

NORM AND GLENDA'S BIG TRIP NEWSLETTER #7

Hi to all:

First off – I hope everyone has a wonderful Xmas season and that 2012 is the best year ever! Norm obviously has other feelings in relation to the Xmas spirit! (I have destroyed the pictures of both of us together on this project as they are not worthy of being put into print). I am sure that deep down Norm (alias Grinch or Grumpy) wishes the best of the Xmas season to everyone.



Denham/Monkey Mia – we decided to stay at Denham which is about 28 kms from Monkey Mia. There is a daily fee for Monkey Mia or you can pay for a month pass. We did what we wanted to do with our day pass which went from when we purchased it to the end of the following day. We had a full day at Monkey Mia starting with the feeding of the dolphins. You have to be 'picked' by the carers, hence Norm and I were observers – this is a slightly different picture to the advertising which gives the impression everyone and anyone gets to feed the dolphins!



After dolphin feeding we went on a boat trip on the Aristocat 2 which is the only boat that has access to the restricted areas around Monkey Mia. We were on board for more than 3 hours and we had a great day. We first went out to the Pearl Farm (new pearl pendant for me!) and then out to where we saw dugongs, loggerhead turtle, shark and dolphins. Passengers were also able to go 'surfing' in the net – I am glad I decided not to do this as some almost lost their bathers – and then there are the sharks – you can just see the shadow, lurking!



We were so happy that this tour went ahead because of previous disappointments. As we were a little late in the season we have missed out on a couple of tours – the flight up to the horizontal falls was cancelled because of rain over the runways north and our boat tour at Coral Bay was cancelled because not enough people booked.

We also did a trip out to the local aquarium where we had a very informative tour and watched the sharks feeding (absolutely no table manners):



The seafood in this part of the country is just unbelievable – here is a picture of one of the seafood platters on offer:



Kalbarri – lovely little beachside village and lovely sunset/cloud formations:



Kalbarri has a mixture of wonderful beach views, spectacular cliffs and gorges and, it is apparently a surfer's dream. Since I am still coming to terms with snorkelling and sharing body space with all those 'things' in the water (and no blue/black line), surfing is not on my 'to do' list right now!



Our visit to Kalbarri was extended to a week – not because of the beautiful location but because it was my turn to try out the local hospital. My hip went into a muscle spasm that ended up with a pinched sciatic nerve – I spent the night in hospital and I rate this one very highly. I have to say though that I was in so much pain at the time, the hospital could have been a humpy for all I cared, so long as it had pain killers! I acquired a new best friend for a few days – the local physiotherapist – and he did

wonders. The poinsettia tree is blooming now over here and the physiotherapist has a wonderful specimen in his front yard:



We also visited the local Parrot Farm which houses hundreds of birds, some of which 'perform' quite well and have a fairly extensive vocabulary.



Kalbarri is apparently one of the best places to see wild flowers in the west, however, we were too late for most of them. The ones we did see are pretty spectacular though:



Geraldton – Coles, Woollies and retail therapy – yippee! A very nice place to continue my recuperation. Markets, restaurants, shops, cafés – Geraldton’s main export is crayfish and we did a tour of the Geraldton Fishing Cooperative. China and Japan are their biggest clients with China now surpassing Japan in demand. At the time we did the tour there was about \$8 million worth of crays sitting in the tanks waiting to be exported. China and Japan are paying about \$400-500 a kilo! I had lobster mornay one night and it was \$52 so I was pretty happy with that.

We did a day trip from Geraldton to Greenough Historical Village where I made friends with the locals and a wander through the old buildings.



Geraldton also has a beautiful HMAS Sydney II Memorial which is situated on a hill with beautiful views – specific points of the memorial point out to sea to the exact spot where the Sydney went down, including the statue of the waiting woman:



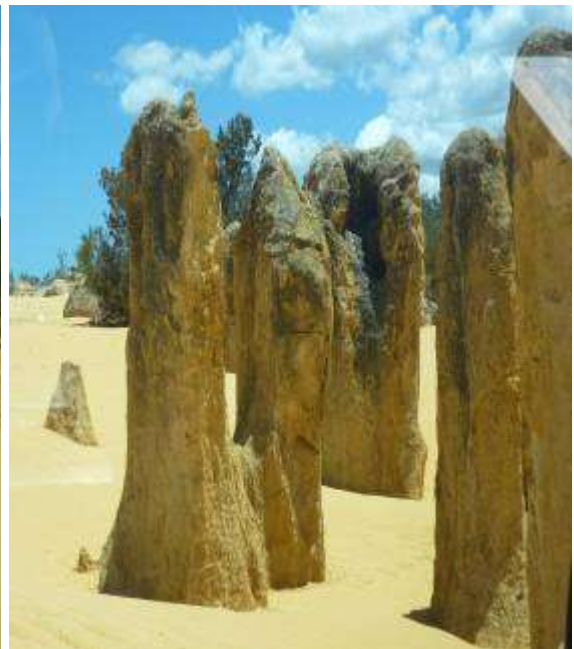
Jurien Bay/Cervantes/Pinnacles – we decided to base ourselves at Jurien Bay – beautiful spot and the caravan park has a very nice coffee shop (with award winning carrot cake) and serves a very nice breakfast! Jurien Bay has a resident seal which hangs around the end of the pier waiting for a feed – he is only a juvenile. The story is that he washed up on shore with a number of fish hooks in him – the RSPCA took him away and removed all the hooks and then took him out to sea and released him on the island with the rest of his relatives – however, he keeps returning to the jetty and chases the fishing lines into the water. He appears to be well fed and he enjoys a swim with the bathers on the beach, coming very close to shore.



We went to Cervantes one day for a drive and had lunch at a little café. We met up with one of the local 'pets' who ran around under the tables and caught some people by surprise!



The Pinnacles are quite spectacular and the discovery centre is very interesting. We did the 4 km drive through:



On our way to Yanchee for our next stop we had morning tea at a little place called Lancelin. This little town is almost surrounded by sand dunes and some people were enjoying the local sport:



There were also a number of cars attempting to climb the sand dunes however, I think you have to either be very good at it or have the required amount of money handy for mishaps. The following signs were at the entrance to the track to the sand dunes:



Yanchep is only about 60 kms from Perth. We stayed for three days as we were not due in Perth until today – 21 December. We did a day trip out to New Norcia to see the monastery/village and, the museum and displays covering the periods when it was a school/orphanage etc – we did the town tour with a guide which took 2 hours

and whilst neither of us are very spiritual we found it very interesting. The woodwork, carvings and some of the paintings in the various chapels are just beautiful.



I think I have said earlier that the west coast is pretty spectacular – it is actually gob-smackingly beautiful! If we could just move it over to the east coast I would live here. On our travels we have seen some pretty varied landscape and the area around Yanchee is one place where it really stands out. Driving along the highway it is not unusual to see agriculture/grazing land on one side of the highway and sand dunes on the other. The sand is so white it looks like you are driving into Thredbo after a fresh fall of snow:



We are now at our home base for the Perth area, staying at the Coogee Beach Caravan Park – it is about 6kms south of Fremantle. A couple we first met in Broome, Ken and Gai, are also in this area at another caravan park. We have met them a number of times since Broome and they travel very much like us – if we see you, we see you. We met up with them again at Yanchep and decided we would see what was on offer in the area for lunch on Xmas day. I had looked up a number of places on the internet and Norm's brother had made a couple of suggestions – all were booked out. Gai and Ken arrived here on Monday and Gai found a vacancy at Frasers which is at Kings Park. They had one table left for 4. It must have been earmarked for us! The view is apparently magnificent and the lunch is a buffet so, day off for the cook after all.

National Parks in WA – there are a lot in WA and when we got to Exmouth we purchased an annual pass for WA which covers all national parks where fees apply (about 30) – with the exception of Monkey Mia. We bought a concession annual pass which cost \$45 – well worth it because we are only in Perth and we have already used up more than \$45 worth.

Caravan Parks in WA – we have found that most (not all) caravan parks over here are not the high standard we enjoy over on the east coast. A number of the parks have had the initial injection of money to establish and that is it – the amenities are dated and tired with poorly maintained gardens and sites – the fees, however, are the same if not more than on the east coast.

The following parks are our top picks so far on our trip:

Port Vincent – Yorke Peninsula SA
Macdonnell Ranges – Alice Springs NT

Victor Harbour – SA
Point Samson – WA

TTFN

Glenda and Norm