

NORM AND GLENDA'S BIG TRIP NEWSLETTER #8

Happy New Year – we wish all our friends a happy, healthy and prosperous 2012!

Before arriving in Perth we came across the following locals in one of the national parks – perfecting the art of relaxation:



Perth/Fremantle – lovely area and the beaches are spectacular – as I said previously, if we could just move it over to the east coast it would be a lovely place to live. We arrived in Perth on 21/12/2011 and we will be here until at least 13/01/12 (most of the silly season!). There is a lot to see and do and we will be able to do it at a much slower pace than usual. We have paced ourselves with a number of rest days in between. Coogee Beach Caravan Park (Aspen Park) is just south of Fremantle with regular bus services right outside the park, to travel into Fremantle. The caravan park is well run, friendly, and very clean. In the public park area adjacent to the caravan park there is a lovely café that has great coffee and does a very nice breakfast and lunch. Parking is expensive in Perth and Fremantle and also more limited for our vehicle because we have the pod on top. Also, once you are in Fremantle and Perth there are free bus services (CAT) around both cities and, to most points of interest. To travel on the train into Perth we found it more convenient to park the car for the day near the train station in Fremantle (8am to 8pm for \$6.50) – that way we could take our time and not have to worry about getting back to Fremantle on time to get a bus home. The train to Perth only cost us \$1.50 (concession) each way.

Here are some of the things we did while in Perth:

Kings Park – Frasers – Christmas Day. We drove our own car for convenience but parking was difficult – luck was our way though and someone was leaving at the time we arrived. Our friends were not as lucky and had to park a fair distance away. Our lunch was a package deal - \$140 a head – this turned out to be a very good deal as when we arrived we realised this included all drinks (limited of course for the driver) but various wines were on offer as was beer and champagne. The food was fantastic and for seafood lovers, it was paradise – open slather on prawns (giant size!), oysters and smoked salmon. There were all the salads and roast pork, lamb, beef and turkey plus barramundi and snapper and other hot dishes (curries and mixed seafood). There were about ten desserts including pavlova, Xmas pudding, crème caramel, fruit salad and cheese platters. We arrived at 1pm and they stopped bringing out the food at about 3.30pm and there was still plenty there. The service was fantastic with extremely efficient and well trained staff. Apparently this functions venue has just been refurbished and the Christmas lunch was the first function after reopening, so everything was shiny and new. The decorations were very nice and Santa Claus visited all the children with lollies. Later on small ice cream cones were handed out to the children. Everyone had a great time and nobody misbehaved.

Our lunch partners are Gai and Ken who we met for the first time in Broome and since then we have been catching up with each other all down the west coast. They stayed in a different caravan park over Christmas but moved to Woodman Point Caravan Park on 2 January 2012, which is just down the road from us. Ken and Gai are 'honeymooners' and they are travelling in an American Winnebago motor home. A number of changes have had to be done to make this vehicle 'work' in Australia, along with a number of adjustments along the way – I am sure they could write a book!



New Years Eve was disgustingly low key – we had a few drinks, watched the Edingurgh Tattoo on the TV and, we were in bed before midnight! At midnight there were a few rowdy moments at a couple of the permanent van sites, that lasted all of two minutes, then all went quiet again.

Fremantle Shipwreck Museum and Round House – part of the shipwreck ‘Batavia’ has been recovered and reassembled here. This display is amazing and tells how they had to treat and dry the waterlogged timbers before they could reassemble it, which they did with the aid of a steel frame that the timbers are attached to:



Outside the museum there is a lovely mermaid made out of steel. I had to wait for some considerable time to take this picture, until other people stopped walking over and ‘man-handling’ or ‘woman-handling’ her!



Fremantle Fisherman's Wharf – there are some terrific restaurants at the wharf and we have given them a good sampling – Kailis Bros (same people that own the pearls) also have a large seafood company and they have a restaurant at the wharf – beautiful and fresh.

Along the wharf and around Perth and Fremantle there are a number of fantastic bronze statues, depicting various activities of these coastal cities:



Maritime Museum – outside the maritime museum there are a number of walls with the names inscribed of more than 20,000 migrants who arrived in Fremantle during the 1950s and 1960s. The following bronze statue reminds me so much of when I (Glenda) and my brother arrived in Canada from England with our parents in 1954 (right down to the school uniform worn as 'best' clothes):



We also did a tour of the submarine at the museum – our guide was fantastic and so interesting because he actually served on this sub:

The submarine you see before you is the Oberon class submarine HMAS *Ovens* gifted to the Museum in December 1998.

The submarine sits on a slipway which was built to service submarines during WW2.

Over 160 submarines served from Fremantle during WW2 making this port the biggest allied submarine base outside Pearl Harbour.

HMAS *Ovens* is open every day with fully guided tours from 10.00am with last tour commencing at 3.30pm.



I know why I did not apply to be a sub-mariner – they only showered and changed clothes every 7/8 days – with 60+ men on the submarine the smell would have been pretty high. Plus, when the sub was submerged, the toilet doors would not close because the pressure altered the shape of the frame – OMG!

Perth has some beautiful old buildings, some of which are shopping arcades, like London Court – others have been 'knock downs' but they have preserved the facade:





We went on a lunch cruise on the Swan River – wonderful buffet lunch on board with a stop at Water’s Edge Winery. Beautiful spot – lovely roses – we did not buy any wine but we had a great day which we enjoyed with our travel friends, Gai and Ken.



For Norm's birthday I took him out to dinner at the Mussel Bar on Fremantle Wharf. We had a lovely seafood dinner and watched a local dolphin playing in the water in front of the restaurant. Norm ended up with a giant sized case of indigestion but I enjoyed myself!

Rottneest Island – we cancelled this trip a couple of days because of very windy weather first thing in the morning but we finally made it. The day we went was just beautiful - we took the ferry over in the morning and had brunch on the island. We then did the round the island bus tour and met some of the locals:



Quokka



Stunning views

We had a beautiful late lunch on the island at Aristos' (of television fame) – he was not there. The seafood was beautiful and I had one of the best serves of garlic prawns.

Part of our extended stay in this area was to have the car serviced and also to have the water heater in the caravan repaired as it had developed a leak. As the van is only 2 years old (and we had already paid out for a new overflow valve when we were in Adelaide), Norm contacted Dometic to see if there was a way some of the cost of replacement could be covered under warranty. After some negotiation between Norm and the Dometic sales manager, an agreement was reached – the bill all up was about \$1500 (heater and labour) and we had to pay \$550.

All in all, we had a pretty relaxing time in Perth/Fremantle. As we had been to Perth before, we did not knock ourselves out doing the tourist thing – we did, however, sampled almost every coffee shop in Fremantle! The Fremantle Bakehouse has goodies to die for – I can recommend the vanilla slice which is double the size of what we normally get in Canberra and, it is only \$5.50. I had to bring home half for the next day so it is very good value!

We have not gone swimming or snorkelling in this area as the swimming is regularly interrupted by the sighting of sharks close to the beaches – mostly hammerheads and grey nurse sharks. Who cares what they are called – they have big teeth and, they are way bigger than me! There are also stingers in the water. As we were on Coogee Beach we saw the helicopters overhead regularly, about every ½ hour! So, my preference for the blue/black line on the bottom has returned.

We have met some lovely people on our travels and we hope to connect with them later on. Ken and Gai (who we have been connecting with all the way down the west coast since Broome) are from Foster/Tuncurry and they have asked us to stop in later in the year when we go north. We also met Geoff and Margaret, from Queanbeyan, when we were in Alice Springs and they have asked that we meet up when we get back home. Another couple, Terry and Merry, we met at Coogee Beach – they live in their caravan and are planning to come to Canberra towards the end of the year – we may also catch up with them during the rest of our trip as they are planning to travel some of the same route as us, before going on to Tassie. Something I wished we had done before we left was have business cards made up – a lot of people we have met have done this and it is great.

We have also made friends with some of the locals:



Bandicoots – love mixed nuts!



Lizzard – stumpy!

I first thought the Bandicoots above were related to the rat family and I was ready to move out when I saw the back end of one going under the unit behind us!

Local radio humour at the moment in Perth – a bougainvillea is something that a cashed up bogan has for a beach house!

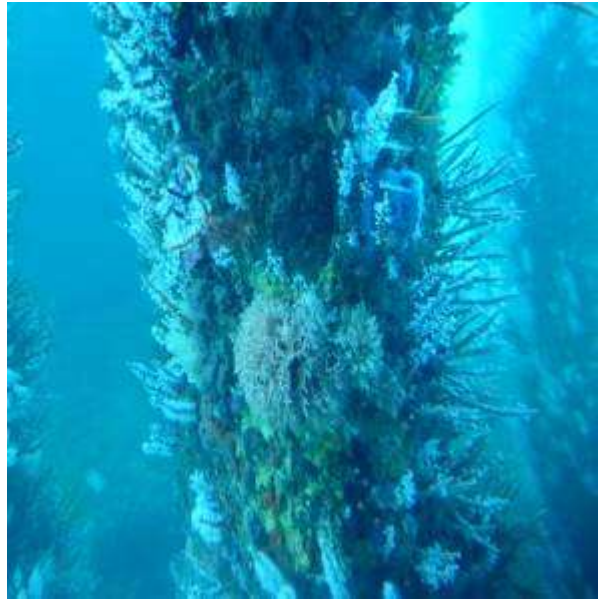
Busselton – a lovely place. The following picture is of one of the nicest front garden plantings I have seen – the house is on a corner – hopefully the hire a gardener.



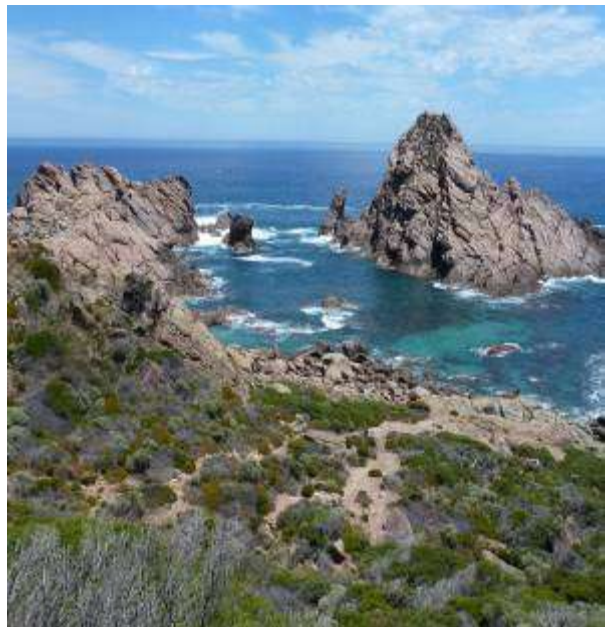
The Busselton Jetty, railway and underwater observatory was great. The jetty is 1.8 metres long and an extensive restoration is almost complete. The train trip out to the end was lovely and relaxing:



The observatory at the end is 8 metres down via a spiral staircase and rests on the ocean floor – it has 11 glass windows to view the underwater sea life, corals and sponges:



We did day trips to a number of small villages in the area – Dunsborough is lovely and on the way to Cape Naturaliste Lighthouse. We did the tour through the lighthouse and up to the top. Norm did go out at the top but I chickened out – the wind was blowing about 50kms an hour. The view from the top is spectacular and looks out over Sugarloaf Rock which we drove to on another day:



On the way back to the car at Sugarloaf Rock we saw a pod of about 8 dolphins playing in the shallows:



This last week has been a real culture shock for us both. It is the first time we have been in a caravan park at this time of the year (January school holidays) that is also a very popular family park – the Mandalay Holiday Resort. I am not sure how we got in here because I am sure the prerequisite is 2.5 kids, bikes, scooters etc etc. At 5 pm the aria commences with all littlies who are tired, hungry and just plain grumpy taking part, building to a crescendo/finale at about 7pm when they mercifully conk out. Hindsight is absolutely delicious and can be dined on indefinitely! Norm is displaying some new skills as the Ozzie Dr Spock or Mr Nanny – he only has two solutions though – size nine on the rear of the littlies and bullets for the parents – I don't think these concepts are going to go down well at all. He has been showing some restraint though, helped along with a few red wines between 5 and 7 pm.

Tomorrow we will be off to Margaret River to sample the wines etc and some more food sampling!

Cheers

Norm and Glenda