

Sunday April 16 (Easter Sunday)

We drove downtown and quickly found a place for breakfast and then checked out of the hotel. We had a relatively short drive today (poor planning!) so decided to spend a little while in Mt Gambier before moving on to our next destination. It turns out that we found several interesting sites and it was about noon before we left the city.

First, Mt Gambier has a number of fine buildings, including the city hall and a number of hotels and civic buildings. Many had wrought iron balconies that we have seen in many stops in Australia so far. So, it was interesting to spend some time admiring the main streets.



Mt Gambier: some fine older buildings and an unusual modern structure

Perhaps even more interesting and certainly unusual are the several sink holes that have developed over the years right in the middle of town. The area sits on thick limestone (formed as a result of an earlier inland sea) and water seepage down cracks has led to significant underground erosion and the occasional collapse such that a deep hole suddenly formed in the earth. Two of these that we saw were about 100 feet deep and both had been developed into public gardens with stairs and walkways down to the bottom of the well-landscaped hole. One of them in fact had been the garden for a large home built near the hole. The home has since been demolished but the beautiful garden still exists.





Two Sinkholes in Mt Gambier

The one shown below and right is in the middle of town (note the nearby housing)



In another part of town there are two lakes, each resulting from volcanic activity relatively recently – perhaps less than 4000 years ago. The one we visited – Blue Lake – is a smaller version of Crater Lake in Oregon and apparently is a very deep blue in the middle of summer. It was still clearly blue today but beginning to transform to its winter gray. It has a circumference of about 3 miles and a water depth of up to 250 feet so is no small hole. It also provides the city's water.



Within 20 miles of Mt Gambier as we headed south we crossed from South Australia into Victoria and, in so doing, lost 30 minutes! From there to the town of Portland where we had lunch, it was a beautiful drive through rolling farmland above the Southern Ocean, of which we got the occasional view as the road neared the coast. The grain and dairy and sheep farm land looked very much like many parts of Southern England, although the fields were larger and the trees unfamiliar to our eyes. There were huge herds of cattle and fields filled with sheep which, together with several large forest plantations, made for a very scenic drive.



Portland is a working port but also has some beautiful public green areas overlooking beaches and the ocean and is a center for whale watching at the right time of year (not now). We were now at one of several southerly promontories along the coast and almost as far south as we would be on the

next day as we traveled the Great Ocean Road. Meanwhile we had one more night in Warrnambool, itself on the ocean, but we crossed 60 more miles of lovely farmland before we reached our hotel in the late afternoon. Tonight we ate at a restaurant on the waterfront, although we didn't see much as it was already fully dark when we were eating.

Monday April 17

We found a café for breakfast after checking out of the hotel and we started our day on the Great Ocean Road around 9:30. It was a little cool as we started but the temperature was forecast to reach the seventies and it was a beautiful sunny day.

The Great Ocean Road spans 250 Km between Warrnambool and Torquay but not all of it hugs the ocean. For perhaps a third of its length the road cuts inland and climbs to several hundred feet about sea level and the scenery changes completely. Inland there are steep climbs through conifer plantations and the ever-present eucalyptus, as well as broad hillsides of grassland. In other places the road travels through farm land and, as we saw yesterday, could be Southern England or even the rolling hills near our home in Ohio. It really is wonderful scenery and on its own would be well worth the drive. It is the ocean view, however, that attracts the visitor and this must be one of the most spectacular and interesting Oceanside drives in the world.

It is unlike Route 1 in California in that it runs essentially at the same level (except for the inland portions mentioned above) about 200 feet above sea level and there are dozens of easy access points to overlooks of interest. The vast majority of these are concentrated in a 30 mile stretch and it is here where the tourists are most prevalent – especially on a beautiful holiday as the one we were experiencing.

The coastal views also differ from those in California in that there are many more off shore “islands” and rocks which have been eroded by sea and wind into some very unusual and fascinating shapes. Many have been given names (The Twelve Apostles, London Bridge, etc) but the attraction is in the rock formations, their color and in the manner in which they were formed – and continue to change.



Great
Ocean Road







***The Twelve Apostles
on
The Great Ocean
Road***

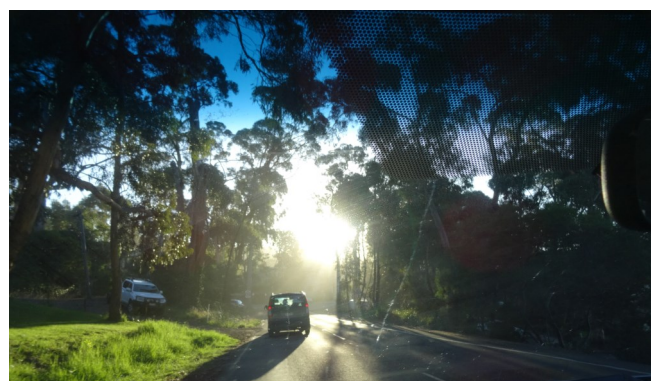


We stopped at all of the overlooks on this most popular stretch and walked for a few yards or as much as ½ mile at each to get the views from every vantage point. The walks themselves were generally quite flat on a hard surface so access to the cliff side was usually quite easy.





Inland stretches of the Great Ocean Road



By the end of our sightseeing day, however, we had walked several miles and we still had over 100 Km of driving to reach Melbourne. Fortunately this was via a fast motorway but it was after 7pm when we checked into our hotel in the middle of town. We showered and changed and walked a long block to a so-so restaurant for dinner – but were pleased to find anywhere open on this final evening of a four day weekend Easter Holiday.

Monday April 18

We were up before eight and started our day of sightseeing in this city of 4 million population. Melbourne is yet another Australian city founded on gold and in fact was the site of the biggest gold rush in the world in the mid-1800s. This wealth not only brought a lot of people here but it also facilitated the construction of some very beautiful buildings, many of which are still standing, often tucked in between two ultra-modern skyscrapers. These latter are of every conceivable design and, thankfully, are not simply glass and steel boxes. In fact, the variety reminded us very much of the new city of Shanghai, although Melbourne is generally much more open and has a lot of green space.

The city offers a Visitor Shuttle bus service around the middle of town (\$7.50 for two days) which provides a good way to get an overview of the city itself but is also convenient transportation between areas of interest. Melbourne also has an excellent tram service and, again, the central city loop is designed for tourists and is free of charge.

We bought two day tickets for the shuttle bus and started our tour. Our first stop was at the Queen Victoria Market where there is a large fruit and vegetable section and an even bigger “souvenir” area. We wandered around the market for over an hour before getting back on the bus to visit two additional areas near the riverfront. From the bus and our stops we got a good look at many of the attractions of this wonderful city.



As usual on a bus ride around a city, getting good pictures of the buildings, parks and street life is somewhat difficult and often results in blurred or “crooked” photographs of unidentified places. Nevertheless, the samples from this day give a feel for how diverse a city is Melbourne, with two hundred year old buildings sitting next to—and between—much more modern designs.



The Magnificent 1909 Flinders Railway Station



Melbourne Cricket Ground

Etihad Stadium, Melbourne built for Australian Rules Football.

Not to be confused with the home of Manchester City Football Club in England!

Melbourne sits at the mouth of the Yarra River and only a few miles from the Ocean (Southern, Pacific??). As a consequence, the Melbourne docks are very close to the central business district. The docks are a very large complex and the port is the busiest container port in the whole of Australia. Many of the older wharfs, however, had fallen into disuse as the port moved

downstream as a result of bridge building and other projects. In recent years—and certainly since our previous visit in 2003—these docklands have undergone a revitalization as modern office, retail and residential facilities have been built. Our bus tour took us to one of these now vibrant areas and we got off for a stroll along the old wharf, now in the shadows of ultra modern skyscrapers.



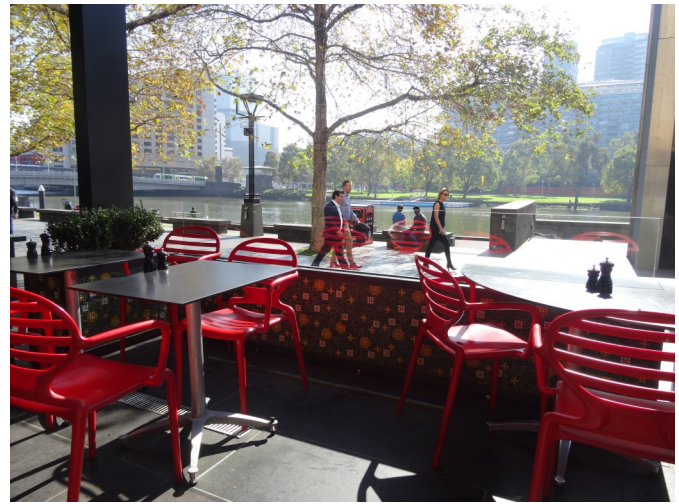
*The Modern Docklands area;
Modern buildings, old wharves
and pleasant green space*

We made one more stop at the area known as Southbank where both sides of the river have a wide walking promenade and dozens of shops, cafes, restaurants and entertainment facilities.



Southbank



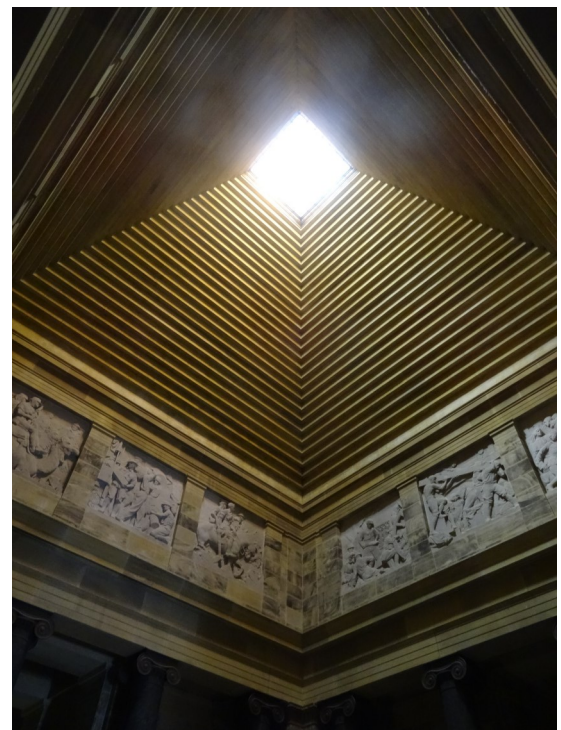


We had lunch at a café on one of the promenades before strolling back to the hotel in the middle of the afternoon.

Tonight we walked about 4 blocks to cross the river and eat at a very nice restaurant on the Southbank promenade. "Rockpool" was expensive but the food and service were excellent as was the ambiance.

Wednesday April 19

We had a later start today but, after breakfast at the same café we enjoyed yesterday, we took the first bus of the day and used our tickets purchased yesterday. We rode as far as the Botanic Gardens and the Shrine. The latter is a huge building built in 1934 to honor those lost in World War I. The names of all the war dead from the State of Victoria are listed on books kept inside the hall and the inside is relatively simple but moving. Nearby this place to commemorate "the war to end all wars" are sadly – but inevitably – additional memorials honoring those lost in World War II and all subsequent conflicts. Next Tuesday is ANZAC day on which Australia honors its war dead and this site is planning services and parades beginning at dawn. Presumably we will see similar activity when we are in Sydney.





The botanical gardens provided a pleasant contrast to the Shrine and we strolled through the Australian forest and camellia section and beautiful grassy areas before having a cup of tea and returning to the bus.



This time we got off at Federation Square, which is the main meeting place for locals, and walked to the river where we were just in time for a one hour cruise on the River Yarra through the center of the city and to the docks. It was a very pleasant way to spend an hour and we got a different view of the buildings of the central business district.



Melbourne Convention Centre



Melbourne Container Port



The Eureka Tower (left) is named after the Eureka Stockade, a rebellion during the Victorian gold rush in 1854. This has been incorporated into the design, with the building's gold crown representing the gold rush and a red stripe representing the blood spilt during the revolt. The blue glass cladding that covers most of the building represents the blue background of the stockade's flag and the white lines also represent the Eureka Stockade flag. The white horizontal stripes also represent markings on a surveyor's measuring staff.



To get back to the hotel we took advantage of the free tram which runs around the center of the city in both

directions. We chose to take the “long” way round and so saw many of the parks and major civic buildings once again. It was a great way to complete our two days of sightseeing in Melbourne. Interestingly, Molly had brought her diary that included what we saw here on our first visit 10 years ago. Although we repeated a number of the sights from last time, it is interesting to read just how much more “per hour” we were able to do when we were ten years younger!



Tonight we walked back to Southbank and had another good meal, this time Italian at Rosetta. It was another excellent meal and a nice way to say "au revoir" to a great city.



Melbourne is the capital and most populous city of the Australian state of Victoria, and the second-most populous city in Australia and Oceania. The name "Melbourne" refers to an urban agglomeration spanning 3,800 sq miles which comprises the broader metropolitan area, as well as being the common name for its city center. The metropolis is located on the large natural bay of Port Phillip and expands into the hinterlands towards the Dandenong and Macedon mountain ranges, Mornington Peninsula and Yarra Valley. Melbourne consists of 31 municipalities and has a population of over 4.6 millions. Its inhabitants are called Melburnians.

Founded by free settlers from the British Crown colony of Van Diemen's Land on 30 August 1835, in what was then the colony of New South Wales, it was incorporated as a Crown settlement in 1837. It was named "Melbourne" by the Governor of New South Wales, Sir Richard Bourke, in honor of the British Prime Minister of the day, William Lamb, 2nd Viscount Melbourne. It was officially declared a city by Queen Victoria in 1847, after which it became the capital of the newly founded colony of Victoria in 1851. During the Victorian gold rush of the 1850s, it was transformed into one of the world's largest and wealthiest cities. After the federation of Australia in 1901, it served as the nation's interim seat of government until 1927.

Melbourne rates highly in education, entertainment, health care, research and development, tourism and sport, making it the world's most livable city—for the sixth year in a row in 2016 (according to the Economist Intelligence Unit). It is a leading financial center in the Asia-Pacific region and is referred to as Australia's "cultural capital". It is the birthplace of Australian impressionism, Australian rules football, the Australian film and television industries, and Australian contemporary dance. It is recognized as a UNESCO City of Literature and a major center for street art, music and theatre. It is home to many of Australia's largest and oldest cultural institutions such as the Melbourne Cricket Ground, the National Gallery of Victoria, the State Library of Victoria and the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Royal Exhibition Building. It was the host city of the 1956 Summer Olympics and the 2006 Commonwealth Games.

Melbourne is also home to Australia's most extensive freeway network and has the world's largest urban tram network.

Thursday April 20

Today we had a long drive (over 400 miles) to reach Canberra, so we left Melbourne about 8am. We found our way out of the city (with one misstep) and then were on motorway essentially for the rest of the journey. We made two stops – one for breakfast and one for a lunchtime snack – but other than that we kept going and arrived at the hotel in the Nation's Capital about 5pm.

It was a very pleasant drive through some gorgeous countryside – with the emphasis on “country”. Apart from the two small towns we stopped at (and these were a few kilometers off the motorway) we saw no other towns and were driving through farmland the whole way. We were also driving up and down some hills and reached an altitude of about 3000 feet, although we saw mountains to the east that were over 5000 feet. At this time of the year none were snow covered and all were brown with some shades of green right to their tops. The region was labeled “Alpine” so we guess that there are some winter sports in the area.



The farming was mostly cattle and sheep although presumably there were hayfields here not too long ago which have now been fully harvested. There were a few conifer plantations but most of the trees were indigenous and scattered across the hilly ground. Other than the Adelaide Hills and parts of the Great Ocean Road, these were the only hills we have seen the entire way across the country and it made the drive all the more interesting. Although we didn't capture much in pictures we both commented that the rolling countryside was at times English and at times more like the foothills of northern California. Molly said it best when she said that “nothing looked unfamiliar”. Again, a beautiful drive on a lovely warm day with clear blue skies most of the way.

For dinner we walked to the casino right next to the hotel and had a superb meal – perhaps the best so far – in the “Natural 9” restaurant. The portions were just right and everything was delicious. We also had a good conversation with our young waiter who was very much into military aircraft and tried to persuade us that we should stay in Canberra for ANZAC Day next week.

Friday April 21

We were up later today but just managed to catch the first Hop on/Hop off bus that stopped outside our hotel at 9:30. This was billed as a 90 minute tour of this city built specifically to be Australia's capital and would highlight most of the civic buildings.

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT; formerly, "The Territory for the Seat of Government" and, later, the "Federal Capital Territory") is the federal district in the south east of Australia, enclaved within New South Wales. Its only city is Canberra, the capital city of Australia.

The need for a national territory was flagged by colonial delegates during the Federation conventions of the late 19th century. Section 125 of the Australian Constitution provided that, following Federation in 1901, land would be ceded freely to the new Federal Government. The territory was transferred to the Commonwealth by the state of New South Wales in 1911, two years prior to the naming of Canberra as the national capital in 1913.

The ACT is independent of any state to prevent any one state from gaining an advantage by hosting the seat of Commonwealth power. The ACT has voting representation in the Commonwealth Parliament, and has its own independent Legislative Assembly and government, similar to the states.

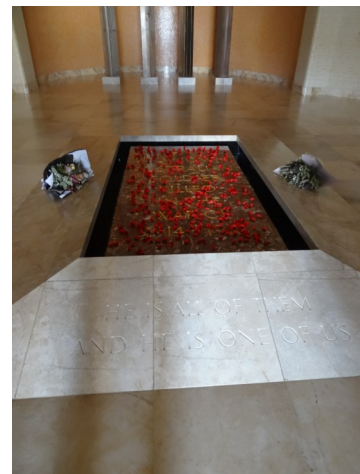
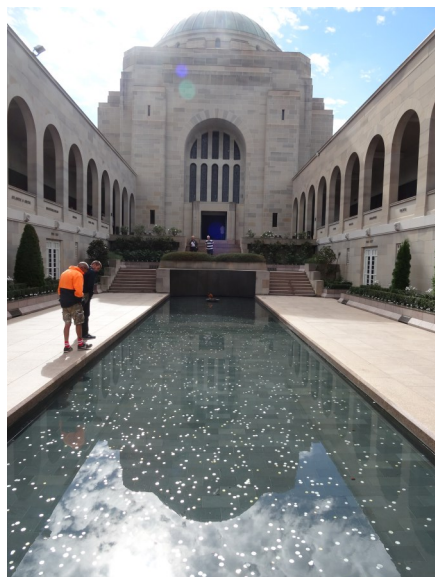
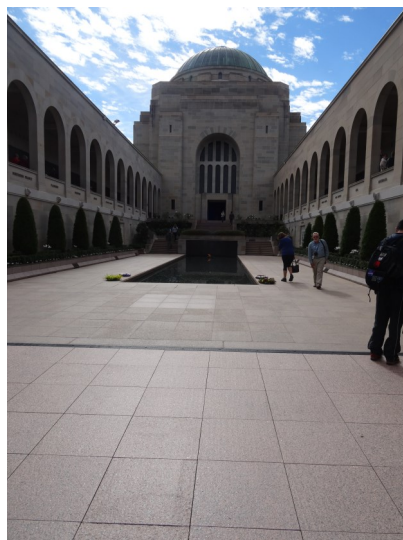
Canberra is the capital city of Australia. With a population of 381,488, it is Australia's largest inland city and the eighth-largest city overall. The city is located at the northern end of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), 170 miles south-west of Sydney, and 410 miles north-east of Melbourne. Although Canberra is the capital and seat of government, many federal government ministries have secondary seats in Sydney, as does the Governor-General and the Prime Minister.

The site of Canberra was selected for the location of the nation's capital in 1908 as a compromise between rivals Sydney and Melbourne, Australia's two largest cities. It is unusual among Australian cities, being an entirely planned city outside of any state, similar to Washington, D.C. in the United States. Following an international contest for the city's design, a blueprint by American architects Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin was selected and construction commenced in 1913. The Griffins' plan featured geometric motifs such as circles, hexagons and triangles, and was centered on axes aligned with significant topographical landmarks in the Australian Capital Territory.

The city's design was influenced by the garden city movement and incorporates significant areas of natural vegetation that have earned Canberra the title of the "bush capital". The growth and development of Canberra were hindered by the World Wars and the Great Depression, but the national capital emerged as a thriving city after World War II.

As the seat of the government of Australia, Canberra is the site of Parliament House, the official residence of the Monarch's representative the Governor-General, the High Court and numerous government departments and agencies. It is also the location of many social and cultural institutions of national significance. The Australian Army's officer corps is trained at the Royal Military College and the Australian Defense Force Academy is also located in the capital.

We got off first at the National War Memorial, which is similar in construction to the one we had seen in Melbourne but is quite a bit bigger. Again, it was a rather somber place to be but it is very well presented and a fitting memorial to Australia's war dead. The huge domed structure also contains the tomb of Australia's Unknown Soldier.



The Australian National War Memorial

***and preparations for
ANZAC Day***



The memorial sits on high ground and is in line with both the new and old parliament buildings and a long mall, similar to that in Washington DC. This is perhaps not too surprising as the design of the city was made by an American, who won a competition in the early 1900s as the city was chosen for the capital of the New Federation. Apparently both Sydney and Melbourne wanted the new capital so Canberra was a compromise and, we were told, one that was recommended by the Defense authorities as being less likely to be attacked by foreign aggressors. Whatever the reason, the city was “built from scratch” and so could incorporate any design and could be laid out to any plan far more easily than building in already established cities.

Today Canberra is still a relatively small city of 300,000 and sits in the Australia Capital Territory, an area of Federal land given by the state of New South Wales. The ACT has similar autonomy to that of the Australian states and, as such, bears another similarity to DC.

From the War Memorial we went to the new Parliament Building, a structure completed in 1988 in a very modern design. Again, an American was one of four designers given the job and he settled in Canberra for the rest of his life – which ended just last year. We did a self-guided tour of the building with its Senate and House chambers much like any US Capitol. In fact, the parliamentary system here seems to take equally from the British and US forms of government, with House representatives having some measure of proportional representation and the Senate having an equal number of senators (12) from each state regardless of size or population. The two Territories (the ACT and the huge Northern Territory) elect two senators each.



The New Parliament Building and its main lobby.

The House of Representatives Chamber



The Mall from the Parliament Building

