

Last of Melbourne

Tuesday: Angela's Birthday!

Back in Melbourne, Nick and I agreed how quickly a place feels like 'home.' And Tuesday was Angela's birthdayso, after a birthday breakfast and gifts, we set out for the day, Angela the proud owner of a new camera, wearing her birthday necklace and earrings and her exclusively-sourced, non-op-shop dress – classy! Oh, and the new hat completed the outfit.



First we travelled down to the city and took the tram to the Botanical Gardens, stopping first at the Shrine of Remembrance where we spent no less than an hour. At home we can remember the Fallen by visiting the fields in Flanders, but none of the bodies of the Australian dead were returned to their home soil. Consequently they needed a focus of remembrance. So this impressive building was erected after a competition with a great number of entries. We all

agreed that the building was so entirely suited to purpose, a partly Greek, partly Aztec, grandiose structure on a splendid site, with views down a wide avenue to the city centre. We were reminded of Stonehenge when it was explained that on the 11th day of the 11th month, a light strikes the memorial stone in the heart of the building. Just before 11 o'clock on 11th November, the sun's rays pass through two holes positioned in adjacent layers of the roof-work to cross the stone, highlighting the word "Love" on the stroke of eleven. So .. yet another reminder of Australia's involvement in the two World Wars and other armed struggles thereafter.



From the Shrine we went across the way to the Botanical Gardens, where we spent a couple of hours and indeed, could have spent several days, amid the beautiful trees, shrubs and flower borders and particularly the children's area. Foot-weary (especially me!) we made our way back to Duke Street on the tram for a very late lunch and a rest! After supper we sallied forth again to catch the Shrine and the city by night – very much worthwhile .

Wednesday

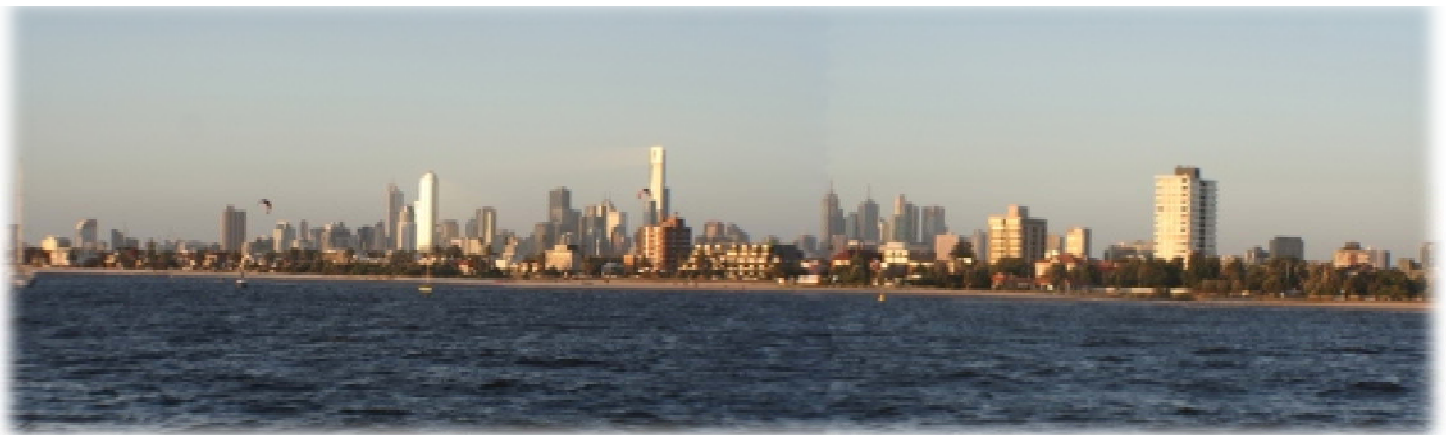
I trawled the Opp shops this morning as I am already panicking about smarter gear for the cruise home and figure that 'trendy' Melbourners might off-load barely-used stuff that will suit me! Angela had already found an area of 'rich-pickings!' Sadly, no bargains were awaiting me! Shucks!



In the afternoon, off we went on the tram down to the city. A crowded freebie tram around the sites/sights proved unbearable, so we decanted off, and on to the regular service and I returned back to base while the others continued, cameras at the ready. I haven't mentioned that my camera was the only 'casualty' of our time spent in the wilderness of the bush, awaiting rescue. It fell into the mud, albeit momentarily, but is well and truly 'buggered' as the Australians say!

In the evening, I opted out of the visit to see the penguins, down at St Kilda, just as well, as the other two waited patiently with over 300 other folk, for over an hour, to see the adult penguins returning

from the briny to their youngsters.



Yes, with Angela, I (Nick) caught the tram to St Kilda – I had planned to see the penguins since

our first visit to this beach early in the month. I had seen a plaque requesting that flash was not used for photography as it confused the penguins. It transpired that, on a 100metre length of rock promontory, there was a colony of 1200 Little Penguins and that soon after sunset the adult birds returned from their



foraging at sea. We arrived on the pier just before eight o'clock and watched some impressive Kite-surfing before walking the full length of the pier to stand and wait...and wait .. and wait. We were able to see one or two of the babies but it wasn't until we'd decided, at 9.30, when the light was too low for photography, to head for home, that the first adults started clambering up the rocks.

Thursday

A marathon day was prepared by Angela who had been charmed by the Dandenongs, just 35km SE of Melbourne, discovering them on a particularly wonderfully clear day before Christmas when we were in Lara. This stand of hills, not so different to our Malverns, is delightful, with woodland homes and small picturesque settlements abundant. As we missed our first 'train to bus' transfer, due to the train being five minutes behind schedule, getting about for the



day was especially challenging – I guess we hopped on a fair few buses going back and forth to our destinations, Angela madly finding the appropriate page in her bus timetable at regular intervals. First, were the rhododendron gardens where we were able to enjoy the lovely hillside

plantings and see the end of the flowering azaleas and rhododendra.

Then a couple more buses, with a picnic stop en route, took us to the William Ricketts Sanctuary where clay sculptures are found, set among the towering gum trees, ferns, and moss-covered rocks. Ricketts had a passion for the natural environment and developed a special respect for the aboriginal peoples who, he considered, lived in harmony with nature. His presentation of Christ's crucifixion with aboriginal figures on the adjoining crosses is an interpretation of history that has caused some controversy here. Our final bus rides took us to the viewing point, high up, where, on a good day you can see Port Philip Bay and the beyond. Angela had been lucky on her first visit, raving about the blue mountain ranges, but today, a heat haze settled over the land. Our final bus took us back down to the railway and 'home', foot-weary and ready for supper and bed!



And Friday.....

Our final day in Melbourne, is dedicated to preparations for the next stage of our Journey. Having had no luck trawling the Opp shops for smart gear for our cruise, I tried the factory outlet shops in Bridge Street, setting out as the sky was clearing and returning with just two purchases: a pair of trousers and a t-shirt for the princely sum of \$49, both major reductions. By the time I returned to Duke Street with bread for lunch, the temperature was approaching 30 degrees and I was as red as a beetroot and ready for lunch and a rest. Nick, meanwhile, had had a laid-back morning, though he had erected a tripod to support an olive tree growing in a pot on the deck outside our bedroom, and had started packing up; an operation which lasted, on and off, for the rest of the day. Finally, at seven or so, the three of us enjoyed a good meal together, a bottle of red , and a game of Rummicub.

Tasmania beckons.