chock (not to be confused with chokoe, a gourd, which Lee describes as "a nubby bumpy thing"), pipis (which are cockles, which are clams) and numerous other delectables.

As we leave the market, the rain has picked up, but we are intrepid travelers and are not dissuaded from our next destination which is Sorrento, some 100 km to the south and at the tip of the Mornington Peninsula. Port Phillip Bay is enormous (see the map to the right). One can imagine that at one time the tip of the peninsula might have been connected to the mainland south of Geelong, making the bay into a lake. As we drive south, the rain eventually abates; I take pictures (to the extent possible, what with the rain and the moving car) of interesting free-standing Lego-like sculptures and intricate designs with clever words on the concrete noise barriers; none of these is suitable for posting on Picasa. To leave central Melbourne, we need to travel through a tunnel and highway, each of which is tolled. There is, however, no way to pay the toll unless one has a transponder. So we go on through, fully expecting the long arm of the Australian law to find us in Gig Harbor. And so it does! On May 13 (nearly two months after our "transgression") we receive a letter from Hertz indicating that our (i.e., Lee's) credit card is being charged 27.70 AUD (10.18 for the tolls, 2.52 for the tax, and a "service charge" of 15.00).



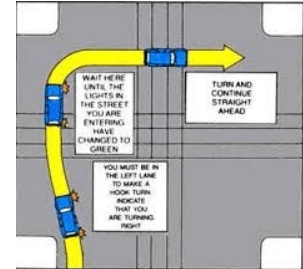
We stop a couple of times to take pictures of the bay and of the interesting variety of birds along the shore. Finally we're in Sorrento, very much an upscale town with clothing stores to cater to them what kin afford 'em and with some elegant houses and public buildings. A real find is a store called Mubble Gourmet Ice Creamery. It serves both take-out and in-store customers and has nothing but homemade ice cream in a wide variety of flavors (see pictures at Picasa). I ask the proprietor if this is the only location for Mubble and he says that it is. When his kids are grown and out of the house, he may decide to open stores in other locations. I'd wager that they'd do a bang-up business in the U.S., competing very favorably with Ben & Jerry's. (Lee has two scoops in a cup: hazelnut and blood orange; I have honeycomb crunch and it is delicious.)

SEXIST AND RACIST PUN ALERT: Lee reflects on her tour with Chris on our last day on Kangaroo Island. She says, "Chris and I were looking for a black cockatoo." Ron replies, "Many women your age are looking for a black cock or two."

On the drive back to Melbourne, we put in 5.0 L of petrol. We had been instructed to return the car "empty" but, first, we do need to make it back to the Hertz dealer in downtown Melbourne, on Franklin Street near Victoria Market. Despite the heavy traffic, we get there about 30 minutes before closing time.

And now I must describe the most exciting, the most thrilling, the most challenging, and the most frightening part of our journey: Lee successfully executes a HOOK TURN! Say what? Well this is going to be difficult to explain in words, but I'll try.

Nearly every major street in downtown Melbourne has tram tracks. In addition to the free Circle Tram, there are tram lines that fan out in every possible direction. Now imagine this: a street that is laid out along an east-west axis; it has six lanes; the two left-hand lanes are for cars traveling from east to west (remember, we're in Australia); the two right-hand lanes are for cars traveling in the other direction; and the two center lanes are for the trams, one heading west and the other east. So far so good. Now, imagine that you are traveling from east to west and you want to make a right turn



at a particular intersection - this will require your crossing two tram lines as well as two lanes of west-to-east car traffic. To prevent you from blocking the trams, what you do is approach the intersection and pull to the far *left*. (Why left? I thought we were making a right turn! Bear with me.) And you pull into the intersection, staying to the left. (This has the advantage of allowing cars that are traveling from east to west to pass you on the right.) You put on your right directional signal and then, when your light changes to red, you make a hard right turn across one lane for cars heading westward, two tram lines, and two lanes for cars heading to the east. And if all goes well, you complete the turn. Perhaps two or three other drivers behind you will also succeed in making this turn.

It all works brilliantly, except when it doesn't. For example, our tour guide Sacha was going to demonstrate a hook turn, but when the light changed and he turned sharply to the right, there was nowhere to go! Traffic had backed up on the street that he was trying to enter. The result is that he got trapped in the intersection, blocking two lanes of traffic. And he's an experienced driver! So mega props to Lee for having done a successful hook turn in late afternoon rush hour traffic. For a video showing how a local driver overcomes the fears of a passenger, see: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qoUPGLn38-A>

Back to the travelog. We ask Hertz to call a taxi for us (it's beginning to rain again). The employee says that that's not necessary - we merely need to walk to Elizabeth Street, half a block away, where we'll be able to hail one. Well we try. Several approach and go right past our frantic signals. I consider raising my pants and showing some leg, but decide against it. So ... we walk two blocks to Latrobe Street and take the Circle Tram, this time to the correct stop not far from the hotel. The knee is feeling a bit better (maybe) but still I'm taking the medication prescribed by Dr. Sam.

For dinner, we decide on a Thai restaurant called Lemongrass which is on Lygon Street, just two blocks south of Brunetti's. The hotel's concierge desk is not very reliable: in the morning, I had asked them to make a reservation for us; when we return in the afternoon and ask if it has been made, another person on duty discovered that it hadn't, so he calls and makes one for us. The same sort of thing happened the day before with a reservation for Lucky Chan.

As we are now car-less, we take a taxi which fights the evening traffic and takes 30 minutes to reach the restaurant. The food is excellent. We share an appetizer of Khao Pod Thod (fried sweet corn cakes); I then have Pad Thai with chicken and shrimp. For our return to the hotel, it turns out that it's easy to flag down a taxi and the trip takes only 10 minutes. I tell the driver about our difficulty in hailing a cab in the afternoon. He said that it's almost impossible to do so at rush hour, one explanation being that the taxi may well be on the way to pick up a fare who has called for a ride. The hotel's business center is closed when we get back, but we're told that the third floor lounge has computers, so we go there to print our boarding passes for tomorrow's flight. A couple of times we need to ask the lounge's manager for help because the machine is running Windows 8 and we can't get it to print or, when finished, to turn off. Troglodytes from ancient times, that's what we are!

FRIDAY, MARCH 28

We arise at 4:20(!) and check out of the hotel at 5:00. The reason? A private car and driver* will transport

*On p. 5, I mentioned that the driver who transported us from the Sydney Airport to our hotel was a man of very few words (to put it mildly). Well, in comparison to today's driver, the one in Sydney was a veritable chatterbox. Perhaps, because it's so early in the morning, the lack of conversation could be the result of their taking a nice nap while steering the vehicle on "auto-pilot"?

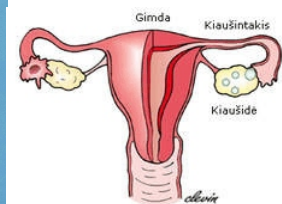
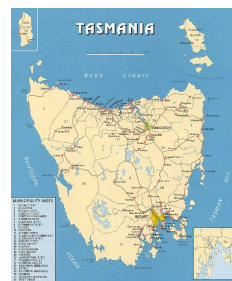
us to the airport in time for our 7:00 flight to Hobart, Tasmania. The drive takes only 25 minutes because very few people are on the roads this early in the day.

Southern Crossings has arranged for the Crown Promenade to provide us with a take-away breakfast, and indeed it does - it's almost too much to manage: three cardboard boxes for each of us, containing cold bottles of orange juice, a croissant, a sweet roll, and ham and cheese on a small roll. It's a bit overboard - and because we don't want to leave food detritus on the seat of the limo, we don't eat en route to the airport. When we arrive at our destination, we discard some of the goodies (the boxes are nearly impossible to manage because we also have our suitcases); and then, after printing our baggage tags and sending our luggage up a ramp to (we hope) the airplane, we find some chairs where we can sit and enjoy our meal.

The airport is all self-service - i.e., there is nobody at the Qantas counter to check our boarding passes or to verify our identity; nor are these documents checked when we pass through security. How refreshing! Apparently, flights within Australia are not considered to be high-value targets for terrorists. Not knowing any better (and well-conditioned by the tight rules in the U.S.), I remove my belt, empty my pockets, take off my watch, strip down to my New York Mets undies, and place the laptop computer and "dangerous" liquids in bins. Who knew that only the last two were required? Of course, living up to their rude reputation, two Aussies try to cut in front of us. Tsk, tsk.

Gate 1 (as the name implies) is close by. We arrive there at 6:00 but boarding does not begin until 6:40. The plane is a Boeing 737-800, with which we are all too familiar as it is the workhorse of Alaska Airlines in the U.S. Lee and I have aisle and middle seats, but when my "neighbor" at the window seat fails to show up, I move over. We have push-back at 7:02 and wheels-up at 7:15. It is a cool, cloudy day and most of the flight is above the clouds. A small breakfast is served - I don't recall if I eat something again.

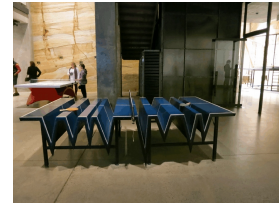
Let's have a brief lesson about Tasmania. I had mistakenly believed that it was an independent country, but in fact it is one of the seven states that make up the Commonwealth of Australia. Just as I compared Australia's shape to a kidney (p. 2) and Kangaroo Island's to a burst pimple (p. 34), I now contend that Tasmania looks like a human uterus. Of course, the comparison would be a lot better if only King Island and Flinders Island were to droop southward; and if the parts of the uterus had not been labeled in Lithuanian.



At the Hobart airport, the Hertz people provide us with a Hyundai Ellantra, a nice car of a manageable size (much like the Toyota Corolla that we rented for the Adelaide to Melbourne trip). The airport is 18 km east of the city, but our plan is to drive on through the city and 30 km to the north to MONA (Museum of Old and New Art), where we arrive at 9:30, thirty minutes prior to opening. I had first become aware of this extraordinary museum through an article in the January 21, 2013 issue of *The New Yorker*, written by Richard Flanagan. The guiding genius behind the museum is David Walsh, who made and lost several huge fortunes as a gambler, card-counter, and horse-racing enthusiast; and the collection is a testament to his eclectic tastes.

One can approach the museum by car or by ferry (painted with military camouflage - for whatever reason)

from Hobart. Entrance is free to citizens of Tasmania; the rest of us have to pay. The grounds are filled with exotic structures and sculptures, as well as ducks, peacocks, and chickens. Most of the museum is below ground and quite dark. Inside, there are paintings, sculptures, constructions (e.g., two ping-pong tables, modified such that it would be impossible to play a game, although some people try), and many electrical and electronic installations. One of these consists of two handles that, when gripped, are supposed to capture the beating of one's heart and, accordingly, illuminate some light bulbs; I give it a try but fail miserably, perhaps because I have no heart beat. I'm not sure that the Picasa photos do justice to what we see. Rather than describing everything, I'll tell about a few of the highlights.



Perhaps most impressive is a huge wall of falling water droplets that are lit so as to show words grabbed at random from most searched items on Google; I take pictures of it from several landings, both at the bottom and from above. Another, that stays with the visitor for a long time, is called Cloaca* Professional - it is a

*Lee's guess is that this is a portmanteau word made up of colon and kaka.

foul-smelling room that has several large separatory funnels, hooked to tubes that feed them and other tubes that evacuate them; inside the vessels are bacteria and enzymes of the type found in the human gut. Feeding occurs at breakfast and lunch time; and after the "food" is digested, it is eliminated later in the day - hence the stench!

An interesting feature of the museum is that there is no signage on the walls to reveal the name of the artist or the title of the work. Instead, every visitor is issued an iPod-touch device called the O. At the user's discretion, it gives the relevant details about each work and, then, if one is interested in further details it gives learned discussions (both in print and orally) plus commentary from reviewers. In addition to my so-so quality pictures at Picasa, you can view hundreds of interior and exterior shots at the museum's web site: <http://tinyurl.com/n2nowtt>

From time to time one sees that kinds of art that are expected in a museum: aboriginal paintings, for example, or a sarcophagus (and other antiquities) from Egypt. But then ... There's a stylus that traces patterns on a sheet of paper, said stylus being driven by a wind turbine outside and some 50 feet away. There's a library (with tables, chairs, computers, and books) in which all of the books are blank - their spines and their pages are pure white. Very easy to describe is a red Porsche that looks as if it had eaten several tank-cars worth of pasta; and you thought that only people were obese.

We sit for quite a while, fascinated by a six-panel video display (done in Sydney, I suspect) of street scenes, but nothing is normal here. The action (cars moving, people walking, etc.) is shown in reverse; and through the use of lenses and curved mirrors, all of the actions are grotesquely distorted. There's a huge rectangular room with rapidly changing displays on opposite walls of numbers, lots of numbers, numbers upon numbers upon numbers - this is probably what it would feel like if one lived inside a computer's cpu.

Although we wander through the museum for about three hours, we must have missed seeing many exhibits. One that I'm not unhappy at having missed is described this way by Richard Flanagan in *The New Yorker* article: "a lavatory in which, through a system of mirrors and binoculars, you can view your own anus." How nice.

And so much more.

Flanagan concludes his article this way: "MONA is a museum not of conviction and progress but of doubt and questioning, of despair and wonder, made not by committee, neither celebrating nation nor seeking to preach orthodoxy, freed from the desire to educate ... All that can be said is that David Walsh made something genuinely new."

We have a pastry and coffee in the museum café, then leave at about 1:30. On the way out, we pass two

parking spaces: one says RESERVED: GOD, the other RESERVED: GOD'S MISTRESS.

About 20 km from MONA is Bonorong Park Wildlife Centre. What a wonderful place! Kangaroos abound (and bound) everywhere! The first two pictures at Picasa shows the claws of a kangaroo: five short claws on the short upper limbs, three claws on the huge feet. The center claw of the three is much longer than the other two, thus allowing the animal to flip a bird (if such a cross-species allusion is possible) at rivals. With the admission price, we are given a packet of yummy kangaroo food - and the animals know it. It's amazing that they don't explode, what with every visitor feeding them.

One of the keepers retrieves Wally the Wombat, barely one year old, from his cage and brings him to us, wrapped in a blanket. Awwwww. A woman takes a selfie of herself and a kangaroo - really! (See the Picasa picture). The keeper then enters the cage with a Tasmanian devil. The little beast loves raw chicken and will jump up to get at it when it's dangled by the keeper.

The keeper then goes to another enclosure and brings out Luanna, a female koala. (There are no koalas native to Tasmania, but this one, and her male mate, were rescued from a fire on Kangaroo Island.) This animal is, if you can believe it, even cuter than the wombat. Awwwww. How many pictures can one take of the same animal? Well, since there's no cost of film anymore ... the answer is "lots"! (I count 19, but I doubt that I'll upload all of them to Picasa.)

There are numerous colorful birds in cages - and then another koala in a tree - and then a field of emus.

FUN FACTS ABOUT EMUS:

- Their stomachs growl so loudly that a visitor (me!) imagines that a freight train is bearing down on us.
- One bird, presumably the alpha emu, gets his jollies by pecking the top of the head of another; it makes a surprisingly hollow sound.

We find another Tasmanian devil, running around his enclosure frantically, behaving exactly the way Tassie devils are supposed to. On some circuits he/she is so fast that my camera records only a blur. And then we seem to be back at kangaroo central again - dozens of them, lolling, hopping, mooching food, and so on. One joey that we see is nursing from its mom. Awwwww. Then there are more colorful birds, and we are done.

We drive to Hobart and find our hotel, The Grand Chancellor. It's in an excellent location, right across from the harbor; unfortunately, the two driveways from street level to hotel (one for passenger drop-off, the other for valet parking) are completely full of cars, with no attendant(s) in sight; after sitting and idling for 10 minutes, we do the only thing we can - we leave the car in the valet lane, take out our luggage, and hand the key to the desk clerk. Our room is some sort of executive suite on the 19th floor, except that when one looks at the building from across the street, it's clear that there are not 19 floors. (In fact, the numbers on the lighted elevator panel change from 8 to 16 as one ascends. The reason for this? I have no idea. Surely numbers 9 through 15 are not considered bad luck in the way that 13 is at some hotels.) And to nobody's surprise, the "deal" for internet usage is the same as it was at Wilpena Pound Resort and at Captains at the Bay: 10 AUD for two hours at one sitting.

Although we never did connect with Linda and Bill in Melbourne, they call us at the hotel and we make plans to meet at Blue Eye restaurant, about a 10-minute from the hotel and right on the water. The reservation was made for 8:15; but when Lee and I arrive, we're told that it had been changed to 8:30, which is when Linda and Bill arrive. Their hotel had informed them but not us. Nice! The food is excellent, the place is very noisy and crowded, and Linda and Bill are excellent companions, mainly (perhaps) because they agree with us on politics, religion, education, etc.

SATURDAY, MARCH 29

After the hotel breakfast (which Lee proclaims as the best of the entire trip), we drive to Port Arthur, 95 km

and about 1.5 hours to the southeast. Some history, courtesy of Wikipedia:

Van Diemen's Land was the original name used by most Europeans for the island of Tasmania, now part of Australia. The Dutch explorer Abel Tasman was the first European to land on the shores of Tasmania. Landing at Blackman's Bay and later having the Dutch flag flown at North Bay, Tasman named the island Anthonij van Diemenslandt in honour of Anthony van Diemen, the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies who had sent Tasman on his voyage of discovery in 1642. Between 1772 and 1798 only the southeastern portion of the island was visited. Tasmania was not known to be an island until Matthew Flinders and George Bass circumnavigated it in the Norfolk in 1798-99. In 1803, the island was colonised by the British as a penal colony with the name Van Diemen's Land, and became part of the British colony of New South Wales ... Port Arthur was named after George Arthur, the Lieutenant Governor of Van Diemen's Land. The settlement started as a timber station in 1830, but it is best known for being a penal colony. From 1833, until 1853, it was the destination for the hardest of convicted British criminals, those who were secondary offenders having re-offended after their arrival in Australia. Rebellious personalities from other convict stations were also sent here, a quite undesirable punishment. In addition Port Arthur had some of the strictest security measures of the British penal system.

The beautiful site on the shores of Carnavon Bay belies its grim origins. There are remnants of buildings from the days when it was a penal colony. A boat takes us to Point Puer where the boys' prison was. From 1834 to 1849, 3,000 boys were imprisoned here, some as young as nine years old. A wonderful guide (from California!) leads us around the island. We view the ruined buildings on the mainland from a distance; entry is not possible because of a restoration project now ongoing. So, we wander through some old homes, officers' quarters, and church ruins from the 19th century.

We stop for a snack: cookies for me, a sandwich for Lee, coffee for both of us. Because my knee is hurting badly, I sit and watch a film about the history of the penal colony while Lee tours the museum. We leave at 1:50. On the return trip we stop to take pictures of Eaglehawk Neck, a very narrow strip of land that connects Port Arthur's peninsula to the quasi island to its north. (I call it a quasi island because its connections to the Port Arthur peninsula and the mainland are both essentially causeways.)

Back at the hotel, we reserve for dinner at The Drunken Admiral, right across the street. Then we go for a short walk to downtown: me to find a pharmacy to buy some more panadeine extra,* Lee to do a bit of

*The pharmacist registers some concern about my taking this medication for so many days, but relents and sells it to me. (I worry, too, but the pain is really bad.)

shopping at Salamanca Square while I rest my knee at the hotel. Last night on the way to dinner, we had passed this collection of galleries and it seemed much more promising than what Lee actually finds.

The Drunken Admiral is a real find. It is crowded (a good sign), filled mostly with locals (another good sign), and staffed by courteous and efficient servers, who are very eager to engage in conversations with the customers. The decor is decidedly nautical; the dim lighting, however, prevents me from taking pictures of the numerous displays (a lantern, a block and tackle, oars, etc.). The food is also very good. Lee has oysters Kilpatrick followed by a wok pot with scallops, shrimp, Asian vegetables and creamy cashew sauce; I have a delicious fish chowder followed by prawns (served in a pearlescent abalone shell) and chips. As we leave the restaurant, we run into Linda and Bill who had eaten elsewhere. We compare notes on what we'd done before going to our respective hotels.

During the night (at 5:30 am), Lee's cell phone rings. Has someone died? Is our home on fire? Did the Mets lose? None of the above. It's Ramona Sirois (from Heron's Key, the CCRC where we're planning to move when (if) it ever gets built in north Gig Harbor). She apologizes for waking us, but, of course, she had no idea that she was calling at 5:30 am *tomorrow* from her perspective. The purpose of the call? They want to use priority members (to which "select" group we belong) in promotions and ads about Heron's Key. So she wants to know if we're willing to be interviewed (by phone - but not at 5:30 am!) and to appear for a

photo shoot when we return. In a weak (and drowsy) moment, Lee says yes.

SUNDAY, MARCH 30

It's a cool and cloudy day. This morning, I have the full breakfast (hot eggs, bacon, beans, mushrooms; cold cuts; and toast). Alas, for the first time on this trip, there are no packets of peanut butter. Shocking! We fill the tank with petrol: 26.3 L for 303 km of driving, $11.5 \text{ km/L} \times 2.352 = 27.1 \text{ mpg}$; cost 1.639 AUD/L (approximately \$5.70 per gallon). We are heading to Strahan (pronounced Strawn), 300 km to the northwest, situated on Macquarie Harbour, an inlet off the vast expanse of ocean to the west. Indeed, if one proceeded due west from here, one would miss the southern coast of South Africa and finally hit land at about the midpoint of Argentina.

The roads are pretty good for a while. We stop from time to time to take pictures of interestingly painted homes, sheep, highland cattle, an upscale golf resort, and the Tungatinah Power Station, which we reach at about noon. What attracts us to it (and off the main road) are huge parallel pipes that bring water to the station for the production of electricity. We also take pictures of wildlife signs that warn about the presence of wombats, echidnas, and kangaroos on the road.

The driving becomes much more difficult, as we climb and wind our way through the mountains. At about 1:00, we stop at the Lake St. Clair Visitor Centre (which is in Cradle Mountain National Park), about 2/3 of the way to Strahan. We have a snack: Lee has coffee and a "thick shake" (which doesn't live up to its name - it's more like chocolate milk); I'm not hungry so I take a couple of sips of her drink.

PUN ALERT: Lee (upon surveying the environs) says, "It looks marshy" to which Ron (stupidly) replies, "Yes. And in just two more days it will look Aprilly."

It's a short walk and hike to look at the lake, Australia's deepest, and to take pictures. And then we continue our winding climbing/descending driving path, passing at one point several bee hives. According to a web site, "Approximately two-thirds of Tasmania's honey production is from leatherwood blossom ... Leatherwood honey has a strong flavour and particularly distinctive aroma. It is unique to Tasmania and has established a worldwide reputation as a distinct honey type." These are portable hives because the leatherwood trees bloom in different parts of the forest at different times of year when the light is right, so the hives need to be moved around.

PUN ALERT: Lee: "I thought we'd see feral animals." Ron: "Silly girl! The only known oxidation states are ferrous and ferric." (Oh, those humorous chemists!)

Lee has driven all the way to here (just past Lake St. Clair) and has done a wonderful job of not getting me carsick by taking the curves too fast. I relieve her for about 60 km; she then takes over and drives the rest of the way to Strahan;* we arrive at Aloft Boutique (well, that's its name) at 4:30. It's a strange place. We

*Strahan is not exactly a big place. In fact, it's quite small. According to the 2006 census (there's been none since then?) the population was 637. It attracts tourists and people who enjoy fishing.

are met (I won't say "greeted" because she was not very outgoing) by one of the owners who shows us to our unit: it's up some stairs and a bit rustic (with full kitchen facilities: refrigerator, oven, dishwasher, dishes, etc.) and, fortunately, air-conditioned. But the room is very large; there's even a washer/dryer in the bathroom. And unlike the big-city hotel (assuming that Hobart can be considered big-city), not only is the wi-fi internet connection free of charge but it is also fast.

According to the hotel information book, the names of the owners are Thekle and Paul Sanhueza. Her accent is middle-European. I meet him when I make the tragic error of walking too far onto the porch of their residence to ask a question; as he shoos me out, he pulls a cord across the width of the porch, saying "This is yours and this is mine." Got it! We are also directed to park on the edge of the backyard grass,

leaving room on each side for one other car.

It's a short drive (well, hell, the town is tiny) to Risby Cove, a pretty motel-restaurant combination. It's in a beautiful location, right on the water and is frequented by ducks and other water fowl. The food is also very good. We share an appetizer (a mixed plate with seafood, quail, pork, kangaroo, and wallaby). For our mains, Lee has ocean trout; I have two small plates: blue-eye trevalla* chowder; and scallops served

*Wikipedia informs us: "The Antarctic butterfish, bluenose warehou, deepsea trevally, blue eye trevalla, bluenose sea bass, or deep sea trevalla, *Hyperoglyphe antarctica*, is a medusafish of the family *Centrolophidae* found in all the southern oceans, at depths of between 40 and 1,500 m. Its length is up to about 140 cm, with a maximum published weight of 60 kg." And now you know.

beautifully in melted butter inside seashells (see Picasa). We have Australian wines: Lee a Sauvignon Blanc from Tamar Valley and I a Riesling from Clare Valley. There is a spectacular sunset over the cove that we view from our table in the restaurant.

MONDAY, MARCH 31

Well, comments on TripAdvisor had alerted us to the fact that breakfast would consist of small boxes of a few different dry cereals; there is also milk in the refrigerator, packets of instant coffee, and a heater for water. We won't starve. Had we wanted, we could have stocked the refrigerator with bread, eggs, cold cuts, etc. and we could have cooked the eggs and bacon or made pancakes and waffles but it just didn't seem necessary. Besides, we would have had more dishes, pots, and pans to wash afterwards.

Lee drops me off at the Gordon River Cruises office (we're required to show up at 8:00 to get the tickets for the 8:30 sailing) while she drives to the public parking lot, about a quarter-mile away. The woman behind the desk refuses to issue me the tickets, even though she has our names on a computerized roster and a positive ID from me. "I need to see your vouchers," she says. "I have no vouchers, nor were any given to us," sez I. Not having a cell phone that will connect to anything in Australia, I hobble (damned knee!) to the distant parking area where Lee is just now getting out of the car. (The delay? She had put 5 AUD in the pay-and-display machine, but it did not issue a receipt so she was writing a note to place on the windshield.) When I tell her what had happened, she says "We have no vouchers, nor were any given to us." Yup.

So we go back to the hotel (fortunately only a few minutes drive from here) and get the spiral-bound notebook that Southern Crossings had provided. Again, she drops me off at the office while she parks. Again, the woman is nasty and reluctant, but having paid a bundle of money for this cruise (and, besides, having no idea what we'd do in this thriving metropolis if we didn't get on board), we get insistent and she finally relents. Grudgingly. And makes me sign some sort of document that probably requires that I relinquish my first-born child (now 53 years old) if it's determined that I've lied.

Our ship is the Lady Jane Franklin II. Southern Crossings has put us on the very luxurious "Captain's Premier Upper Deck" with its spacious seating and large windows. We board at 8:15 and set sail at 8:30. On the early part of the trip, the boat proceeds at a swift pace. There is lovely scenery and some islands on this very wide part of the Macquarie Harbor; we pass a couple of lighthouses and trout farms. And we are served mini quiches followed by salmon on crackers, all before 9:00.

As we continue to the south and east, we finally enter the narrow Gordon River (at about 10:00) where top speeds are restricted to five knots. We skirt small islands, waterfalls, interesting flora - but most important we are offered a buffet snack at 10:15: cheeses, fruit, salad, beer or wine (at 10:15??), crackers, coffee. At 10:30 we are on the very still section of the river where there are gorgeous mirror reflections of the trees on the shore. Even my meager pictures at Picasa reveal this. Our first stop (at 10:45) is at Heritage Landing, where we are met by a guide who takes us on an easy hike to view the flowers, trees, and small animals. It is a very wet place, looking very much like Washington State's Hoh Rain Forest. Moss, mushrooms, spider webs, they're all there. The path is on a boardwalk, so we are hardly akin to pioneers who would have been

slogging through muck and mud.

We are back on board at 11:10, having been sure not to have left any passengers behind. At 11:30, we reach the furthest point we're allowed to visit because the river narrows to five meters after this. So we execute a U-turn (sort of an aqueous hook turn) and head back. To be sure that none of us starves, we are offered a buffet lunch when we rejoin the ship: cold turkey and ham, smoked wallaby, Greek salad, green salad, potato salad, and lots of other things in which I choose not to partake.

At 12:30, we dock at Sarah Island, which (according to a web site) was "a settlement which pre-dates Port Arthur by decades. Created to put the 'fear of God' into the convicts of Van Diemen's Land, this tiny outpost of 18th Century British penal history hides a fascinating tale of human triumph over adversity, brought vividly to life by expert guides." And we have an truly exceptional guide, a 30-something woman who, with her father, cleared much of the island, restored (where possible) the decaying structures, wrote the script that she delivers with passion and conviction, and together wrote a history of the island. From time to time, she enriches her tales with dramatic uses of unsuspecting visitors to serve as prisoners, guards, generals, etc. She tells about the many attempts of convicts to escape from the island, all eventually unsuccessful.* Most

*Lee, of course, has page after page of details on the history of the island, the names of the prisoners who led insurrections and escape attempts, the names of the military men and jailers, etc. This is possible because someone (i.e., Lee) took detailed notes while someone else (i.e., Ron) just listened to the talk. Oh, yes, Lee also had "outside" help - she bought a booklet about the history of the island, written by our guide and her father.

of the structures are nearly gone, although the parts of the gaol and other structures made from brick do survive. I regret not having our guide's name (Lee thinks it was Kiah) because she deserves a hearty shout-out.

PUN ALERT: We are shown the remnants of the wharf where once prison ships docked. I suggest to Lee that she do a pier review.

At 1:30 everyone is back on board (thank heavens we are served cookies and drinks on the way, lest we perish) and we return to Strahan, arriving at 2:30. We walk to a nearby gift shop (Lee is still looking for a nice present to bring to our neighbors who are watching over our house.) I'm feeling tired and my knee is hurting quite a bit, so we return to Aloft, nap for about an hour, and enjoy the air-conditioning while reading and using the internet.

And then it's dinner time. Strahan doesn't offer a lot of good choices, but Lee finds an interesting place on TripAdvisor (where it's rated #1 of eight restaurants): Bushman's Bar and Café. When writing this, I checked and found that there are about fifteen reviews written since we were there, all but one of them glowing and effusive with praise, but I'll be damned if I can understand why. Yes, the place has a weird "charm" - the proprietor, one Bumpy, sports an outfit that seems to consist of pajama bottoms (in a turquoise-and-purple camouflage pattern with lavender patches), earrings, a shell necklace, and a loose shirt. The menu is written on a chalkboard. Every person who comes in asks, as do I, what is "Chicken in PJs" and he replies, "Didn't your mother ever have serve you chicken pajamajam?" (which, I suppose, is meant to be parmigiana). Lee and I order local ales. She has quiche and Greek salad (which she enjoys very much) but I have cottage pie, perhaps the worst meal I've ever had in a restaurant: chewy, grisly meat, canned veggies, barely heated, along with a small hunk of corn-on-the-cob that was well past their use-by (or even its dispose-by) date. We return to our room and read until going to bed at 10:30.

TUESDAY, APRIL 1

After our "sumptuous" breakfast of cereal and milk, we check out (well, not exactly - to avoid contact as much as possible with her guests, Thekle had told us to just leave the key in the door, which we do) and head mostly east (and a little north) to Launceston, the second largest city in Tasmania (population just over

100,000), about 275 km away. The first part of the drive is, again, challenging as we weave along mountain roads, but eventually we're in the clear. On the A10 (for the first part of the drive), there is lots of road construction: we are stopped by no fewer than eight red light portable traffic signals as we proceed.

At about 11:30, we stop at Cradle Mountain Ranger Station. A free shuttle bus takes us from the station into the national park and, 24 minutes later, to Dove Lake. It is very beautiful and very still. We hike 0.8 km, mostly uphill on stones and rocks (some not firmly planted in the ground) to Glacier Rock. As the final portion of the climb is even more difficult, Lee goes to the top of the rock while I wait patiently below.

Walking down toward the bus stop, Lee stops me and says "Take a picture of that poop." This is not a command that one often hears, but one (i.e., moi) knows better than to ignore instructions barked by my drill sergeant of a wife. The object in question is cubical. And Lee knows that wombats produce cubic poop (ouch, it must hurt, eh?) because they live in rocky terrains and a round piece of poop would roll off a stone. "So what if it rolls off?" you ask. Good question! It's there to mark their territory. If you don't believe me, check out any of several web sites, including:

<http://io9.com/5872472/the-wombats-cubic-poop-is-one-of-natures-weirdest-superpowers>

PUN ALERT: As we are walking down the hill to the bus stop, Lee cautions, "Watch out for those two loose stones" to which Ron replies, "Well, as we are heading downhill, you might have said 'Watch out on that *two loose low trek*.'"

Back at the ranger station, we have a snack: Lee has a Greek lamb wrap and I have a blueberry muffin; we share a coffee. This park is really for serious hikers and backpackers, as revealed by the size and heft of the gear that they leave outside when they come into the café.

MORE AusSpeak: wile for whale, liebour for labour, sickened for second, stiddy for steady, leyeter for later. But interestingly, unlike the Scots who warn that wet stones can be "slippy," the Australians say it the same way we do: "slippery."

On the road again, at about 3:00 we are in the town of Sheffield, celebrated (at least in some circles) for the murals on many of its buildings. We are not impressed by the quality of the works (think provincial nostalgic folk art) and certainly not by the religious themes that several of them portray. We fill the car's gas tank (can we call it a "gas" tank?) with petrol: 35.5 L for 472 km which is 13.3 km/L x 2.352 = 31.3 mpg at a cost of 1.609 AUD/L (approximately \$5.60 per gallon). With the able guidance (if annoying synthetic voice) of the GPS, we arrive at our downtown Launceston hotel, The Sebel. It is considerably nicer than we expected, based on the reviews that we read: we have a suite with separate bedroom and living room, separate shower and bath (the latter makes Lee happy), computer/work desk, and air-conditioning that works very well. It also has self-service parking, although there is (of course) a charge. We would have been charged for wi-fi internet use, but the desk clerk tells us that it will be free if we join the Accor Loyalty Program. So now we are "loyal" to InterContinental and Accor - do you suppose that they know about our split loyalties? Well, sign us up!

One of the big employers in town is J. Boag & Sons, which makes beer and ale; as we head to dinner, we walk past their enormous distillery where the workmen are going deep into the night (as we'll discover when we pass it again on our return to the hotel). We are also intrigued by much of the architecture of the older buildings and plan to take more pictures tomorrow when it's daylight.

It's about a 15-minute walk to Me Wah Restaurant,* which turns out to be one of the finest Chinese

*Having decided, the day before, that the reviews for Me Wah warranted our going there, we tried several times on the way to Launceston to call and make a reservation. We would connect, leave a message, and wait (in vain) for a return call. Finally, once in Launceston, we succeed. We learn that their phone system is set up to reject foreign calls (as from a U.S. based cell phone).

restaurants I've ever eaten at. (They have another restaurant in Hobart, but we didn't know that.) We share

an appetizer called Crab Dumplings (described on the menu as "steamed dumplings filled with blue swimmer crab meat, pork broth, red vinegar & ginger dipping"). For her main, Lee has Ginger & Shallot Sea Scallop ("sautéed with ginger & shallot sauce, fresh seasonal greens"). I have King Prawn Shiitake ("sautéed fresh shiitake & steamed seasonal vegetables"). Lee finishes with Deep Fried Ice Cream ("a famous Chinese delicacy, ice cream covered in coconut batter, then deep fried, served with caramel syrup") but Ron does not indulge. Upon our return to the hotel, we print boarding passes for tomorrow's flight to Melbourne; use of the lobby computers is free to Accor loyalty program members, a select group in which we are devoted and enthusiastic, if not also long-time, participants. Back in the room, we read for a while before going to bed.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2

For breakfast in the hotel, I choose cereal, cheese, and cold cuts while Lee goes all-out for Eggs Benedict. There is a light rain, as we walk a few blocks downtown to Tasmanian Design Centre,* part showroom

*Some of the goods for viewing and for sale are shown at the Picasa site. Others can be seen at the firm's web site <http://designtasmania.com.au/shop/>

and part museum. They have a superb collection of very modern tables, chairs, and beds (all made from Tasmanian wood), as well as kitchen ware, art glass, and jewelry. Lee purchases a bowl that is made by a 3-D printer from polymeric materials and crushed macadamia shells and has it shipped to our home.

It's raining harder as we make our way back to the hotel: we take pictures of the commercial buildings, gates, churches, and hotels. Halfway back to the hotel, we split: I continue limping back while she visits a wool store. On her return trip to the hotel, she takes a good many more pictures of the interesting downtown buildings.

We check out of the hotel at noon. Because our flight to Melbourne is not until 5:00, we decide to drive north along the west bank of the Tamar River just to see what we can see. Unlike our first two car rentals for which we were instructed to return with an empty (or nearly so) tank of petrol, this one requires us to fill the tank. We are a bit low after yesterday's long drive, so we add about 15 L as we begin our drive.

It's a hazy, foggy, cloudy, drizzly day with a temperature of about 20°C (reminds us of Seattle!) but we do take lots of pictures of the river and surroundings. To get closer to the water and beaches, we leave the A7 highway and travel on truly minor roads. About halfway to the end, we cross over the water and proceed north along the east shore to the Georgetown (which, upon reflection, doesn't seem to have been worth the effort). We return through Launceston and then south to get to the airport where we arrive at 2:30. (We top off the tank at a petrol station right nearby.)

We park the car in one of the spaces allocated for Hertz rentals, then walk to the terminal to turn in the keys and get a receipt. There is only one clerk on duty; he is dealing with a young Asian couple who have a very limited command of English. I feel terribly sorry for these tourists who probably feel as "lost" as I often do when confronted by a clerk whose only language is French or German or whatever. A family in line ahead of us gets frustrated with the wait; they bail out and go to the Avis counter. But we have no choice but to wait ... and wait ... and wait. When finally we reach the desk, we are told that all we have to do is drop the keys in a box; the bill, we are told, "will come later." Lee asks the obvious question, "Why don't you post a sign indicating that car-return can be accomplished simply by dropping the keys in a box?" He responds with a Gallic shrug, even though we are not in France.

It's too early to check in at the desk, so we stop and have a snack. The airport terminal is surprisingly modern and well laid out, considering the modest size of the city. After a while, we make our way to the Qantas desk, check in, leave our luggage, and head to the gate. As we've come to expect, security is minimal: no checking of I.D.s and only removal of the laptop from the carry-on luggage. We board the plane at 4:40, a turbo prop Bombardier Q400 with 2-2 seating throughout, capacity 74 passengers. We are held at

the gate by a delay issued by the Melbourne airport, but finally we leave the gate at 5:20 and are air-borne five minutes later.

It's a short flight, but the attendants do manage to distribute a snack: a cardboard box with local scenes (varying from passenger to passenger), containing celery and carrot pieces, sauce (curry!), soy chips, ice water, and something sweet (which I cannot decipher from my notes). It's clear that they don't want you to gain weight during the flight, lest the plane become too heavy to fly. Or something. We land at Melbourne at 6:30, collect our luggage, and are met by a driver named Adam. In striking contrast to the drivers who picked us up at the Sydney airport and who delivered us to Melbourne's just last week, this man is talkative. Oh, my, is he talkative! We learn that his parents came from Turkey; he also has a bit of an accent, but says that he was born here. He doesn't like taxes (this is news?); and he doesn't like government regulation; and he doesn't like Australia's immigration policy. As we enter the city, he gives us a better touristic spiel than we got from the Melbourne guide whom we had hired on March 26. And he tells us an interesting story about one of his flights to Turkey to visit relatives: there was a medical emergency on board and he assisted the crew in getting the afflicted passenger to the crew's resting quarters in the belly of the plane. Who knew?

We check in at the old familiar Crown Promenade, go to the third-floor lounge to print our boarding passes*

*Good old Qantas! They require us to enter all of our emergency contact information, even though we had done this before leaving the U.S.

for tomorrow (as was true last Friday, we need the assistance of the man on duty to get the Windows 8 operating system to work for us and to get the printer to respond). We have dinner at the hotel's restaurant, Mesh, where we ate on our first night in Melbourne. For starters, we each have "Roast beetroot, chick peas, spinach and walnut salad with honey thyme dressing." For her main, Lee has Hokkien Mee ("Stir-fried Hokkien noodle with chicken, shrimps, spring onion and bok choy in soy and oyster sauce") while I have Penne Bolognese.

Our room is not the same as the one we had last week (no surprise) but the bad news is that the thermostat for the air-conditioner doesn't work. At least we can't get it to work. There is a temperature dial to turn, but no markings for degrees and no indication of which way gives hot, which way gives cool. (Our room last week had a modern electronic unit that displayed the temperature settings.) So the night is spent in a too-warm room with our covers thrown off. At one point during the night, I get up and shut off the fan which, I'm convinced, is blowing only warm air on us.

THURSDAY, APRIL 3

Having packed out suitcases in "airplane" mode last night, we rise early, have breakfast when Mesh opens at 6:30, check out of the hotel, and are met by our driver at 7:00. On March 28, I noted that the driver was a man of very few words. Very few. Well today's is even more so! What is it with these ultra-laconic drivers? Do they resent having to get up so early? Do they hate American tourists? Who knows? But, at any rate, we get to the airport at 7:30, plenty early for our 10:10 departure.

The airport is very crowded, principally because of flights to Malaysia and Singapore whose passengers seem to have an inordinate number of pieces of luggage per person. And in contrast to the truly smooth sailing for our *intra*-Australia flights (with minimal airport security), this time we are on a very long line to check our baggage (even though we already have our boarding passes), then another very long line for security screening of carry-ons, and yet another long line for passport screening at customs.

As was true on several earlier occasions, the ugly Australian penchant for cutting into lines is in evidence: a man tries to cut in front of Lee but she body-checks him back to the exit doors; and because an Asian family with children and luggage doesn't move fast enough, a woman ducks under the webbing that is separating the lanes and cuts in front of them. It takes more than an hour, but we get to the gate at 8:40, are allowed

inside the gate at 9:30 (and told to take a seat), but are not allowed to board the plane until 9:50.

As was the plane from Los Angeles to Sydney, this is an Airbus A380-800 with two decks. Again, we have premium economy seats on the upper deck, so we enter the plane from an upper ramp. And, as before, we parade through business class (with its 2-2-2 seating) to our section which is 2-4-2. Although our scheduled departure is 10:10, we are still at the gate at 10:15 when the captain announces that Los Angeles won't allow us to open our doors at LAX until 6:30 am; were we to leave Melbourne on time, we'd arrive in the U.S. too early.

When doing the pre-flight safety announcement, one of the flight attendants says "For your safety, we don't allow anyone, including children, to sleep on the floor." Good! Well, it's only a short delay: push-back is at 10:30 and the plane is wheels-up at 10:50. We are almost immediately into the clouds, which is too bad because there will be considerable flying over land (including over Sydney) before we reach the ocean. And the early part of the flight is somewhat bumpy (an unpleasant reminder the proprietor at Bushman's Bar and Café, where I had terrible dinner on March 31.) The captain announces that the flying time to Los Angeles will be 13 hr 13 min (how symmetrical!)

On the flight from Los Angeles to Sydney, I never made use of the "entertainment system" built into each seat. I usually prefer reading to watching movies, TV shows, comedy routines, etc. But this time I decide to see if I can succeed at any of the games that are part and parcel of these systems. On earlier flights over the past couple of years, Lee and I have failed miserably at their version of mini-golf, so (naturally) I download it first. Well, things are no better. Not only is its behavior kludgy (I don't know if that's how to spell it, but I mean lethargic, unresponsive, much like a college sophomore) as the electronic golf ball takes "forever" to finally settle down and permit the next shot, but I'm also awful at judging the angles and how hard to strike the white orb. So I give up and turn to reading.

At 11:30, the flight attendants distribute pretzels and almonds along with one's drink of choice. A while later, we are served lunch (or is it dinner?). I have a nice green salad, then roast pork* with "spiced red cabbage,

* So what's a nice Jewish boy doing eating pork? Well the other choice is chicken (which I usually love) but it is described as "Peri Peri Chicken with Pilaf Rice." What is this "Peri Peri"? Lee rescues me by warning that it has things that my delicate constitution considers no-nos. And she's right, as I learn when I can consult the internet: it's loaded with chillies and peppers and is served at various Portuguese, African, and Oriental restaurants.

crispy potatoes, and sautéed apples in cider sauce," and ice cream for dessert. Following lunch, I resume reading my Jo Nesbø book on the Kindle and finish it at 3:45 (still on Melbourne time). I try to sleep, but manage only about 20 minutes. Oh, well. I look outside and see that we are now flying over the ocean. Boring!

It's time to re-set my watch to PDT: 10:15 pm on Wednesday, April 2. I think. When we left the U.S., the time differential was that Australia was 19 hours ahead of Seattle; now it's only 18 hours ahead because the U.S. changed to DST and Australia remained on DST. (Those numbers, of course, are 18.5 and 17.5 if one is talking about Adelaide and Kangaroo Island.)

AUSTRALIAN WORDING: Lee shows me the credit card from the BP station in Mount Gambier. Printed at the bottom is "Denotes items which attract GST" and there's an asterisk next to the candy bar but not the petrol. All well and good. But why the word "attract"?

I read *Progressive* magazine, but when I get sleepy I shut my eyes at midnight. I sleep for only 20 minutes! Damn!! So I begin one of the non-Kindle books that I had brought, Jane Gardam's *Last Friends*, the conclusion of the trilogy that began with *Old Filth* and continued with *The Man in the Wooden Hat*. I thought that the first two were superb and I'm eager to get into this new one. (There'll be no more in this series. Gardam is in her 80s and has no intention of adding to the story of the lawyer Sir Edward Feathers, his wife, and his arch enemy/friend Terry Veneering, also a lawyer. All three are slim volumes, but packed with

loving detail and insight.) At 1:30, sleepiness again intrudes, so I close the book, turn off the light, recline the seat, and close my eyes ... for all of 20 minutes!

So I return to the game console and, having done so miserably at golf, I try a game that does not depend on digital dexterity. I decide to play chess. My first game is an interesting one: my cyber opponent and I get to the middle game and he has an obvious checkmate available in one move that he does not pursue. Why? So I continue playing and manage to checkmate him. Hey, this is the kind of game I like. So "we" play again and I lose. Oh dear.

Breakfast is served at 4:15 am: along with juice and a muffin, I have "Leg Ham and Gruyère Crêpe with Slow Roasted Tomatoes" which I quote in full because (a) I have no idea what "leg ham" is and (b) it gives me the chance to show off my ability with French accent marks. Sacre bleu! Just before 6:00 we begin our descent (there's a beautiful red sunrise that lights up the horizon) and are on the ground at 6:32 and at the gate at 6:45.

And I'm still coping with the conundrum of how we could have left Melbourne at 10:10 am on Thursday, April 3 and arrive at Los Angeles at 6:30 am on the same day! This is just not right! But as nobody else seems concerned by it, I suppose that I should just accept it ... even if it's wrong.

Re-entering the U.S. takes time. We have a considerable wait in line to get to passport control. Then to collect our luggage - well ... we could have been lucky and found ours among the first few to come down the chute or we could have been unlucky and had to wait until nearly every suitcase from the 500 passengers had arrived. Of course, it was the latter. By this time, the exit lines through Customs had grown to excessive length (and our passage was made even slower by the dogs that sniffed each suitcase, purse, carry-on, and male crotch). The good news is that we could then deposit the checked luggage on a conveyor belt that would send them to the gate for Alaska Flight 461.

We take the bus to Terminal 6 (no fire, this time - see p. 3) but we do have to pass through security again. Having been accustomed to the polite behavior of security agents in Australia, it was a rude reminder of where I now was when a TSA agent barked at me for putting my belt in the same bin as my laptop. Lee pays a few dollars to get us admitted to the Alaska Airlines Board Room (sounds fancy, but just a lounge) which is, truth to be told, quite ordinary and much too warm. Besides the food selection is poor and the quantities small.

My cell phone is now working! Well, of course it is. (On April 7, I'll engage in a Live Chat with Verizon, telling them how pissed off I am at not having been able to connect to a network in Australia, despite their many assurances. My chat room BFF "guarantees" that I'll encounter no problems when in Europe this coming summer. I reply that if there's no connectivity, I'll cancel my plan and switch to ATT. So there!) I call Gloria at Harbor (thank goodness I no longer have to type HarboUr) Taxi to tell her that we're in Los Angeles; she says that she won't be at SeaTac but her daughter, Cynthia, will be.

The flight to Seattle is uneventful. We retrieve our luggage and call Cynthia, who is waiting in the cell phone lot, to ask her to pick us up. In contrast to her taciturn brother who took us to the airport on March 4, she is a veritable chatterbox, going on and on, from topic to topic, leaving Lee and me quite breathless. (At least, unlike Ken, who drove us to the airport on March 4, she doesn't extol the virtues of Rush Limbaugh.) When I was young, the standard comment about talkative people would be, "She/he must have been vaccinated with a phonograph needle." Alas, a young person in 2014 would reply, "What's a phonograph? And why does it have a needle?"

On our past extended overseas trips, I've asked the Gig Harbor post office to hold our mail, then deliver it on the day we return. This time there was a complication: the post office will hold the mail for a maximum of 30 days, but we are planning to be away for longer than that. So I asked our neighbors, the Manskes, to collect our mail for the first seven days; and I then asked the post office to hold mail from that day until our return. So I am disappointed, when arriving home, not to see the large plastic bin in which they always deliver the accumulated mail. Had the post office failed for the first time ever? No, they had not. Our cleaning woman

Jana Jones, who works for us on Thursday mornings, was present when the mail was delivered, so she brought it inside. All is well.