

Hi all

This is our first monthly email to let you all know how we are and where we are on our big trip.

We hope this email finds you all well and not suffering too much with the winter weather.

Other than the fact that I badly twisted my ankle two days before we left Canberra, we had no other problems with take off. This lasted for approximately 3 hours! We stopped in Cooma for breakfast after leaving Canberra at approximately 7am. We had to resort to Macdonald's for breakfast (ugh!!) because we could not find a parking spot for our rig and it had started to rain. On our way into Cooma, Norm did say it looked like it was either going to rain or snow. Little did we realise that by the time we reached Nimmitabel the snow would be our first obstacle on the trip - we wondered why all those cars that were passing us the other way were covered in snow! We had to wait in Nimmitabel for about 2 plus hours, waiting for Brown Mountain and/or the road to Bombala to be reopened - they were closed due to snow, land slide and/or truck accidents. Our friends, Maureen and Joe, were about an hour behind us and they were stopped at Cooma. Eventually, they opened the road and we scrambled to get in line to go down the mountain. Norm decided Bombala was a better bet - he was right as we were about half way to Bombala and we heard on the CB that Brown Mountain had been closed again. We did the rest of the trip without further incident and arrived in Merimbula about 2.30pm. Unfortunately, our friends Maureen and Jo had to return to the ACT and travel via Clyde Mountain and come along the coast to Merimbula - they arrived around 7pm tired and hungry which was rectified with a couple of drinks, a good meal and some good jazz at the RSL.

The Jazz Festival in Merimbula was as good as usual and a great time was had by all. We decided to stay couple of extra days in Merimbula to finally unwind after all the lead up to leaving on our big trip - my ankle also needed some down time.

Victoria:

We moved on to Lakes Entrance for 3 days - we were held up in two spots on the way - one for a landslide and one for a truck that was resting on its mirrors. Weather is generally cold, wet and windy and my electric blanket and the heated car seat have now become my new best friends (NBF). The site was so tight in the park at Lakes Entrance I did not get much sleep the night before we left because I was worried Norm would not be able to get the caravan out without hitting anything - no worries, he did well and, he did not hit anything.

We decided to go to Phillip Island and we were there for 3 days - cold, wet and windy and I still love my NBFs. Weather was so bad we did not do much here although we did spend some time at the Vietnam Veterans War Museum - very interesting. On our last night the manager came and suggested we move the caravan as we were out in the open and winds of 120 km were predicted - we moved in about 15 minutes to a sheltered spot, then went out to dinner to get over it. We were planning to travel to Geelong by road the next day but the rain was so bad we decided instead to take the ferry from Sorento to Queenscliffe - it was a good crossing and certainly cut the travel time.

We spent 5 days in Geelong visiting Norm's Mother. Enjoyed a relaxing time - still cold, wet and windy. We had lunch with the extended family before leaving. We were disappointed that we could not do the flight over the 12 Apostles while we were here - weather was just too bad. We had a look at some new caravans while we were here though and I found one I really, really, really like - have to work on Norm over the next 14 months.

Moving down the Great Ocean Road - a tremendous trip between Geelong and Laver's Hill - sunshine finally. Then, cold wet and windy AGAIN! We decided to stay the night at Port



Campbell - one night does not allow for much comment other than I have never seen a boggier caravan site/park. Norm had trouble getting us out of the site and we heaved a huge sigh of relief when he was successful (owners said that they had 5 inches of rain in the last week).

Portland and the first of concrete slabs in a caravan park since Merimbula - yahoo - we stayed here for 3 days and we found a great coffee shop opposite the marina. We saw a couple of whales in the distance and when we went to the wharf to watch the fisherman bring in their catch (Yellow fin Tuna weighing 15-



20 kgs each), there was a family of sea lions and a stingray lining up for a feed (pictures). We finally had a few days of no rain and we were able to have a cleaning bee - Norm washed the caravan and the car and I cleaned inside the caravan. One night while we were here the local possums decided to have a shindig behind our caravan at about midnight - it sounded like World War III! Norm indulged his passion for checking out the Light Industrial Areas (don't ask why, it is a male thing) and we had to sit for lengthy periods so he could find out how they unload the big semis carrying woodchip.



South Australia:

We stayed at Mount Gambier 4 nights - home of the Blue Lake - the lake is not blue at this time of the year though, more like black. I really like it here though - a lot of interesting things to see and do, although the weather is still cold, wet and windy. There are some really beautiful old homes here and even a lot of the new homes that are being built are in the old style. Everything is lush and green and the rain stopped long enough for me to go to the Umpherston Sinkhole which is landscaped into a beautiful garden/picnic/barbecue area - the lillies are just starting to bloom.





We travelled down Highway One (Princes Hwy) to Millicent and then the Southern Ports Highway to Southend, Beachport and Robe. We had lunch in Robe but the weather was so bad we kept going to Kingston SE, where we are now. We have only stayed 2 nights (rain, rain and more rain). Tomorrow we are travelling towards Victor Harbour and the Fleurieu Peninsula with a side trip out to Kangaroo Island for a few days.

We are both well and whilst we have not been able to spend a lot of time sightseeing, because of the weather, we have done a lot of reading and I have done quite a bit of knitting. Norm has

managed to get through the paper every day and of course, happy hour is a highlight of any day. We are pretty accomplished at the relaxation mode now and we have even become experts at sleeping in - especially with my NBF (Norm has even been using his side of the electric blanket). Norm has worked out how to use the DVD in the caravan and now we have been watching the travel DVDs we have in relation to the next segment of our trip, before we do it.

We wish everyone well and TTFN.

Glenda and Norm