

## NORM AND GLENDA'S BIG TRIP NEWSLETTER #12

### WHO TURNED THE HEAT OFF? *Mandatory death sentence applies for this crime!*

Hi there everyone! Judging from the weather map it would appear that you are nearly all experiencing cold weather of some sort at this point in time.

Swan Hill (continued) – we were initially staying one extra day in Swan Hill for me (Glenda) to have a body service – super moisturising and massage (it was wonderful). But then some on road traveller friends arrived, Kevin and Chris (we first met them in Kalgoorlie) so, we booked in for two extra nights so that we could have happy hour with them. I have said before, flexibility is the key to caravanning! We then travelled to Echuca together and ended up parked side by side – just the right setting for more happy hours!

Victoria is a beautiful place and we have travelled over most of it. Norm was born in Alexandra and grew up in Geelong so he is biased but, I do have to agree with him, it is great. There are some beautiful cities/towns and villages and loads of history wherever you go here. There are fantastic old buildings that have been restored and/or beautifully maintained. The food and wine is great and, there is an endless variety of coffee shops.

Echuca – is one of our favourite places in Victoria and we never get tired of coming here. There is so much to see and do and we never miss going on the river on the Emmylou. This time there was six of us for lunch on board – Norm and I, Kevin and Chris and another couple we picked up along the way. We had a great time and the weather was just beautiful and the food delicious. Thank goodness we went this day because the weather went downhill after that!



The Pevensey is an original paddle steamer and, was one of the boats in 'All the Rivers Run'. The Emmylou was built specifically for the series, however, it is so authentic looking you would think it was the original one. As well as short day cruises,

lunch and dinner cruises, they also have overnight cruises (one and two nights) on the paddle steamers – the cabins are very small but I don't think it is intended that you spend too much time in them. There are showers and toilets (shared) and there is a dining/ bar lounge – the atmosphere would be great. The Emmylou has two large spotlights that are used to light up the river gums at night – we have done the dinner cruise before and can confirm it is pretty special. Norm might have difficulty sleeping on the boat because I think the bunks are about two feet too short but there is a little window that he could possibly hang his feet out of!

As I said, the weather turned cold – so, being the cold fish that I (Glenda) am, the electric blanket is plugged in, the air conditioner is on the heat setting and, the heated car seat is in use. I spent about an hour 'snorkelling' under the bed to find skivvies, track pants and jumpers. The crock pot is in use (yummy lamb shanks) and, I think soup is back on the menu! We said goodbye to Kevin and Chris as they are going to Tocumwal and we were heading to Ballarat – Kevin and Chris live at Banora Point (Coolangatta/Tweed Heads) so we hope to catch up with them when we go north in July. Ken and Gai, our travel friends that we met in Broome and last saw at Port Lincoln, have now gone home to Forster/Tuncurry and, we hope to catch up with them as well.

Echuca also puts us back in the land of the Beechworth Bakery – yummy pies and cakes and, they make the best bee stings!

Ballarat – known for being cold and it has not changed! I don't think we have ever been here when it has been warm. Again, this is a city steeped in history and there are some magnificent buildings (not to mention the one occupied by yet another Beechworth bakery!).



Just in case you were wondering, I gave up counting calories ages ago – I think it was just after we left Canberra, about Cooma! I was thinking of offering myself up to Jenny Craig when we finally get home in September, however, someone told me I would have to give up happy hour – I will have to weigh up this one (oops – was that some sort of pun?).



Ballarat is Victoria's largest inland city and is famous as the site of the world's largest deposit of alluvial gold. You can pan for gold and watch the hustle and bustle of an 1850s gold mining settlement at Sovereign Hill or, watch the dramatic Blood on the Southern Cross sound and light show, telling the story of the Eureka Rebellion. Ballarat has lots to see and do and we would like to come back and base ourselves here for about two weeks – when the weather is warmer. The caravan park we stay at here is just down the hill from the Sovereign Hill attraction; however, we decided it was just too cold and wet to do it this time. We did it some years ago and it was freezing then so I was not doing it in the cold again. Something we have found with these sorts of attractions too – the only time they are operating at 100% is during school holidays or long weekends – so, if you come during 'off-peak' periods you get to still pay the same entry fee but you only get to see half of the attractions operating ie the candle maker, the wood-turner, the blacksmith etc. Ballarat has a wonderful glasshouse at the Botanical Gardens – I wonder if this one will fit in our back yard easier than the one at Adelaide? The begonias on display were just beautiful and someone said it is near the end of the display period!



The throne display was in honour of the Queen's Jubilee, however, the sign indicates that this 'mere mortal' is not allowed to sit on it – I think I should have some claim to sit on it given my twice-recycled pommie status! As a representative of the Queen?

The theatre building below has undergone a wonderful restoration. When I was taking this picture a woman stopped to talk to me about the building. She is a local artist and she told me the doors on the theatre are original and her father made them!



Geelong – it was great to reunite with Rita, Norm's mother. It was also great that half of her garage was empty and we could store all the things we had to take out of the van, before it went to Melbourne for repair to the front. Rita could not believe all that stuff was under the bed in the van! We took the van in on the Monday and we had it back on the Friday – I think I must have been suffering some separation anxiety while it was away because I was so glad to get it back. Then the job of putting everything back, including the goods that we have had sent to Rita during the trip, to store – I am sure we have reached our maximum towing weight now! While the van was being fixed we stayed with Norm's mother and then we moved back into our 'home' at the Geelong Riverview Caravan Park – this park is right up our alley as there is a coffee shop on site and, they make great coffee.

Geelong also has some lovely old buildings and the Cunningham Pier is a must see.





I love the painted bollards along the waterfront.



There are lots of coffee shops and Packington Street in Geelong is a shopper's wonderland. We stayed in Geelong for two weeks so that we could get the van fixed and, we were able to take Rita out for Mother's Day lunch. I also used this time to have an eye test, so I could get new glasses to replace a pair I broke out west.

For Mother's Day we went to 360Q at Queenscliffe which is part of the new \$38 million marina with an observation tower and eateries. 360Q is the restaurant with the best views with almost every table having a view of the luxury boats berthed outside. The restaurant is run by the Rathbone Wine Group and, it has a cellar at the front where you can choose a wine and take it to the table. We enjoyed a lovely 5 course meal with accompanying fizzy pop.

We stayed one night in Sale on the way to Lakes Entrance. Whilst Sale is a nice little place, the Sale Motor Village where we stayed is memorable for me in a specific way. The last time we stayed here was in 2009 – the park is a dog friendly park and the night before we were leaving, a dog club booked in. It was a fly-ball club – do not ask me to explain this activity other than I know it involves a dog and a ball – I am not sure if it is the dog, the ball or both, that is supposed to fly! The washing machines in the laundry all had signs on them stating that dog blankets were not to be washed in the washing machines. The morning we were leaving I watched one of the dog club members gather up all the dog blankets and deposit them in the washing machines.

At this particular time, Norm and I were designing our current caravan and, after watching what had just occurred I said “As well as a toilet and shower, the new caravan has to have a front loading washing machine”! Following on from this, I am so glad we did get the washing machine because in the caravan parks out west, there are a lot of mining contractors (referred to earlier as FIFOs – fly in, fly out) who live in the cabins in caravan parks. They wash all their work clothes thick with red dust in the same washing machines that everyone else is supposed to use. Our washing machine has paid for itself I am sure and, I know what goes in it! We have the Dometic front loader machine and it has been fantastic – it washes everything we use in the caravan.

Lakes Entrance (or Victoria’s Gold Coast) – we were quite excited to get to Lakes Entrance as we were meeting up with our neighbours from Canberra, Mark and Jenny. Mark and Jenny have been keeping an eye on our house and we are so appreciative of their efforts and, without them, I am sure we would not have felt so secure about leaving for as long as we have. In three days we managed happy hours, sight-seeing, a BBQ dinner and dinner out at a restaurant! We were sad to see them leave but we will meet up with them again in June. I hope when they decide to do what we are doing we will be able to return the favour and, keep a watch on their house. Lakes Entrance is a lovely spot with the main street right along the waterfront – much like Batemans Bay. There are some very nice shops, coffee shops and restaurants. We have been here a number of times and never get tired of it. We used to stay in one of the smaller caravan parks on the main street; however, it was a bit tight moving this van around it the last time so we opted for a new park that is a bit further out. The Eastern Beach Caravan Park is lovely with big sites and beautiful amenities with easy access to the beach and, there is a lovely walking path that goes into town along the waterfront. There are some very nice towns close by like Bairnsdale, Metung and Paynesville – on our sightseeing drive with Mark and Jenny, we stopped at Paynesville for lunch and had fresh fish and chips – very yummy. This bird was sunning itself while we ate lunch along the waterfront and, the car ferry transports cars etc to and from Raymond Island.



We were surprised that there was a fee for the ferry as it is the only way of getting on and off the island with a vehicle – in similar places in SA this transport was provided by the State Government, free of charge.

We will be taking it easy from now until the long weekend in June when we will be in Merimbula for the Jazz Festival. We will probably go to Mallacoota for a few days in between. We are looking forward to meeting up with Joe and Maureen from the Canberra Caravan Club at Merimbula – of course, there will be more eating and happy hours – we are a very sociable lot. On the way to Merimbula we will stop at Eden and pick up our annex at ARV where we left it for storage last year – I hope they have not sold it! And of course, we will have to have a talk with Brian at ARV about building a new caravan .....

Merimbula is where we started 'Norm and Glenda's Big Trip' nearly twelve months ago and it has been a wonderful experience. I will be sending out one more newsletter in June to finish off.

Cheers

Glenda and Norm