## More World Travels of Mrs Dog 2017



Visits to Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia and America

By Robert and Molly Hillery

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In the past year, Mrs Dog has once again traveled over 50,000 miles which is equivalent to going around the world twice! Along with Grandma and Granddad, she has visited five continents and been in ten different countries. Sometimes a country visit meant stopping in one city only for a day but in others she traveled across the entire country and visited many different cities and places of interest. She has been on airplanes, trains, ships, buses and in cars and has walked (or been carried) over one hundred miles.

In addition to the three major trips that are covered in detail in this book, Mrs Dog also spent time driving through the western United States and in England. And, as you know, during one of those trips to England she was joined by her California family as they traveled in many areas of Great Britain.



Our first major trip in 2017 was to take a cruise in the western half of the Mediterranean Sea. This Sea separates Europe from Africa and is connected to the Atlantic Ocean through a very narrow opening called the Straits of Gibraltar. This gap between two continents is only about nine miles wide; otherwise the Mediterranean Sea would be completely enclosed like a huge lake.

In the drawing you can see the route that we followed in the cruise ship. We started in Rome, Italy, after spending a few days in this wonderful ancient city and then sailed in a generally clockwise direction until we reached Barcelona in Spain. You can also see that we visited two cities in North Africa (Tunis and Algiers) as well as the five stops in European countries.





Before starting our cruise we spent two days in the capital of Italy, Rome. This city has many ancient buildings (many in partial ruins) from the days of the great Roman Empire of 2000 and more years ago. At its height, the Roman Empire stretched from North Africa to northern England and from Spain to the Middle East. Perhaps the most visited of the buildings in Rome is the Colosseum, a huge oval amphitheater. It is the largest amphitheater ever built, could hold up to 80,000 spectators and was often used for gladiator ("swordsman") contests and public spectacles such as mock sea battles. Some of the sporting events held here were ones that we would not recognize and would not want to see today.

Next to the Colosseum is the Arch of Constantine, built for the emporer of that name to commemorate his many victories in battles all across the empire.







At the center of the old city was an area called The Forum. This was where most of the major government and public buildings were, as well as markets, temples and libraries. It was where the congress met and where important people of the time came to meet and talk. As Rome was the capital of a very big empire with lots of inhabitants, the Forum was a bit like Washington DC is to the United States. Or Sacrameto to California.

A place where every visitor to Rome must go is the Fountains of Trevi. These fountains and the pond in front have existed for almost 2000 years and it is said that if you toss a coin into the fountain (with your right hand over your left shoulder as Grandma did) you will return to Rome some day. It has always worked for us so far! Mabe it will for Mrs Dog.

So, after spending time in The Eternal City, it was time to leave Rome and get on board our cruise ship to sail to our other destinations.



Our ship was called the Viking Sea and was operated by the company called Viking. We had taken several river cruises with Viking but this was our first ocean cruise with them. The Viking Sea is quite a bit smaller than the Crown Princess that you have been on (twice) and carries about 900 passengers. We found it to be very comfortable and we enjoyed the balcony on our stateroom.

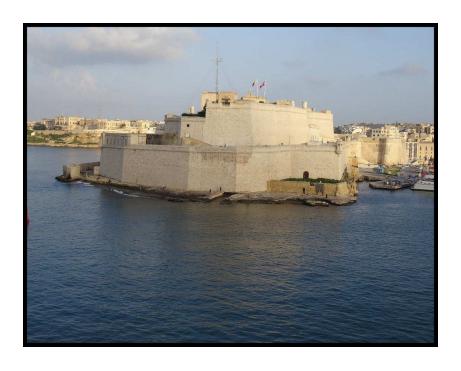


From Rome we cruised along the west coast of Italy and eventually passed near to the island of Sicily.

Sicily is part of Italy but is separated from the mainland by a narrow channel called the Straits of Messina.

From our balcony we could just make out one of the towns on the island of Sicily as it was beginning to get dark.

Grandma was already dressed





After sailing overnight from Rome we docked in the city of Valletta, the capital of Malta. Malta is very small but is in a key position in the Mediterranean and has been a fortress island for many centuries, during which it has been occupied by the Phoenicians, the Romans, the French and lastly, the British. It became an independent country in 1974.

In World War II, Malta was under siege for many months and was awarded the George Cross. The George Cross is a British medal, usually given to individuals for their bravery, but in this case it was presented to the entire population. Hence, the official name of the country is Malta GC.

Today, the entire city of Valletta is enclosed by walls that are very high and very thick - as shown in the top left hand picture. But there are other, much older, walled cities on the island and we went past one (above) on our shore excursion around the island. This one is called Mdina and it was the capital of Malta until 1530.

Malta was ruled for a long time by the Order of St John which was a group of knights who had fought battles in the Middle East, trying to re-establish Christianity there. These were called the Crusades and many European countries sent knights to help before they were finally expelled and exiled to Malta.



Mrs Dog finds a colorful fishing boat



In addition to being a fortress, Malta is also known for its beautiful coastline and for its fishing.

The fishing boats that the Maltese use are very colorful and we were able to see some as we made one of our stops around the island.

On one part of the coastline there were some very steep cliffs with very large caves and grottos that have been worn into the walls by the tides. We saw a number



of small boats taking visitors into these caves which must have been quite exciting and very beautiful.

We had only one day on Malta but we saw a lot of the island and learned about the history of the island. On a previous visit some years ago, Grandma and Granddad had also seen several beautiful churches and other grand buildings, as well as more of the beautiful scenery. For an island that is only about twice the size of San Francisco, Malta is very interesting.





Our next stop was the first of two in North Africa. This was Tunis, the capital city of the country of Tunisia.

Tunisia is now an independent country but it was ruled by France for over a century, so there is still a little French culture here. However, Tunisia is now very much an Arabic country and this shows in the buildings and in the native dress of its people. Of course, Mrs Dog had to try to become part of the design of this door.



During our walking and driving tour of Tunis, we saw mosques and tall towers that are typical of Muslim countries. We also took a walk in one of the "souks", which are basically markets with all kinds of goods for sale - from food to gold to tourist souvenirs. They are usually built along very narrow, covered streets so can get very crowded, especially when a cruise boat docks! Tunis also has some very pretty areas like the one around the lake in this picture. We really need to spend more time in this city and this country.

But, it's time to move on - back to Europe.













From Tunis we sailed north to the island of Sardinia. This island is actually a part of Italy but has a long history of its own and the people like to think of themselves as Sardinian rather than Italian. They even have their own language, although Italian is also spoken.

It is the second largest island in the Mediterranean Sea (much bigger than Malta). Its capital city is Cagliari and it was there that we docked.



Sardinia has a lot of different scenery - beautiful coastline, mountain ranges and large flat fertile plains - and we saw some of this as we took our shore excursion from Cagliari towards the central part of the island. Our destination, and the main reason for visiting Sardinia, was to see one of the many ancient villages that were built around tower fortresses called nuraghi.

All of the buildings of the village and the tower itself were built of stone and are as much as 4500 years old. There are many



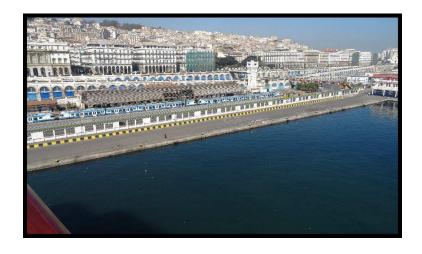


thousands of them dotted around the island. The houses and other buildings of the village were built very close to each other (for warmth or protection?) and many were circular in construction. None of them today have a roof (presumably made of sticks and straw when they were occupied) so that makes it easy to see how they were connected to each other by narrow passageways.



Grandma and Granddad were reminded of a place in Scotland that we visited some years back called Skara Brae. There too the houses were stone-built and very close to each other and belonged to an even older civilization. You may have seen Skara Brae during your visited to Scotland in the summer.

Mrs Dog didn't seem to care whether it was Scotland or Italy; she just enjoyed sitting on the stone walls in this unusual village on the interesting island of Sardinia.





Now it was back to North Africa again, this time to the city of Algiers, the capital of Algeria. Algeria is the tenth largest country in the world and the largest on the continent of Africa.

You may recall that Mrs Dog visited Cape Town, at the very southern tip of Africa, during 2016. Cape Town and Algiers are about 5000 miles apart, so there is still a lot of Africa to see!

When we first docked in Algiers we could



see brightly colored buildings along the waterfront, behind which were many large European-style buildings from the French era. Behind these, and built up the steep hillside, were the more modest homes more typical of Arab settlements. It seemed like a nice mixture of cultures. Western tourism in Algiera has only just begun and the authorities are trying very hard to keep tourists safe. In fact, our tour buses had to go in groups of five with a police escort and we were only allowed off the bus at the one site we visited.







Like Tunisia, Algeria was ruled by the French until 1962 when it received its independence. However, unlike Tunisia, independence came only after a very long and bitter war in which many people were killed. As a result, the Algerians built a huge memorial, called the Martyrs' Memorial, to commemorate those who lost their lives in all wars, especially the war for independence. This was our destination on our shore excursion.

The memorial is a three-fin structure that is over 300 feet high and topped with an Islamic-style turret. (Algeria is a Muslim country). Each fin is "protected" by a statue of a soldier. The memorial can be seen from just about anywhere within the city. Although we weren't allowed to mingle much with the local people, everyone appeared to be very friendly and waved to us as we rode the bus back to our ship.



After leaving Algiers we sailed north once again back into Europe. Overnight we had quite a rough ride as we passed directly in line with the narrow gap that joins the Mediterranean with the Atlantic Ocean. We guessed that the winds coming from America were particularly strong that night!

But we made it and docked the next moring in the Spanish city of Valencia. We didn't know a lot about the city before we arrived except that the area was the home of Valencia oranges. We did indeed see a few orange trees (above right) but there is so much more to this city.

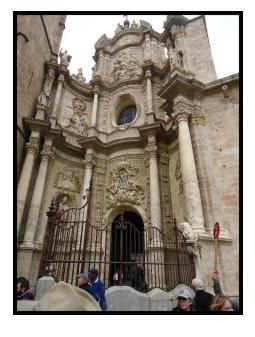




There are some very modern buildings (see the one shaped like a ship) and some others that were built over 100 years ago. Indeed, Valencia has an area that used to be walled and is several centuries old. The city used to be protected by the wall and there were a number of guarded gates which allowed entry and exit. We saw one of these gates (top left on opposite page) that still stands. We thought that it was an impressive structure and much like the medieval gates that are part of the wall that surrounds the city of York in England. Perhaps you remember walking on top of that wall?



In addition to the wall and the gate, the old city has several large squares where many people were gatherd on the afternoon we



part of the outside that can be seen is one wall that contains the main entrance door. the facade is very ornately decorated.



were there. In one of these squares sits the cathedral. This is a huge building but from the square it looks quite small as the only



The inside of the cathedral is also very beautiful as you can see in the picture above.

As we walked through the streets of the old city we saw many other lovely buildings and several tall towers. We thought that the buildings with the balconies looked a lot like those that we have seen in New Orleans in Louisiana.

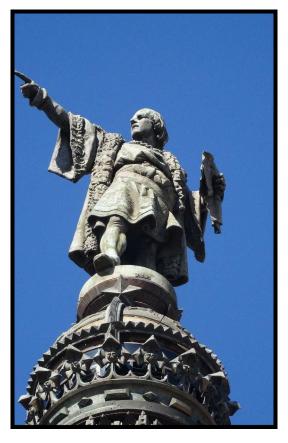
So, Valencia is a lovely city and the old part (built mostly 300 to 400 years ago) is particularly attractive.

Valencia has a festival each spring called Falles. **Commemorative structures** built for the parades are eventually burned, which must be quite a sight. When we were there, it was just before the main two weeks of the festival and the main event each day was the setting off of fireworks that we were told got louder as the festival itself got closer. We heard some of the bangs - and they were plenty loud enough for us! We would like to return to Valencia some day.











Our final stop on this cruise was in Barcelona, Spain where we left the ship and spent another two days in the city. Barcelona is in the state of Catalonia in Spain, and many locals want Catalonia to be an independent country - outside Spain. That debate has been very active in recent months so we will see what happens.

Whether Barcelona is in Spain or Catalonia, it is a very beautiful city and attracts many tourists each year.

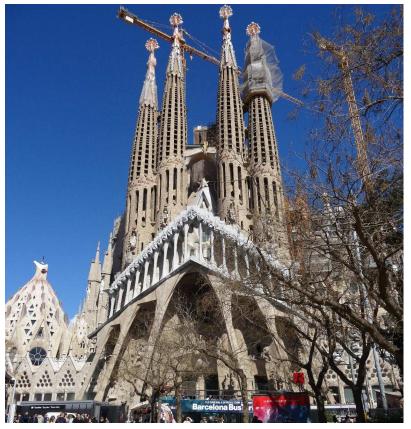
At the end of a mile-long pedestrian street (lined with shops, cafes and theaters) is a huge column on which stands a statue of Christopher Columbus. You know what he did, don't you, but did you know that he was born in Italy but sailed to America with ships and money provided by the Queen of Spain? Where do you think he is pointing?

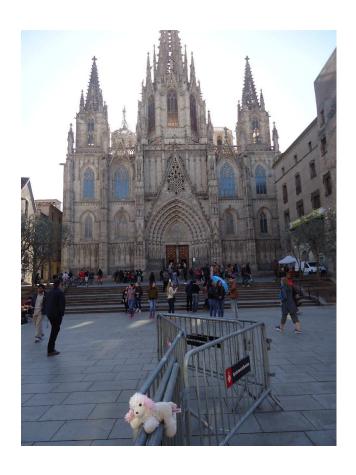
One other very famous citizen of Barcelona was a man called Gaudi who lived there in the 20th century. He was an architect with some very unusual ideas of what a building should look like.













Gaudi used concrete a lot and often it seemed that the building was unfinished - even when it was completed!

His most unusual design is that of a cathedral that has been under construction for over 100 years. Don't you think that it looks like something you might see at Disneyland? It seems that Mrs Dog preferred to be photographed in front of a more conventional

cathedral - and Grandma and Granddad agreed with her!

So, after two final days in Barcelona we came to the end of our Mediterranean cruise and flew home to America.

However our travels for 2017 were by no means over and the next trip took us to the other side of the world.

Are you ready to go?



Indeed, our next vacation took us to the other side of the world to spend the month of April in Australia.

Australia is both a country and a continent (although today it is called Australasia and includes a number of other countries) and is the sixth largest country in the world. It is very similar in size to the "Lower 48" states of the USA. Almost all the major cities are on the coast, except the capital, Canberra, which is inland between Melbourne and Sydney.

Much of the country is a vast desert (called the Outback) which covers most of Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory on the map above. Grandma and Granddad had visited Australia before but had spent the time in the southeastern corner of the country.

On this trip we wanted to see more of the west so we flew from the USA to Perth on the west coast. It was a very long flight!

From Perth we traveled all the way east across the country, mostly near the south coast, until we reached Sydney. To do this, we took a train for two days (and nights) from Perth to Adelaide, where we rented a car for the rest of the journey.

We went right across the Outback, along the beautiful south coast on the Great Ocean Road and spent a few days in the major towns of Adelaide, Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney.

So, we will start our trip in the Western Australia capital of Perth.





Perth is a large city with many modern buildings and a very pleasant city center close to the Swan River. But it also has some lovely older buildings from its earliest days as a settlement in the new British colony. Although aboriginal Australians have lived here for thousands of years, it is only in the last two hundred that Europeans (first the Dutch and then the British) came here to live. Oddly enough, Perth, and its neighboring city

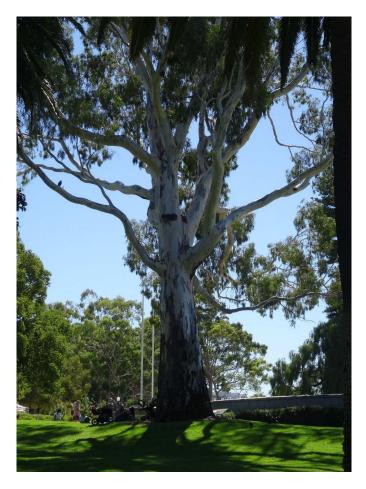
of Fremantle, were founded as penal colonies to replace those lost in America in the War of Independence so to some extent it owes its growth to the United States.

Perth also has a number of parks, including Kings Park which is huge and overlooks the river and the city. It includes botanical gardens, with plants and trees from all over the world, as well as a war memorial for the soldiers of Western Australia who died in battle.









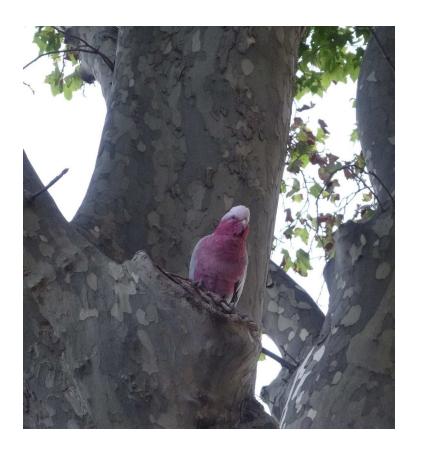
We visited Kings Park and spent several hours there looking at the plants and trees, many of which were native to Australia. We saw plants that survive the desert heat and others that are happier in the coastal areas and the farmlands of the eastern part of the country.

Of course, Mrs Dog found lots of areas to sit and be photographed, including one where she sat on top of a memorial stone. The plaque on it says it is to commemorate the aboriginal peoples who fought with the British and Australian forces in every war since the Boer War in South Africa. Perhaps you could find out about this war and when and why it took place.

Mrs Dog also spotted a very unusual tree, unlike any others we had seen. It is called a boab tree and, although boabs are found in other countries, this particular species is native to Australia.

The other tree above should be much more familiar as there are lots of this variety in California. It

The other tree above should be much more familiar as there are lots of this variety in California. It is also the favorite tree of a certain little animal that is native to Australia but which didn't appear to be inhabiting this one.





We did spot two other animals that are common to Australia. One was a parakeet dressed in a coat that we thought you might like. The other was a kangaroo, although we must admit that this particular one was made from bronze. Grandma really wanted to see kangaroos and koalas as we traveled across Australia but, as you will see, we had to wait until the very end of our trip to catch sight of any live ones.

The picture to the right shows the war memorial in Kings Park and the view across the Swan River to the city of Perth. You can see many of the tall modern buildings but, on the next page, you will see some of the older colonial buildings that we saw on a walking tour of the center of the city.







The fine building at the top left is the Western Australia Governor's Mansion. The Governor is appointed by Queen Elizabeth and, until recently, he or she was British. However, since Australia's independence, the governors have mostly been Australians. The Queen is still the Head of State of Australia.

At the top right is one of the original hotels of Perth and it is still a popular hotel today. We don't know who lived in the house to the right but it probably was someone of importance to the history of Perth. Why do you suppose that two of the second floor windows have been bricked in???

That covers our time in the city of Perth but while we were in the area we visited two other places: Fremantle and Margaret River, so let's start with Fremantle.





To get to Fremantle from Perth we took a boat down the Swan River. Fremantle is on the coast and overlooks the Indian Ocean.



We took a short tram ride around the city and then spent more time just walking around and admiring the old churches, and other buildings.



Fremantle was originally a place where Britain sent prisoners and one of the oldest buildings here is the prison. It was actually built by the



convicts, so we wondered where they were kept while it was under construction. Presumably that's what Mrs Dog was thinking!



Margaret River is about 150 miles south of Perth and is a popular tourist destination for its beautiful coastline, pine forests and vineyards. Our major reason for going there, however, was to see the place (Cape Leeuwin) where the Indian and Pacific Oceans meet - or so we thought! It turns out that it is where the Indian and SOUTHERN Oceans meet. The Southern Ocean stretches from the Antarctic to this point and as far east as Tasmania (southeastern Australia) where IT then meets the Pacific Ocean. We stand corrected! The spot where the two oceans meet (whatever their names) is beautiful but VERY windy. You may remember that when we were in South Africa last year we went to where the Indian and Atlantic Oceans meet and that, too, was very windy. Is this just a coincidence or is there some reason why it's windy when two large bodies of water come together?





While we were in this region, Mrs Dog found a number of places where she just had to be photographed, so these are shown on the opposite page. We hope you like them.

We also saw a sign warning of kangaroos crossing the road - but never saw a kangaroo, much to Grandma's disappointment.













The next stop on our journey across Australia was the city of Adelaide in the state of South Australia. However, it is over 1600 miles from Perth and most of it is across desert, so we decided to take a train rather than driving by car. We could have flown, but we really wanted to see the countryside so the train seemed ideal.

The Indian-Pacific Train goes right across Australia between Perth and Sydney, a distance of about 2500 miles, so we were going to do about two thirds of the total journey. Our ride to Adelaide would take two days (and nights) so we had accommodations on the train much like those on a cruise ship - although a little more cramped.

Our cabin was arranged as you see it below during the daytime. At night, the sofa converted to a bed (not much room around each side). The cabin also had a very small, but adequate, bathroom so we were quite comfortable for our long journey.

There was a dining car and a lounge where we could relax and see the scenery as we rode.







The train made only three stops during the entire journey. One was in the town of Kalgoorlie, where we visited a huge gold mine (called the "Superpit") and heard about the history of mining in the area. It was late evening when we stopped there.



Most of the journey was across the very flat Nullarbor Plain. "Nullarbor" is from the Latin for "No trees" - can you see why?



At the Kalgoorlie gold mine we saw some of the huge trucks that bring gold ore from deep in the mine to be processed. How big is that wheel?



Our second stop was very early the next morning when we were served breakfast off the train - in the middle of nowhere! It was fun.



The final stop before Adelaide was a small "town" called Cook. It had once been a railroad town of 300 people but now has only three!



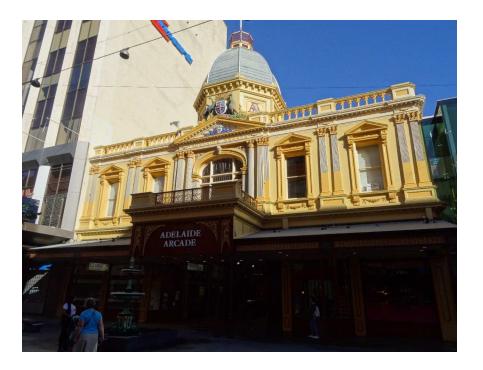


We left our train in the South Australia capital of Adelaide. Adelaide was one of the first cities in Australia that was not established as a prison settlement but was founded as a "free" British colony.

Adelaide - much like Washington DC - was a "designed" city in that it was planned in a grid and the entire central area is surrounded by parks. In the middle of town is a very large park (above) in which is a statue of Queen Victoria. Remember that Australia was a British colony and Queen Elizabeth is still the Head of State.

In the middle of the city there are some beautiful Victorian buildings including a shopping arcade and a railway station. We don't know why the station has a car sitting over the main entrance.

The area around Adelaide is largely farmland and is one of the major grape growing areas in the country with many vineyards.







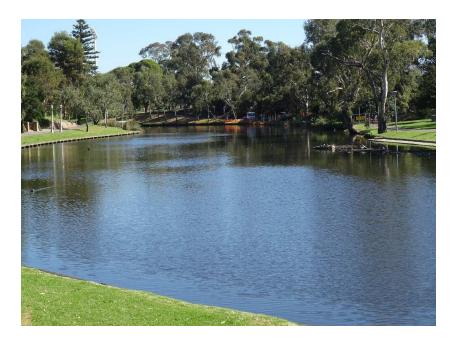
We took a bus tour of the wine country around Adelaide and visited several wineries. As with many vineyards around the world, the estates are beautifully landscaped and the wine tasting areas are set in lovely buildings.

On the tour we stopped at a small town and walked along the tree-lined streets. It was April but the trees were at the height of their fall colors. Do you think it odd that April is the fall? Why is it different from the time we see fall in the United States?





While we were on another bus tour near Adelaide we saw "the world's biggest rocking horse". There is a smaller version standing in front of it and you may be able to see a familiar figure sitting on that.



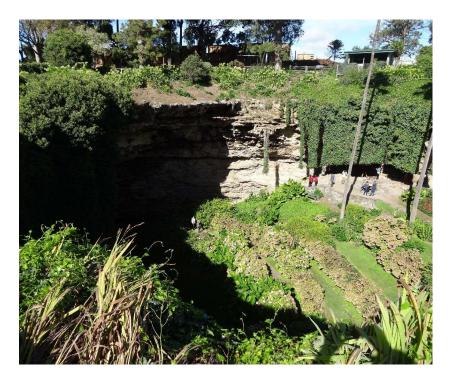
Adelaide sits on the River Torrens, which runs through a beautiful park right in the middle of the city. The city center is also just a few miles from the coast so we took a tram ride to a small town called Gleneig Beach.



We also visited a huge dam which acts as a whispering wall. It is called that is because someone standing at one end can hear a whisper of someone at the other - almost 450 feet away. What did Grandma whisper to me?



The ocean here (which ocean is it?) is a popular spot for both tourists and city residents and, although this picture doesn't show it, there were lots of people there when we visited. We really enjoyed our few days in Adelaide.





After our time in Adelaide, we picked up a car and would use that to drive the rest of the way to Sydney to complete our Australia vacation. That would be about 1100 miles so we still had a lot to see. The major attraction between Adelaide and the next big city of Melnourne was the Great Ocean Road, which is a lot like the coastal road that runs along the Pacific Coast in California. You may have guessed by now that the Great Ocean Road is on the Southern Ocean.

We stayed one night in a small town called Mount Gambier, which turned out to be very interesting. The town had a number of sink holes - huge holes in the ground that had suddenly opened up. These had been underground caves but the roof had collapsed leaving the hole. Interestingly, people had built homes right on the edge of these holes which we thought was perhaps a little dangerous in case the ground collapsed again!







The most scenic stretch of the Great Ocaen Road is about 100 miles long. The road generally follows the coastline but about 100 feet above the water, so most of the views are from the cliff top. The land here is mostly limestone which is relatively soft

so the water has been able to erode away large areas of the land. The result is a series of unusual and interesting rock formations that sit in the sea just a short distance from the land to which they once belonged. Many of the rock form-



ations have been given names, such as London Bridge and The Twelve Apostles. Sometimes the names make sense (for example London Bridge) but others are less obvious. For example, there never were 12 rocks at the Twelve Apostles and



today there are only eight. Named or not, the whole coastline, with its beautiful blue water and white surf, is a stunning drive and (dare we say it?) is at least as attractive as the one in California. Mrs Dog certainly enjoyed being there.

Mrs Dog enjoying the Great Ocean Road along the southern coast of the state of Victoria.











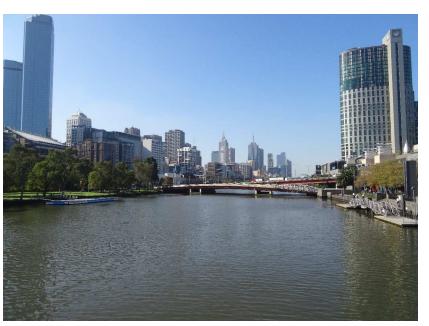








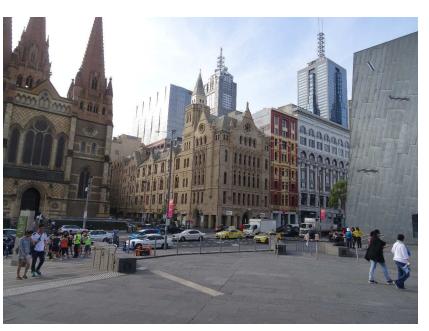
Melbourne is the capital city of the state of Victoria and the second largest city in Australia. The modern part of the city sits on either side of the Yarra River. This river flows to the ocean and allows Melbourne to be a major port of the country.



The city started its growth in the 1850s when gold was found in the hills nearby. Most of the gold mined in the area had to pass through Melbourne to be sold, which makes it much like the city of Sacramento, don't you think?



Some of the finest buildings in the city were built in the early 20th century and include the magnificent railway station in the picture above. There are also several beautiful churches and a very large square, which is a popular place for locals to



meet. This is Federation Square, named for the federation formed between the six original British colonies in 1901. The square gray building on the right is a modern exhibition center built of steel and glass.



One of the most outstanding buildings in Melbourne is the War Memorial. We happened to be in the city just a few days before ANZAC Day, which is the National Day honoring all those who fought in the wars, so preparations were underway.



The memorial is in a lovely park which has trees and flowers from all across Australia and is a very pleasant place to walk and have a cup of tea! In case you were wondering, ANZAC stands for the Australia and New Zealand Army Corps, which



was formed to send troops to Europe to fight in World War I. ANZAC Day is perhaps the biggest holiday in Australia (and New Zealand) and there are parades all across the country. One really nice thing in Melbourne is a free tram system that

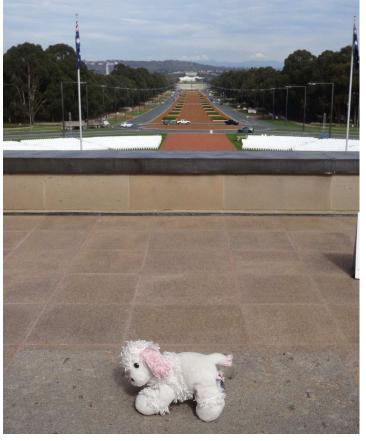


covers the entire downtown area and uses vintage trams. In the picture to the left you can just see the driver as we rode along the rails. Melbourne is an attractive city - especially at night.





Canberra is the capital city of Australia and the only one of the country's major cities that isn't on the coast. After the Federation was formed, both Melbourne and Sydney wanted to be the capital city but, after a lot of debate, the government decided to build an entirely new city about mid-way between the two. So, Canberra was named the capital and the whole city was designed essentially from scratch. We said that Adelaide had been a planned city, but Canberra was not only planned but it had an American "flavor" with a mall stretching from the parliament building to the National War Memorial, much like the mall in Washington DC. Perhaps it's not surprising as the designer (who won a competition open to anyone) was an American! The picture above was taken from the War Memorial (where they were preparing for ANZAC Day) towards Parliament House in the distance. The red flowers are poppies that were being used to decorate the wall of soldiers' names in the war memorial.



We spent some time at Parliament House (below left). Actually this is the NEW parliament building which was opened by the Queen in 1988. Before that, parliament (which acts much like Congress in the US) had met in the old parliament building (below right), a short distance away down the mall. Neither one looks much like the capitol buildings we are used to in the United States but both are interesting. The new parliament, for example, has a flag on top that is as big as a tennis court. It is also very modern inside and out but the House and Senate Chambers are very colorful, one being red and the other green. Which do you suppose is the one that Mrs Dog found? You should also be able to guess who is depicted in the statue that she found in the building. The walk between the two parliament buildings is very pretty and lined with trees - one of which attracted Mrs Dog.

So, Canberra is a very attractive city and has all the government buildings that you would expect of a capital from Parliament, to the Supreme Court and the Prime Minister's mansion. The prime minister is a bit like the president here but we are sure you will learn about the similarities and differences in your school classes.











On our second day in Canberra we decided to take a drive into the surrounding countryside. The fall colors were beautiful and the scenery on the drive was very nice but our main reason for taking this route was to visit two very interesting observatories.

When Canberra was founded, the city leaders said that it should have an observatory which would concentrate on the skies above the Southern Hemisphere and become a world-class facility. Indeed it did and the original Mt Stromlo observatory (which was within the city limits but on a high hill) was a leading observatory and research school in the world until 2003 - when it was almost totally destroyed by wildfires. Some of the telescopes and other equipment have been rebuilt (bottom left) and Mt Stromlo still functions as an observatory but much of it has been converted to a museum.

Another series of telescopes has been built a few miles away and this became the Canberra Deep Space Center which looks far into space. Much of the work done here is supported by NASA in the USA and the many telescopes can be "rented" and controlled by agencies around the world. It is a very interesting place.















The last stop on our visit to Australia was Sydney, the largest and most well-known city in the country. There are two things that everyone associates with Sydney - the Opera House and the Sydney Harbor Bridge.

The Opera House was designed by a Danish architect (again as a result of a competition) and was opened in 1973. It is a multi-purpose entertainment center and has dozens of rooms for concerts of all kinds, not just opera.

The Sydney Harbour Bridge is an arch bridge across Sydney Harbour that carries rail, vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic between the center of the city and the northern suburbs. It is almost 3/4 mile long and was completed in 1932. One of the most interesting things about the bridge is that you can climb to the top of the arch. Grandma and Granddad did that on an earlier visit to Sydney.

Sydney is also a port and a popular stop for cruise ships. Do you recognize this one?





Sydney has a lot of very tall, modern buildings especially in the downtown area near the harbor. The hotel where we stayed is in the picture above - somewhere!



It also has some very fine Victorian buildings including this beautiful cathedral, the largest in the country.



Like many Australian cities, Sydney began as a penal colony and many of the earliest streets are still in use in an area called The Rocks, where it all began.

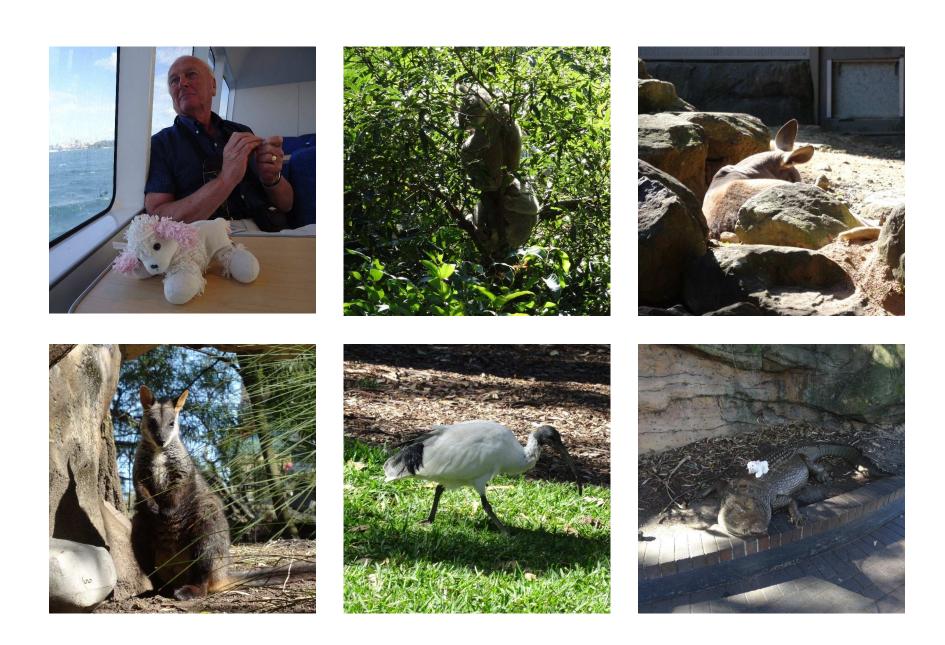


Unlike most cities in Australia and the world, Sydney has a very popular beach within easy reach of the downtown area. Obviously it is very well used.

Sydney also has a big zoo which we visited by taking a boat across the harbor and then a cable car to the highest point. From there it was easy to walk downhill and see all the exhibits. Finally, after almost a month in Australia, Grandma got to see what she came for - koala bears and a kangaroo. Neither of them were particularly cooperative but we hope you can see the koalas in the tree and at least the ears of the kangaroo behind the rock.

We also saw a very cute wallaby and perhaps the most common bird in Australia, the ibis. Mrs Dog even found an alligator but fortunately this was not a live one.

The zoo also had many of the animals that you see in almost any zoo: elephants, giraffes, emu, deer, etc, etc but we thought the Australian animals were most interesting to show here.







One last thing we should mention about Sydney and this visit. We were able to meet with a niece of Grandma and Granddad's (a cousin of your daddy), called Catherine. She is a nurse and moved to Australia from England about ten years ago and has settled there with her family.

We met Catherine, Ben and the two boys Jake and Harvey (now which is which???) near the Sydney Opera House and spent sevral hours with them on a beautiful sunny day. Everyone, especially Catherine, was charmed by Mrs Dog and we almost had to leave her in Australia.

It was lovely to see some family so far away from home and a great way to end our visit to the country of Australia. From Sydney we flew home (another long flight) and began to think about our next world adventure.



## Back to Asia

Our final major trip of the year was to the continent of Asia and specifically to the two countries of Taiwan and China. To be more precise, we visited only one small part of China called Hong Kong. We probably need to explain a little about the history of both places to see where they fit relative to the big country we know as China - and a look at an atlas or the globe might be useful.

For many centuries, Taiwan, Hong Kong and China were all one country - China! However, in the last 200 years, things changed as a result of wars and internal strife. First, Britain was given Hong Kong as a result of a war between Britain and China. Unusually though, Hong Kong was to be returned to China after about 150 years - but would be allowed to retain some of its "independence". This return actually happened in 1997.

Similarly, Taiwan was a part of China until 1895 when China lost a war with Japan - and, guess what, Japan took control of Taiwan. Taiwan remained under Japanese rule until the end of World War II when Japan surrendered and had to give Taiwan back to China in 1945.

But Taiwan's changes didn't end there. There was an internal fight in China - a Civil War - that once again ended in separation of Taiwan from the mainland. The large country of China became a Communist state whereas Taiwan formed a democratic government and followed more Western ideas. Tensions between the two countries still exist but many people in Taiwan have close relatives in China - and in Japan! Have you got all that?

For our visit to Taiwan, we spent a few days on our own in the capital, Taipei, but covered much of the rest of the country on a bus tour with a local guide. The country is less than the size of Ohio, so it was easily covered in a five day tour.







Taipei, where we started and ended our visit to Taiwan, is the large capital city of the country (over 2 million people) and has many modern buildings, busy freeways and an excellent subway system. But its heritage comes mainly from China so there are lots of beautiful public (and private) buildings built in typical Chinese designs.

Two of the major public buildings that we visited were the Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial (above) and the Revolutionary Martyrs' Shrine (right). As we said, the most recent war involving Taiwan was between itself and China and the Martyrs' Shrine is to commemorate the thousands who were killed on the mainland.

Chiang Kai-Shek was the leader at the time of the revolution and he was the first president of the new country of Taiwan. A huge complex has been built to honor him, which includes the main hall where there is a statue of him. We were there for the changing of the guard that is always there to "protect" him.





This is the enormous statue of Chiang Kai-Shek and you can see one of the guards. Two of them are on duty all the time - but fortunately they change every couple of hours. Even so, it's a long time to stand absolutely still!



Something we saw on our walk around Taipei was this display set up by the city fire department. Children (and a few adults) could use a water hose to try to put out the fires in the windows of a model house a few feet away.



This is just one of hundreds of Buddhist Temples that we saw while we were in Taiwan. They are all very brightly decorated and have incense burning all the time. All of them also have at least one statue of the god Buddha.



Obviously they didn't have real fires but if the aim of the water was good, the "window" would flip (the fire would go out) and a score would register above. Don't you think this was a great idea to teach young children?







Taipei has one of the tallest buildings in the world called the Taipei 101. It is almost 1700 feet tall and when it was completed in 2004 it was the world's tallest. It has now fallen into sixth place but it is still a very impressive building and is supposed to resemble bamboo. We weren't sure about that!

On the street near Taipei 101 are a number of polished gold balls which provide an interesting reflection of the tower (which appears bent and perhaps looks more like bamboo in that position) and an unusual way to take a picture of it, as well as those taking the photograph. Can you see anyone you recognize?

As with most big cities, Taipei has lots of modern buildings and big squures, especially in the main shoppping areas. We came across this one as we were looking for a Starbucks.



Taipei was once a walled city (remember those from an earlier trip?) and we saw one of the gates that used to be the only way in and out. This one was built in the middle of the 19th century, which we thought was rather late for a walled city.



This building, now used as an entertainment facility, has an interesting history. It was built in the 1930s to celebrate the crowning of a Japanese Emperor when Taiwan was under Japanese rule. In 1945, when Japan lost the war, it was also here that they officially surrendered.



There is also a lovely park in the middle of Taipei where there are several lakes and grassy areas. This particular park was established to remember the revolution but today is just a nice place to walk and sit.



Finally, Taipei has a huge big wheel (or "Eye") that some of us wanted to take a look at from our hotel room.

So, that was Taipei, but we still had a lot to see on the rest of the island of Taiwan. Are you ready?

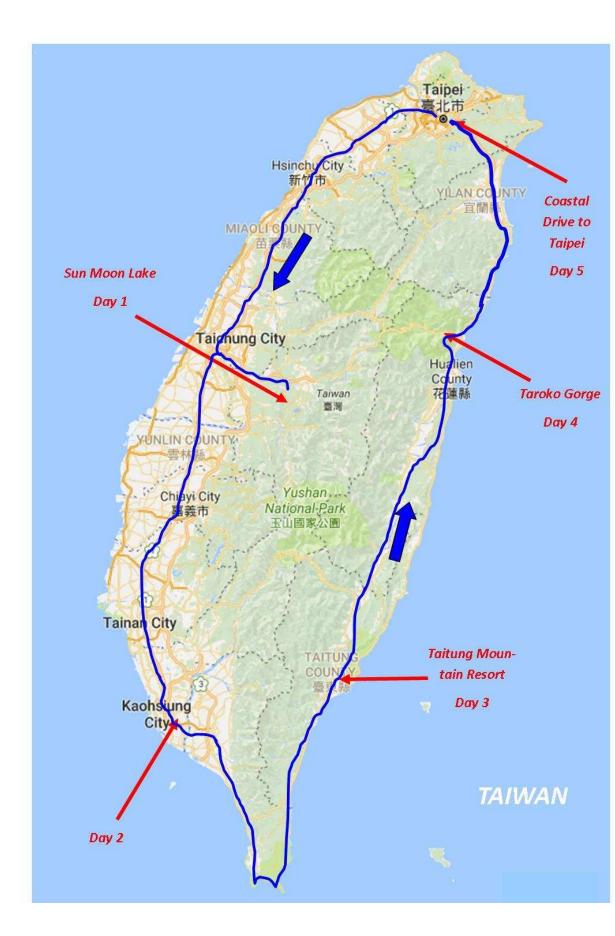
As you can perhaps see on the map of Taiwan, much of the island is very mountainous and the only stretch of flat land is down the west coast. It is in this region that all four of the major cities and all of the industry are concentrated. It is also the only part of the country that has expressways; the rest of the country has two lane roads only.

We followed one of the major north-south highways from Taipei all the way to Kaohsung City, taking up two of our five days on the bus. The rest of the time we went around the southern tip and all the way up the east coast, passing through a number of small towns and some amazing scenery.

Obviously most of the population is on the west coast plain and we passed lots of factories where many electronic components are made - many of them exported to the United States to be used in our phones and other products. It is also in this region that we visited some of the most beautiful temples and monasteries of Taiwan, as well as seeing some modern Western-style buildings in the cities.

We stayed in very nice hotels on each of the four nights we were on the tour and our guide told us a lot about the country, the history, the culture and the people. We also enjoyed the food that we had and we got quite used to eating everything with chopsticks.

It is difficult to say which part of the country we enjoyed the most: temples, mountains, lakes or coast. See what you think!





Our first overnight stop was at Sun Moon Lake high in the mountains. It is supposed to have the shape of a sun and moon - but it needs a little imagination to see that!



It is a beautiful lake, however, and was a favorite place of the first leader, Chiang Kai-Shek. In fact, he built a pagoda overlooking the lake in memory of his mother.



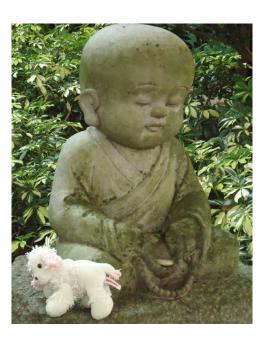
The pagoda is on top of a hill that our guide said was "an easy walk" from where the bus was parked. If that was easy, we wouldn't want to try any of his difficult walks! But one of us made it.



The pagoda is very close to this beautiful Buddhist temple. The roof in particular is very colorful and decorated with lots of different animals. The area around temples usually has many other statues.



This is one of the decorated roof areas with several animal statues that each mean something in the Buddhist religion. Do you see one that looks like a dog?



And another!

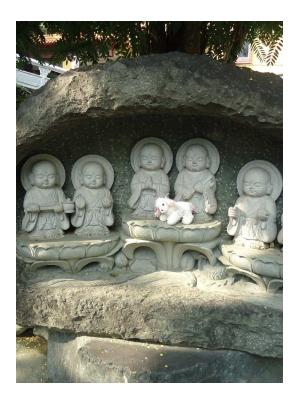


Here's one that definitely looks like a dog.



There's even one sitting on the fence around this big lion.

How many more can there be? Taiwan is not a very big country but dogs seem to be everywhere.





















One day we visited a monastery. This is a place where monks (men or women) live and learn about the Buddhist religion. Once they have been accepted in the monastery, they stay there for life. This one had an enormous golden Buddha statue to remind them of their god, no matter where they are on the site. The temple pictured above looks as though it has been through an earthquake - which is exactly what happened in 1999. One of the monks there had a dream that something was about to happen so he was able to save the black statues that were important to the temple. They are now safe in a new temple that has been built to replace the damaged one. But they have kept the "earthquake temple" as a reminder of the day.



Koahsiung City is towards the southern end of Taiwan and sits on the Love River. That name was given to it after a young couple drowned there before they could get married. We took a boat ride on the river.



The most southerly point on Taiwan is where the China Sea and the Pacific Ocean meet. Perhaps you remember other places where two oceans meet from earlier in this book - and what the weather is often like in those places.



Koahsiung, like many cities throughout Asia, has a night market. These are markets set up on a few streets after dark and they sell everything from fruits and vegetables, to fast food and souvenirs.



Near the lighthouse is a rocky cliff overlooking the East China Sea. It is a lovely part of the coast and has some interesting rock formations in the water. Can you see the one that is said to resemble a cat?









The coastline along the south coast is very beautiful and has some interesting "beaches", including one where the rocks have cracked to form slabs. Difficult for sunbathing and swimming! Another very rocky beach has a dragon-shaped bridge that crosses to a small island. The guide warned us that we might not be able to cross as the winds are very strong but many of us made the difficult walk against the wind and up and down the dragon.

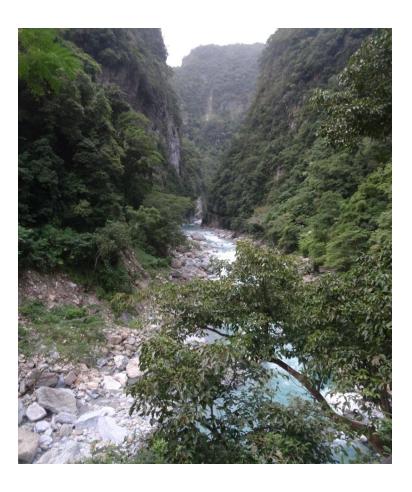




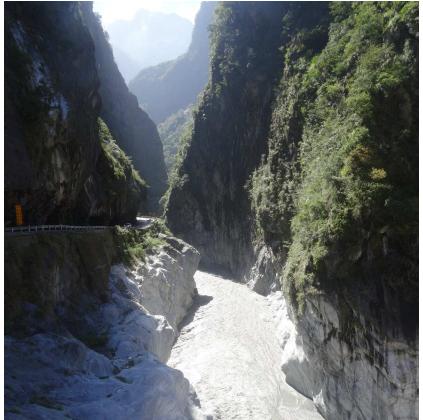
One of the most famous places on the island of Taiwan is Taroko Gorge, a very deep river valley in one of nine National Parks.

Taroko Gorge and the surrounding area is well known for its abundant supply of marble, leading to its nickname, "The Marble Gorge". The rock now seen in Taroko began over 200 million years ago as sediment on the bottom of the ocean. As the sediment collected, it was subject to increasingly large amounts of pressure which eventually hardened it into limestone. Over the past 100 million years, tectonic compression between the Philippine Sea Plate and the Eurasian Plate supplied additional pressure that metamorphosed the limestone into marble.

We spent half a day in the gorge (staying overnight in a park hotel) and were able to take a walk along a narrow path about 30 feet above the river. It was about a two miles round trip on sometimes rough ground, but it was a very scenic walk.













From the Taroko Gorge we returned to Taipei along the Pacific Ocean coast road. In many ways it was like California Route 1, with steep mountains that seem to fall right into the sea. The narrow road ran close to the water,

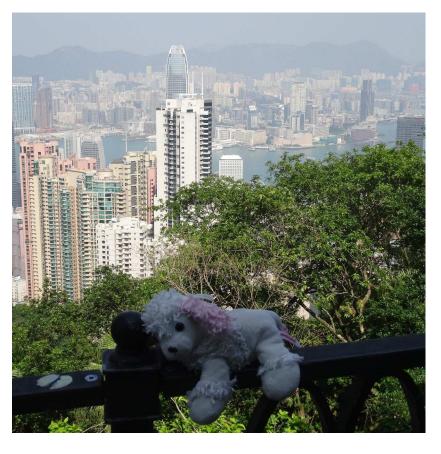


sometimes at sea level and sometimes climbing several hundred feet up the cliff side. In many areas, long tunnels had been cut through the mountain for the road. It was quite scary at times but we had a very good driver.



There were great crashing waves in places and we saw some very unusual rock formations.

Mrs Dog seemed to enjoy the ride and, indeed, the whole visit to Taiwan. We wondered when we might come back...





It was only a two hour flight from Taipei (Taiwan) to Hong Kong, an island just off mainland China. Hong Kong, or more correctly, the New Territories, is only about 350 square miles (Sacramento is 100 square miles) but it has a population of over 3 1/2 million people. So, it is very crowded and most people live in apartments in high-rise tower blocks. The city is also very hilly and much of the downtown area is built on hills that rise steeply from the waterfront. From the top of the hills there is a great view of Hong Kong and the mainland town of Kowloon across the narrow stretch of water. This stretch is getting narrower all the time as both Hong Kong and Kowloon are reclaiming the water with landfill. We have visited several times over the years and the ferry ride across the stretch gets shorter as more and more land is reclaimed.

We took a funicular railway (like a cable car) to the top of Victoria Peak to get these views of Hong Kong.





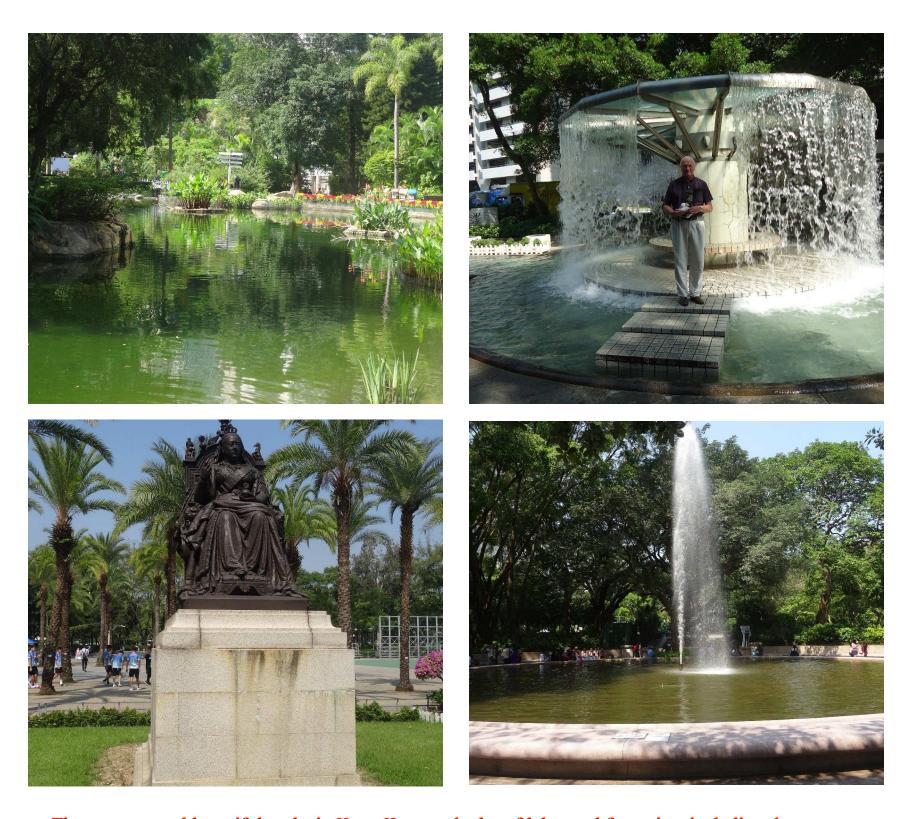


Another way to get up the steep hills is by way of an outdoor escalator. It is covered most of the way and goes in different directions at different times of the day to allow commuters to get up or down to work. If you want to go up at the wrong time, you must use the stairs!

On the level ground near the water, another means of transport is by tram - usually called streetcars in America. These trams have been operating for over 100 years and it is quite exciting to sit on the top deck and ride along the rails. Since the tram is always on the rails, other traffic on the road has to get out of its way.

To travel from the New Territories to mainland China, there is a railway line from Kowloon that goes to several of the major cities in China. Grandma is standing in front of the clock tower that stands where the old Kowloon railway station once was. The station was moved when new high speed trains became available, but the clock tower still stands.





There are several beautiful parks in Hong Kong and a lot of lakes and fountains, including the one at the top right where you can walk into the fountain itself. Can you see Mrs Dog with Granddad?

As we have said, Hong Kong was a British colony for a long time so there is even a statue of Queen Victoria in one of the parks.





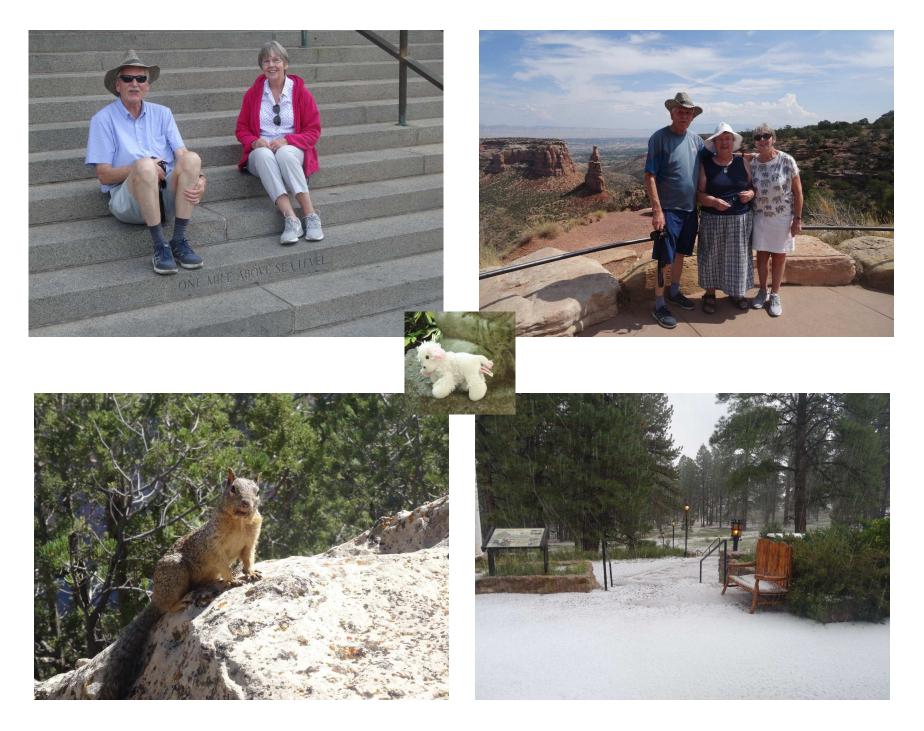




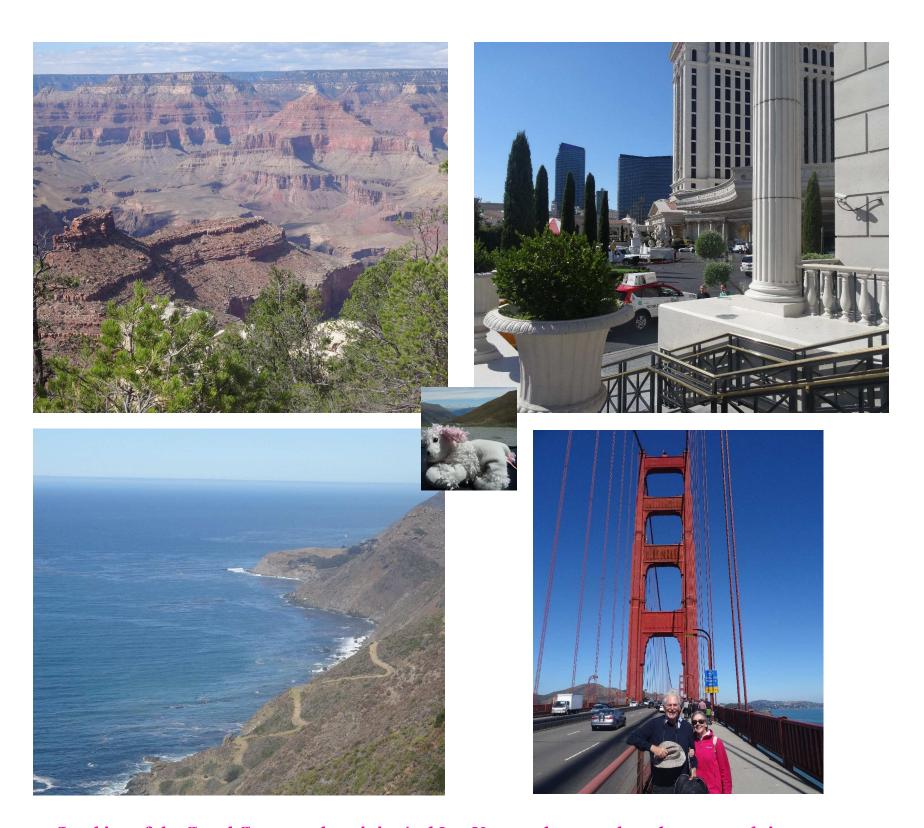
Kowloon has a very famous hotel called The Peninsula. If you stay there, they will send a Rolls Royce car to pick you up from the airport! The concert hall near the hotel has an unusual entry staircase.

These last pictures of Mrs Dog bring us to the end of our visit to Hong Kong and to the end of our travels for 2017 to Asia, Europe, Africa, Australia and Ameri.....wait! Did we forget something?

Didn't we say that we visited America during 2017? In fact, isn't the sub-title of this book "Visits to Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia and America"? We certainly did visit quite a bit of America in 2017 so we need to include some pictures from the driving trip across five of the Western states. But - as both Mrs Dog and you know this country quite well, we thought it would be nice to include just a few pictures of places you know but with some people who you perhaps don't know so well. So, here we go......



You may remember meeting our English friends, Keith and Zena, and you surely will recall sitting on those same steps. Do you remember the city and state? In that same stste we visited the Colorado National Monument and, in addition to Keith and Zena, we made a new friend (no, not Grandma!). Then, even though this was early September, we got caught in a hailstorm in Bryce Canyon. Didn't you have a similar experience once at the Grand Canyon?



Speaking of the Grand Canyon - there it is. And Las Vegas, where you have been several times, right? Then there is the Pacific coast in California; don't you think it's similar to those in Australia and Taiwan? But nowhere else in the world has a bridge like the one Keith and Zena walked across.

So, that's just a brief visit to America..... and it seems that Mrs Dog was watching it all.



But there was one other visit that we should record here. You certainly will remember your visit to England and Scotland in August. Harry Potter, Shetland Ponies, train, boat and plane rides and much more. You even spent a few days with Grandma and Granddad and we went to several places (Malham Cove and York included) and you spent one night with Isobel. We wonder if you mom and dad remember the name of the gate where they kissed each other?



So, that really does conclude our trips around the world in 2017. We hope that you enjoyed it as much as Mrs Dog and Grandma and Granddad did. We certainly saw a lot of interesting and beautiful places.

But who is that with Grandma and Granddad?? That's not Mrs Dog, is it? Actually we don't know much about her except that she comes from Scotland and we think she is a lamb. She was loaned to us for this picture by Uncle Chip who had brought her from his golfing trip to Scotland. We suppose that she now lives in Ohio, but we haven't seen her recently.

And, there's no need to worry: she isn't going to take the place of Mrs Dog on future travels so there could be more books like this if you want them. Where will 2018 take us?



