

2017 New Zealand & Australia Walkabout

09 Apr 2017 - Sunday

Over the Pacific Ocean

We are en-route from Vancouver to Auckland and crossed the date line losing a day in the transit. (Talk about time travelling and going ahead in time)

10 Apr 2017 - Monday

Auckland, NZ



We arrived in Auckland at 5:00 am next morning and after we picked up our baggage and cleared customs we boarded Super Shuttle Rack coach and were dropped off at our hotel around 0640 hrs. It was early Monday morning when we checked in at the **Heritage Auckland Hotel** down town Auckland. We were expecting to have to stay up and wait for our room until check in at 1400 hrs, but to our great surprise and relief our rooms were ready when we arrived. After a couple of hours of snooze we got up and went to explore the area around our hotel. Not far away, on Queen street, we found a cell phone store and purchase a SIM card for my cell. On the way back to the hotel we stopped in at the Sky City tower for tour information and purchased two tickets for tomorrow for the "Hop-on Hop-off" buses.

Next we ventured out to the waterfront to survey the sights. We stopped in at an outdoor garden and had a beer, after which we continued our walkabout. We walked by the Maritime Museum and decided to see their exhibits. It contained Maori history with the European sailing vessels and their arrival and colonization of New Zealand.

11 Apr 2017 - Tuesday

Auckland, NZ

After a good night sleep, got up and had breakfast in the room. Then walked over to Hertz rent a car to ensure we had a vehicle with a GPS and advised them that we were returning the vehicle here instead of at the airport. Next we walked to the Sky City tower where we got on the red "Hop-on Hop-off" bus which took us around the Auckland showing the highlights. We got off at the Auckland Historic Museum where we saw live Maori show and looked through the various maritime historic exhibits. Back on the blue "Hop-on Hop-off" bus which took us up Mount Eden where we had lunch at the Eden Gardens. After lunch we were taken to the top of Mount Eden where we witnessed a panoramic view of Auckland and area. We returned to our departure point under the Sky City tower and walked to our hotel, where we enjoyed the Hotel's hot tub, sauna and lap-pool.

Next went out for dinner to a restaurant call "the Fox" on the waterfront, across from the Maritime Museum. Susan had a rack of lamb while I had fish & chips complimented by a bottle of local red wine for us both. On the way back to the hotel for desert we treated ourselves to ice cream from a street vender. All in all, we had a great time.

12 Apr 2017 - Wednesday

Auckland - (Waitangi) Paihia, NZ

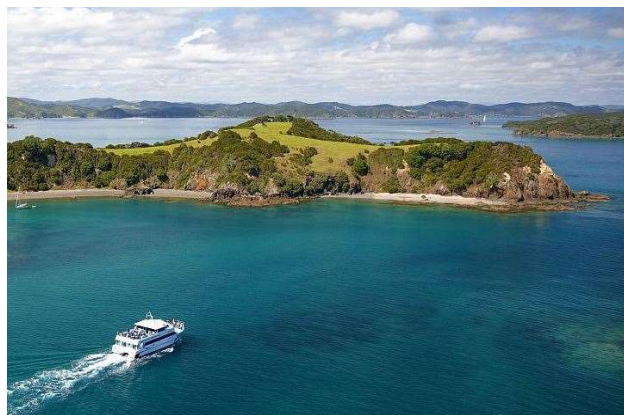
Next day after breakfast in our room we packed up and checked out of the hotel. I walked over to the Hertz car rental and picked up the car. Driving back to the hotel, driving from the right



seat my head was swivelling to make sure I didn't drive on the wrong side or turn in the wrong direction. Made it back to the hotel where we loaded up and with Susan as my co-pilot we departed Auckland for the Island's North coast. The GPS was a great help and comfort. We drove for three hours in pouring rain to Whangarei where we stopped for information and lunch. We

decided to continue to Paihia, the Bay of Islands, where we took a room at the Swiss Chalet.

After unpacking at our motel, we ventured out and took the ferry over to Russell, New Zealand's first Capitol city. We engaged a local town bus tour (costing us an exorbitant \$60 NZD) but it was a good tour even though the weather was rain fog giving us at time poor visibility. The tour included a through drive through and historic explanation of the entire town, culminating on a drive up to the highest point on the island to oversee the panorama of the area. The rain did let up for a while and on return to our tour starting point we went and sat on the veranda of the local hotel and had a glass of wine to recount as what we saw and heard. The weather was not like the picture



down below, non the less we did have some clear overcast view of the Islands.

Returning to the hotel and still raining, occasionally pouring walked to a restaurant featuring sea food called ironically "Only Sea Food". The dinner and wine compensated for the weather and by the time we started back to the motel, the rain subsided. Listening to the TV before going to sleep the weather report was the Cyclone Cook was to make landfall on the North Island shores tonight or very early tomorrow morning. OH WHAT JOY!

13 Apr 2017 - Thursday

(Waitangi) Paihia - Rotorua, NZ

We woke next morning to the news that Cyclone Cook did make landfall during the night and it was forecasted to be a brutal storm. A quick breakfast in our room, then we packed up, checked the weather and headed out early. The weather was actually kind to us. No rain, no wind

just overcast skies and the roads relatively dry until we passed through Auckland on our way to Rotorua.

Driving the main auto route, we stopped for lunch south of Auckland at a gas/lunch bar. I set the GPS for Motamata (Hobbiton) first but the weather turned wet and dark, so we elected to go straight to Rotorua where we arrived in the mid afternoon under steady rain. We checked in at the Millenium Hotel, where staff was getting buttoned down for the Cyclon and many attractions were put on hold or cancelled

14 Apr 2017 - Friday

GOOD FRIDAY

Rotorua - Motamata - Rotorua, NZ

Waking up in the morning there were no surprises. The Cyclon never made much showing, so we decided to go on with our plans after a quick in room breakfast. We to drive to Motamata to see Hobbiton and the Hobbit film set. It took us an hour to drive to Motamata and after purchasing tickets we had to wait an hour and half for the bus to arrive and take us to the film site. The tour was well organised but not what we expected.

Groups of 30 people were guided through the film set and explained how the film and its backdrop was made. All the props and buildings were just props man made including some of the full size trees. One in particular, on top of Bilbo Bagin's home, was fabricated and every leaf was attached and hand painted. The Hobbiton dwelling were made of Styrofoam fronts or miniaturized wooden facades. The only building on the set which was full size and habitable was the "Green Dragon" pub. Peter Jackson, the director and producer picked this site on a farm because it fit the description on Tolkien's story almost to a perfection.

We got back to the hotel in time to have a change of clothing, relax with a glass of wine and get ready to go to the Maori Hangi Feast. At the appointed time we were picked up at the hotel by a bus and transported with a busload of people to the Maori Feast location. We were ushered in to a large tent room which housed about 50 large tables and we were assigned a table and seating where we met our table mates. We were welcomed by a traditional Moari welcome followed by a buffet stile dinner. At our table we had an international group. Mostly young women from France, Italy, Germany the US and Sweden. My next seat companion was a young blond women from Sweden, a lawyer for Goggle and working out of Doubling, Ireland. She was on a relaxation and meditative tour as she was at cross roads whether she wanted to work for Goggle any longer. She was a charming conversationalist..

After dinner were led to another tent arena where we were invited to watch a Maori village meeting, celebration and a show of their cultural songs and dances. On conclusion we were let outside where we witnessed a Maori hunting party in dugouts followed by a walkabout in their woods and along sacred ponds. With that the Feast and tour was concluded and we alighted on our buses for the return trip to our hotel. The evening was worth it, the show was entertaining and informative. The Maori commentator, their chief and tribe gave a good account of their history, culture and food.

15 Apr 2017 - Saturday

Rotorua - Aukland, NZ

After breakfast in the hotel before checking out and setting our sites on Te Pau thermal reserves. We drove South to Te Pau for about an hour and arrived there before the crowds came.

We purchased our tickets (the rain came and went in downpours) but by the time we got to the guizer site the weather cleared up.

Oh yes, the gauzier - it was nudge nudge wink wink from some chemical washing agent by a local site guide, which eventually gave us a small squirt of spray before falling back to dormancy. Next, we walked around the thermal pools then at the gift shop we purchased a local wood carved artifact before getting on the road to Auckland.

It was Easter Weekend so the roads were very busy, non the less we made it back to the hotel by 3:30 pm and after gassing up the car, I returned it to the Hertz rental and then checked back into the Heritage Auckland Hotel. A quick change and we went out for a walk along the waterfront then had pizza at a local restaurant along the waterfront followed by a nice walk before returning to our hotel.

16 Apr 2017 - Sunday

EASTER SUNDAY

Aukland, NZ - Melbourne, AU

Departed Auckland for Melbourne, Australia on Air New Zealand. After a 4 ½ hour flight we arrived in Melbourne, going through customs and immigration was relatively easy and fast. And once we picked up our luggage we were out in the arrival area where we were met and picked up by our driver who drove us to our hotel in a Mercedes Benz. Our driver was very talkative and gave us a good account of Melbourne and its many attractions and history.

Arriving at Clarion Hotel and settling in we went to search for a grocery store and picked up food supplies for dinner. We brought back wine, cold cuts, buns, cheese, a pizza, munchies and cereal, etc. It was a long day.

17 Apr 2017 - Monday

Melbourne, AU

Up early and a quick breakfast in our room before being picked up by Grayline Bus to take us to Federation Square where we had to wait for another bus which was to take us on a Melbourne city and historic tour. The tour was informative about Melbourne's history and gave us a birdseye view of the city and its various highlights.

We left the tour at the Australian War Memorial (the Shrine of Remembrance) where we looked through the memorial walls and exhibits before walking back to our hotel.

After a quick lunch in our hotel room we walked back to Federation Square where we boarded our tour bus, which took us first to Phillip Island

Penguins & City Tour

Pickup - 7:30 am at Clarion Suites Hotel

Transport - Coach

Duration: 16h

Note: *be there 10m early, warm water-proof clothing*

Drop off - 11:3 pm at Clarion Suites Hotel

Operators: Grayline Melbourne T: (1300)858687

Confirmation #: 941636 / 339043 2 adults

Morning: city tour, Cathedral, Fitzroy Gardens, walking tour laneways, arcades and market

Afternoon: Penguin Island

where we were shown a working Australian sheep farm with and a sheep sheering demonstration. Next

we were taken to a Quala Bear reserve on a eucalyptus tree farm where we had a glimpse of a few Qualas. Then driven to the edge of a kangaroo enclosure for a phot opportunity before we were finally taken to our destination, the Penguin Walk.

It was a 2 ½ hour affair with a massive crowds of Orientals getting off of dozens of tour busses. It was pandemonium moving people from the bus parking lot through the admission gates and down to the shoreline



and viewing area, but it was well controlled even though most of the visitors were quite undisciplined. The Penguin Walk was quite unimpressive and boring. Penguins coming up the shore in small and medium groups hurrying along a path to their burrows up the hill from us. The entire tour was expensive, long and not very interesting.

18 Apr 2017 - Tuesday

Melbourne - Sydney, AU

The Limo service arrived right on time 10:00 am to take us to the airport. Our driver was a Australian with Turkish background. He talked about his Turkish relations and his business back in Turkey which he had for 4 years. He dropped us off at the Melbourne Airport the domestic side in good time. After depositing our baggage at the baggage drop point, we got our boarding pass and boarding went well.

On arrival at Sydney Airport at just past one pm our Limo service was already waiting for us. Our driver, a young man from Arizona was waiting for us at the baggage claim area. A short drive later we arrived at our hotel, the Holiday Inn Darlington Harbour. The hotel was located on a side street with a lot of construction going on next door to the hotel. However we found that everything was in a relative walking distance to the hotel.



Susan was not well so we asked around for a clinic and there was one open a few long blocks away (a 10 minute walk). We found the place and Susan filled out the paperwork and within a few minutes we saw the doctor who prescribed antibiotics for Susan. Next door at the Pharmacy we picked up the prescription and some laxatives for Susan.

The doctors visit and the prescription cost less than \$75 plus another \$16 Australian dollars (which was fairly close to the Canadian dollar value). We were impressed even though this had to be an out of pocket expense. [Before we left for the clinic I tried to call MEDOC's international number but had to wait on line for far too long, so we elected to go to the clinic and take our chances.]

Back at the hotel we played cards and had some wine before going out for dinner at a local pub a few blocks away. The pub had an Irish theme and we had Fish&Chips Australian style, sitting at a tall table overlooking the street and its evening going-ons.

19 Apr 2017 - Wednesday

Sydney, AU



We were up early at 6:00 am to go on our tour. After breakfast we hurried to our pickup point a few blocks away. The tour bus picked us up and had a few more stops to pick up people before the city tour began in earnest. Our morning tour was quite extensive with stops at MacQuay Point where we were able to take some panoramic pictures of the Sydney harbour with the Opera House. Next stop off was Boundary Bay where we had a bit to eat, before our tour continued back to the Harbour area

where we were dropped off for an Old City walking tour. At around 1:30 pm we walked to the Sydney Opera House where we had a very informative tour of the facility with background history and stood in for two rehearsals in the two Opera House auditoriums. (The Opera house history included an 80 million dollar budget over run and the original architect not being allowed back on the building site after budget over run and massive construction delays.)



We walked back to our hotel from the Opera House, and on the way we stopped in at the Catholic Cathedral. Story goes that Sydney was a protestant town and Catholic churches were not allowed in the city, so the Cathedral was built just outside the then city limits. The Cathedral is now pretty much in the centre of the city proper.

For dinner, we wandered down to the Darling Harbour waterfront and picked the Adrian Restaurant as our dining spot. It was on the waterfront and our table had a water view but the service was less than acceptable. Having the tip in the price of the meals there is no way to not appreciate the service. After our culinary experience we walked down the harbour to check out the location where we are to go for our harbour cruise tomorrow.

20 Apr 2017 - Thursday

Sydney, AU

After a quick breakfast in our hotel room we made our way back to Darling Harbour, Pier 26 for our Harbour excursion tour. The boat took us to the Sydney Zoo across the harbour first. A Safari Cable car took us from the boat wharf to the Zoo entrance. We looked around the

- SSHEZ Harbour Express Cruise & Zoo
pickup - 9:15 am Darling Harbour Pier 26
Transport - Boat Cruise
Duration - 2h

Note: *be there 30m early*

Drop off - 11:15 am No.6 Circular Quay
Darling Harbour

Captain Cook Cruises Tel: (02)9206 1111

Confirmation #: 24HQ2G / 339043 2 adults

Includes: Sydney Harbour Explorer Cruise
Tango Zoo Entry,
Sky Safari Cable Car

Zoo for a couple of hours and had lunch at a food court before we boarded another boat to continue our cruise to Manly Beach and the mouth of the Sydney Harbour where it meets the ocean.

Dropped us off at Manly Beach we walked through a street of Souvenir shops of all descriptions and open air restaurants before we got to the ocean side of Manly Beach. The sandy beach went for miles in all direction. We walked part of the beach, sat on the sand and watched the surfers, sunbathers and ocean. We stopped in at a beach pub and

had a sandwich lunch and washed it down with wine and beer before returning to the wharf and boarding our boat back to Darling Harbour. After a short rest at the hotel, we headed back to Darling Harbour for dinner and ended up at the same restaurant as before after scouring through many harbour side restaurant and not finding what and where we wanted to eat. The service was a little better but not by much.

21 Apr 2017 - Friday

Sydney - Ayres Rock, AU

Checking out of the hotel went smoothly and our limo arrived a few minutes early. The driver, a Serbian middle aged man, told us he owned his own limo business. As he explained, he was born in Serbia but grew up in Germany. He married a German woman who worked for a pharmaceutical company and they were sent to Australia as part of her job. They have lived here

for 14 years however they travel between here and Germany twice a year as they have a house in Düsseldorf. They have a son who lives in the US.

We got to the airport in good time, check in and through security quickly before boarding the plane for Ayres Rock. (Security was less intense than in North America.) Our flight on Virgin Australia departed on time at 08:30 am and arrived at Ayres Rock airport as advertised at 1315 hrs. (Temperature a reasonable +27C and sunny. Our transport, an AAT King Coach, bus was already waiting for us to take us to our hotel/motel where it took a longer to check as it was the only accommodations in the area.



Finally in our room, we unpacked, changed and left right away to join our tour bus for the Uluru Rock (Ayres Rock by white man's name), local area and aboriginal historic site and cultural centre. The soil is red everywhere (Ferric Oxide most likely). The vegetation is like in a savanna. Trees are stunted and bushes sparse with wild grass growing everywhere. Roads are narrow and only the main roads and highways are paved.

We were bussed onto the Uluru sacred site park where we were driven around the rock itself before taken to the native cultural centre and shopping. Once in the centre we were not allowed to take pictures. The cultural centre exhibited information articles about the indigenous people's beliefs and their teaching stories. Their history goes back 35,000 plus years - meaning that the indigenous people can trace their culture back at least that far. Their story is that they have women business and men business - each with its own laws and practices. And although they keep each side separate they compliment and complete each other. Each side is equally important and decisive as the other. Their art reflects their beliefs and stories. Boys at age 8 and below stay with the women's group. After that they are taken by the men's group and thought hunting, fishing, warfare and weapons handling. The women's group teach the girls growing food, making meals, etc..



Eventually we went for a small walk about and story time with our guide. After this interlude we were drive by bus to a viewing site to watch the sunset over the Rock. Tour guides set up tables for food and wine while we watched the sunset over the Rock and took pictures.

The Rock was formed 400 million years ago and comprises of sand stone. As the oceans came and went sediments built up and deposited layers of sand which over time and pressure turned to stone. During a major upheaval the rock was shifted 90 degrees. It extends 6 kilometres under ground and is visible 1000 feet above ground level. The change in the colouration of the rock as the sun is setting is breathtaking.

22 Apr 2017 - Saturday

Ayres Rock - Kings Canyon, AU

They offered an Urulu Sunrise and Kata Tjuta excursion leaving six in the morning but we declined as we had sleepless night with large centipedes and little mice scurrying around and keeping us awake. In the morning we had an expensive and only available breakfast on the hotel premises and then checked out from the hotel around 1000 hrs. While waiting for our transport we went shopping for souvenirs for family and friends and took in the local native art which was actively offered at every stall.

Our bus finally arrived around 12:45 pm and we set off to continue our tour for Kings Canyon. The trip was tedious and long through savanna like country, semi desert areas, flat featureless with a few hills thrown in for variety. We stopped at Curtin Springs, a cattle station for relief and a bite to eat, around 2:00 pm. The weather was continuously hot, humid and cloudless for most part. Next stop was Mount Conner, a 75 million years old rock formation not as deep as Urulu but almost as high out of the ground at 860 metres. Took a few pictures and back on the bus to continue our journey.

We eventually arrived at Kings Canyon, which was originally settled by Cottrell and started a small settlement. Along the route, just before Kings Canyon several large ranches have been established. Each about several thousand hectares, grazing around 3000 cattle and wild camels (which were brought here by the white explorers/settlers). Today the camel training is big business as Arab countries buy Australian camels for \$1000 each and ship it back to the middle east. The



entire countryside is red soiled with trees a little taller in the Canyon area than on the flat lands.

The aboriginal people we saw up to now were short, squat, with distorted features, at least to my white man's eyes. After arriving at the Canyon, our driver showed us the start of the guided canyon walk (for which we did not sign up for. The price for this conducted walkabout was \$70 per person which was ridiculous so we elected not to go on it.) Once checked in we went to a viewing area where we watched the sun set over the canyon's bluff. Noting spectacular at least not like at Urulu.

By now we were tired of looking at rocks and sunsets (the Grand Canyon of Arizona is far more spectacular.) Had dinner at the Carmidad dinning room on the premises where the only meal was pork rolls.

23 Apr 2017 - Sunday

Kings Canyon - Alice Springs

Bright sunny morning as we got up, showered, dressed and went for breakfast at the local dinning hall. The AAT Kings Tour Coach picked us up on time at 11:45 am and drove us for seven hours to Alice Springs. Along the way we stopped at a previous cattle station for lunch, then onto a rendezvous with other buses for passenger exchange. Next we drove through countryside with more vegetation, trees more abundant, taller and fuller with branches and leaves, indicating more water in the ground. The landscape still had a bit of Mars like feeling and appearance with out cropping of fractured rock formations.



We finally arrived in Alice Springs around 7:30 pm. (As we entered the city we could not help to observe a high security US installation on the outskirts)

Our accommodations, the Chifley Alice Springs Resort, was not much more than a hotel and even less of a resort. We checked in and after finding our room, we went for dinner at the hotel restaurant by pool. Next I went and checked on our transport for tomorrow, for which we were advised to do so, and arranged for a 4:00 pm hrs checkout (because we were staying in our room after check out time, it cost us an extra \$49 AU).

24 Apr 2017 - Monday

Alice Springs - Cairns, AU



Our transport arrived at 3:30 pm, 30 minutes before agreed time and was waiting for us when we checked out of the hotel. Since we were early for our flight, Harry, our transport driver gave us a little tour of Alice Springs by taking us up to a central hill where there is an ANZAC memorial marker (Australian New Zealand Army Core) much like our war cenotaph. He brought us here as ANZAC day will be celebrated all over Australia and New Zealand tomorrow, much like our Remembrance Day. Harry also gave us a little history lesson about the Australian - New Zealand engagements in WWI, especially his take on the campaign at Gallipoli, Turkey. In his youth around 1969 he spent 6 months in an Israeli Kibbutz.

We arrived at the airport two hours early as our Qantas Airways flight did not leave until 5:45 pm. The airport was almost deserted except for the employees.

We breezed through check-in then security and with time to spare. We had lunch and read our books until boarding and looking around in the airport shop purchased a genuine kangaroo skin bush hat (the highlight of my day).



The flight to Cairns on the Boeing 717-200 was uneventful. The aircraft was half empty so we had lots of room to spread out. We arrived on time in Cairns and our transport was already waiting for us to take us to our hotel, the Holiday Inn Cairns Harbourside, which was centrally located on the edge of town centre at the Esplanade, with the bay shores of Cairns

located just a few steps away. We checked in at the hotel and received a room upgrade. After settling in, hungry we went downstairs to the bar to have a pizza for our dinner. We sat outside on the hotel patio enjoying the balmy +24C evening temperature and clear night skies

25 Apr 2017 - Tuesday

Cairns, AU

We woke early, had breakfast in the hotel restaurant and waited only a short while for our coach transport, which arrived right on time for our Barrier Reef Tour, conducted by the Quicksilver Cruises. We were the last group of people the bus had to pick up before heading out to our destination. The coach headed out of town and travelling North on winding but very scenic roads it took us a good hour out of Cairns to reach the very quaint tourist port town of Port Douglas. We were taken directly to our quay where we boarded a large catamaran to take us out to outer barrier reefs.



After an hour of cruising we arrived at a large floating platform at the Agincourt Reefs. On embarking on the platform we were given black coveralls, diving masks, fins and snorkels. Next we were treated to a bountiful smorgasbord lunch. While on route to the reef we signed up for a 45 minute underwater snorkel tour around the diving platform. So after lunch we got suited up and went on our own snorkelling around the platform. We came back onto the

platform to warm up and have some snacks before joining our guided underwater tour, which was informative, All in all we had a wonderful snorkelling experience on the reef, where the colours, the corals, the variety of sea life was amazing. We drifted over white, green, purple and black

corals. The sea urchins, giant clams (at least 3 feet across), clownfish and anything in between including a small sea turtle feeding on the moss covering the corals was amazing. After the tour we dried off got back into our dry clothing shortly before our catamaran left for the return trip to Port Douglas.



The coach trip back to the hotel was a flash, as we were both tired and snoozed along the way. Back at the hotel we rested and changed, then went into town along the waterfront to find a restaurant for dinner. There were so many to choose from, but we settled on an Austrian style

eatery, The Schnitz, sitting at an outside table near the walkway where we had pork schnitzel and strudel for dinner complimented with some fine Australian white wine. We sat and talked into the

evening then returned to our hotel via a lazy meandering route. The day was amazing and we slept like a log.

26 Apr 2017 - Wednesday

Cairns, AU

We were up early again at 6:45 am and after a quick breakfast in the hotel restaurant, had the front desk check on our tour for pickup time. *Kuranda Classic Tour & Train Skyrail* - Our Tour bus arrived on time and we were taken to the Kuranda Tarin Station. (The story behind the train line construction to Kuranda is that the gold and tin miners in the mountains during bad weather days could not get food and equipment supplies up into the mountain over the rough and steep terrain back in the mid 1870's. The government of the day decided to build a railway up to



them in the mountain to resupply them and transport the minerals down and to the ships. The work was entirely done by hand and hand tools. They moved track up the steep and rocky mountain side and cut 42 tunnels to get to the top now known as Kuranda. A total of 30 men died building the rail line.)

The train ride was interesting going through the steep and scenic panoramic landscape. The rail route twisted through several switchbacks and at the midway point stopped and passengers were let off to

take pictures of waterfalls and steep valley views. When we arrived in Kuranda, large groups of tourist were already milling around. It was a quaint little town with lots of shops and site attractions to see. Susan took great delight in looking around and shopping.

Our Kranga Classic Tour & Train Sky-rail tour included an Australian BBQ lunch with



kangaroo and alligator steaks as delicacies, but to my relief they also had BBQ chicken and beef. Next we were treated to a rain forest Army Duck trek through the rain forest outside of Kuranga. From there we were ushered into a theatre for viewing aboriginal dancing followed by a short walkabout in a small zoo and lessons in throwing a boomerang. The final stage of the tour was a very long sky cablecar ride from Kuranga to the base of the mountain where our bus picked us up and returned us to our hotel. Great day but long!

27Apr 2017 - Thursday

Cairns, AU

This was a day to ourselves, so we slept in a little then had breakfast in the hotel restaurant before heading out to explore the city of Cairns. We walked downtown and along the waterfront,

into side streets and had lunch on the wharf. Later back at the hotel we relaxed by the pool and sat in the hot tub.



In the evening we had dinner out in the town at a Kino game supported restaurant where they gave us a one day membership so we can eat there. It was on the main road across from the water front. After a nice leisurely walk back to the hotel we packed and went to bed early.

28 Apr 2017 - Friday

Cairns - Sydney, AU - Auckland, NZ - Vancouver, BC

This is the part of our trip where a day lasted 48 hours.

Early up 4:00 am, quickly finished final packing and rushed breakfast in our room then went downstairs and checked out of our hotel room. We were picked up later than agreed. Eventually they did arrive at 5:00 am yet they managed to get us to the airport on time. (This was the first glitch in all of our travel on this trip.)

At the airport we received all of our tickets from Cairns all the way to Vancouver and our baggage was tagged all the way to Vancouver which was good.

Cairns to Sydney - Departed on Air New Zealand flight and arriving in Sydney three hours later. In Sydney we had to transfer to the international side of the airport, via bussing which was provided us to the international side. It was a long bus ride as the two terminals were quite far apart. At the international terminal we had to go through customs & immigration and then again through security which was ridiculous and comical. We were held up by two security agents which argued about the passengers ahead of us for carrying two many small lotion size containers of makeup. It was a joke (not funny though) watching these two agents arguing while we had to stand around watching the drama unfold. Finally another agent came along tagged our water bottle and Susan's lotion and let us through. (I lost my water bottle to the agent, but Susan was allowed to keep her lotion.) Sydney International Terminal is massive and filled with the most expensive shops we have seen anywhere. In fact most of the departure area was filled up with these shops making the poor travellers walk long distances just to get to their departure gates. We had to search for our departure gates as they do not get assigned until 30 minutes before departure, then you rush around to find departure lounge and gate. Once there the rest went smoothly.

Sydney to Auckland - Departed on Air New Zealand flight at 11:50 am (local) and we arrived in Auckland little over five hours later. We departed on time and en-route we were served wine with our meal. The flight was uneventful and we arrived on time in Auckland.

Auckland to Vancouver - Once again on Air New Zealand we departed Auckland a on time 8:10 pm (local). The flight took a little over thirteen hours, arriving in Vancouver at 2.20 pm (local). Two hours into the flight we were fed and wine then the lights were dimmed and passengers tried to sleep. I am one that can't sleep on an airplane due to an earlier experience. On arrival in Vancouver we had to go through customs & immigration without incident.