

## NORM AND GLENDA'S BIG TRIP NEWSLETTER #14

Hello to everyone – we hope everyone has had their flu shots and has a new best friend (Ha! I was talking about the electric blanket!).

This picture was taken as we came up to the top of the Clyde – is that snow clouds over Canberra?



Canberra – OMG!! – our first night in Canberra was -6°C!! Whose decision was it to come into Canberra for a few days? It must have been Norm – it couldn't have been me. Well, what started out as a 5 day stay turned into 10 days but it did give us a chance to catch up with some friends. Also, the battery had died in my car at home and we replaced it and then drove it around while we were in town. We stayed at the Canberra Motor Village – the locality is good (O'Connor ACT) but, the caravan sites do not seem to have changed since 1982 when I stayed there in an on-site cabin for six weeks, while I was waiting for a house to be finished. It is a lot better than EPIC though and a more secure setting. It is sad that Canberra does not have anything better to offer, given that it is the Capital of Oz and has so many tourist attractions on offer. O'Connor is central to everything but, unfortunately, the park also accommodates a number of school groups. So, from Monday to Friday, during the school term, you are almost guaranteed there will be an influx of school age children. I must say though, the groups we encountered were quite well behaved and really only slept at the park. Also, the cabins must have their own bathroom facilities because I did not see any of the students in the amenities block. The owners of the park are currently spending quite a bit of money to upgrade the park – the laundry has all been redone with new machines and the bistro has recently opened. There are plans to upgrade all the caravan sites and the amenities block. Not before time.

We certainly did notice some changes in Canberra after 12 months away. We noticed that a new art work has appeared on the Tuggeranong Pkwy – an orange monstrosity, with eyes, that looks like 2 (or more) crabs mating! I guess we voted for this, the same way we apparently voted for the Arboretum. It is amazing we can afford these so-called 'works of art' (???) but the local radio station has to run a fund-

raiser to earn money for a humidicrib for the hospital! I still can't work out why we needed an Arboretum when we have the Botanical Gardens. We have seen some interesting 'works of art' on our travels and every time we have said it must a John Stanhope special or one of his clones!

This one is at Port Macquarie – I must say it is easier on the eye than any of the ones in Canberra, especially the mangled train wreck on the Barton Hwy:



I will get off my soapbox now!

Finally – medicals, blood tests etc are done and we are off – I was the mad woman bouncing up and down with glee as we drove out of Canberra.

The Entrance/Gosford – still not warm enough but getting better. The Entrance is a pretty little place but as well as a significant senior population, it is also a magnet for those who want a 'surfie' lifestyle, paid for by the Government.



While we have been travelling we have been using a mail forwarding agent – Landbase – located in Gosford. We took the opportunity while we were in the area to meet Jan Baetz, the owner of Landbase, and to pick up our mail. Jan's service has been great and we owe thanks to Paddy and Margaret (Canberra Caravan Club) for recommending her. Landbase is great for people who do not have other options like

willing family members or, like us, have a post office box. Australia Post will not accommodate more than one forwarding address so, everything is forwarded from our box to Landbase in Gosford and then when requested by us, is forwarded to whatever address we nominate. Jan runs her business out of a spare room in her home, with one other person to help – she told Norm that some weeks she processes 4-5 thousand pieces of mail! When organising this sort of service you must remember to try and cut down your mail to only what is necessary ie, advise Australia Post not to forward any junk mail. We also put all our household accounts onto direct debit and email or on-line notification.

Forster-Tuncurry – our main reason for coming here was to catch up with Ken and Gai, a couple we met in Broome and, who we kept meeting up with all the way around to Port Lincoln – if you recall from a previous newsletter, we also joined together with Ken and Gai in Perth for Christmas lunch. We had a lovely few days with. Our caravan park was right in town so we were able to walk almost everywhere. On the first Thursday of July every year they have crazy day on the main street, which is blocked off for the occasion. All the businesses have sale tables outside – Norm managed to pick up a Jarvis Walker rod and reel and an extra reel, all for \$70.



Coffs Harbour – warmer - 18°C. I really like Coffs and there is some lovely scenery around here. Also, huge numbers of Victorians! Most were grumbling, however, as it had been raining for a number of days. They were not alone though as the weather map indicated that almost everyone on the east coast was getting rain. We were walking around the caravan park one evening and who should we come upon but Sandra and Ted (Canberra Caravan Club) so, joyous reunion all round progressing to happy hour. The following night we combined our resources and Sandra cooked a roast – what a great night – alcohol consumption was high but we did not have far to go home!

Dolphins were highly visible at Coffs.



And, the views from Muttonbird Island were spectacular.



Byron Bay – 20°C – bliss! We stayed right in town at First Sun Holiday Park. We have stayed here before and we think it is great. It is right on the beach, walking distance to all shops, restaurants and, our favourite coffee shop in Byron is around the corner. The park is extremely well run and the security is high. Your picture is taken at check-in and there is a security guard on duty every night. There are zero tolerance park rules ie no anti-social behaviour, excessive noise or drinking and, no gathering of more than 6 people on any one site unless prior permission has been granted. The gates to the beach are locked at around 6pm. There is a lovely BBQ area on the point overlooking the beach and it is a great spot for happy hour – you can hear the nightly performance of bongo drums at the beach from here too.



In addition to bongo playing, surfing of any kind is also a favourite pastime.



The Centrelink Office is quite central in Byron and, there would appear to be a number of 'clients' hanging around (we have heard this equates to being a Government employee of sorts). Perhaps they are all on Austudy allowance whilst they study a major in surfing or bongo playing. The clothing style in Byron is wide open to interpretation – the prize goes to the person who can combine as many

different styles, eras and colours into one outfit. There are a number who have been very successful at this and wear it – day in and day out.



I have developed a skill of moving about 3 feet away from anyone with dread locks – I am not sure how far lice can jump!

The surfers are out every day looking for a wave and the sunsets are pretty good:



We reluctantly left Byron but it was just as well as the Splendour in the Grass music festival was on the following weekend and, we did not really want to be in town for that – apparently there is an influx of about 30,000 people on top of those already in town – we would probably have to cue up for coffee!

Gold Coast - we originally were headed for a caravan park north of Surfers but they were unable to accommodate our size van – they directed us to Tallebudgera Creek CP and what a great alternative. We originally planned to stay a couple of weeks before moving up to Noosa. Reports indicated it was still pretty wet in places up north so we decided to stat at Tallebudgera – we are now booked in until 25 August. The park is lovely and very clean and tidy. The pools are lovely but it is still too cool for us. Since we arrived the weather has been lovely during the day (average of 21°C) and the nights are cool (average of 9°C). We have been walking every day –

there is a beautiful walk around Burleigh Head and a great coffee spot half way – about 2.5 kms round trip. The surfers are out in force most days although some do take some serious chances. One day we saw one get thrown onto the rocks by a wave. He did walk out but very gingerly and, I suspect he will be pretty bruised and sore for a few days. Norm said he had an American accent so he may have been a visitor – unfortunately visitors are not always aware of the dangers and just go for it.



On the way around the Head there are some pretty impressive rock formations with signs indicating you should not walk the track during wet weather.



The couple on top of the large rock sticking out were quite oblivious to their audience below and, they were obviously feeling quite secure and safe! I was wondering if I should post the pictures on UTube except that someone would have to show me how to do it. Besides, there is always the chance they are not where they are supposed to be or with whom they are supposed to be with!



The ocean front at Burleigh Heads is very popular and the park is beautifully maintained with great picnic facilities, bbqs and even boiling water on tap to make tea an coffee!



Norm's mother and a friend were holidaying on the Gold Coast when we arrived here so we were able to spend a bit of time with them – lunching and shopping – I have spent considerable time and effort in developing Norm's shopping skills during our time away – he is improving but slowly so, more effort will be required!

We travelled out to the Harbournetown Outlet Shopping Centre but were pretty disappointed – when it first opened the prices were pretty good but now it is just like any other shopping centre with the same old stores – very few of them are true factory outlets.

One night we went to the Australian Outback Spectacular – Spirit of the Horse. It was a great night and show and the food was very good – three courses – small spinach and cheese quiche entrée, rib eye steak and vegetable main course and, pavlova for dessert.





We also went to the Gold Coast Home and Leisure/Pleasure show at Southport which turned out to be a bit disappointing. There were not very many makes of caravans on display, nor were there all that many exhibitors for other camping and caravanning supplies. We were looking for a small Coleman table but Coleman did not have a display there. The only supplier there was Anaconda and they only had a couple of Coleman products on sale.

This is one rig that was on display – owned by an American film maker.



The fellow is single and shares his domain with two very large dogs. There is an upstairs balcony on the side and the pen around the entrance is the dog's exercise yard!

That is all for now. We are certainly enjoying some much warmer weather and we do think of all our friends braving the cold down south – we are just not willing to trade at the moment! We expect to be back in Canberra early September – have to plant the vegie garden and do some work around the house.

Bye for now!

Norm and Glenda