

Our Holiday

Before I commence this story, it is most important for me to personally thank Gwen for her companionship, friendship and suggesting we holiday in Tasmania, Great Ocean Road of Victoria and South Australia and New South Wales visiting all of the tourist spots during our seven-week trip.

Earlier in the year Gwen and I were shopping at Gympie when she suggested we visit Harvey World Travel and inquire about the cost of taking her car onto the 'Spirit Of Tasmania' for our holiday in Tasmania. She got no argument from me! That morning we paid for and booked our berth on the 'Spirit Of Tasmania' departing from Sydney on Sunday 25th September 2005 at 2pm. Our holiday was set in concrete. We were committed!

From that moment onward our world focused on '**Our Holiday**'. Initially we intended only visiting Tasmania, however in the excitement of our first holiday together visiting Tasmania, spread to traveling along the Great Ocean Road of Victoria and South Australia returning home via Dubbo and Tamworth in New South Wales. Deciding to follow our hearts and have a wonderful time together and enjoy every moment taking every opportunity, as each presented to us wherever they may be was our focus!

Before we knew it, time had caught up with us and on Tuesday 20th September 2005 Gwen and I left Brooloo on '**Our Holiday**'. Our first night was spent at Conrad Jupiter Casino on the Gold Coast. What a surprise we were in for when we registered to confirm our reservation. We couldn't believe our good fortune when we were upgraded from the usual overnight accommodation to the Executive Suite on the 18th floor.

Neither of us had ever stayed in an Executive Suite with views of the Gold Coast from every point of the Suite. We were absorbed by luxury and spoiled in the elegance of staying in such a place. It even had a king size bed! Ordering room service we lapped up every moment as if it would be our last to know how the Rich and Famous lived. We were living life like the Rich and Famous!

After a very large breakfast and collecting a small amount of winnings from playing Keno, we headed south along the Pacific Highway toward Sydney. Recent road works gave way to some very smooth highway until we reached Pottsville. Gwen remembered she had friends, John and Shirley at Crabbs Creek near Pottsville so we called in to see them. They were so pleased to meet me and to again see Gwen.

Traveling along the Pacific Highway down to Grafton seemed easy. Every couple of kilometers was signs showing 'speed cameras ahead'. Being a Queenslander I was on the lookout for Police and their vehicle. In New South Wales the authorities have 'speed cameras' fixed and operational twenty-four hours per day, seven days a week positioned on the side of the road. I said to Gwen, 'Don't be surprised if a photograph of your car is waiting for you when we get home.' To date she hasn't received any photographs of her car in the mail so we must have been one of the lucky ones.

Without sounding too critical of the New South Wales road authorities, after traveling over six thousand five hundred kilometers on our holidays, my opinion is the ‘Pacific Highway’ is one of the **worst** highways I have ever driven on anywhere! Apart from the many stoppages along the way I feel sorry for the overnight truckers who are running to a timetable to complete their journey.

Grafton was our destination for the night stopping in a wonderful motel and dining at the local truckers service station. Next morning well refreshed we headed to Coffs Harbour on our way to Taree for our overnight stay.

Along the way we stopped at our first winery Cassegrain, tasting their fine wines and coffee. It was a delightful place, which also gave us time to have a rest away from the hideous road works.

At times we traveled at forty kilometers per hour and then sixty kilometers per hour, back to forty and sometimes one hundred kilometers. It was between Coffs Harbour and Taree where we faced the road works and stoppages, finally arriving at Taree for the night. I thought a number of times I was a goner with ‘speeding’ but so far haven’t received a photograph of the car in the mail.

Coffs Harbour has certainly come ahead since I last drove through there some five years before. We visited Coffs Harbour Jetty taking in the beauty of the harbour. Looking back towards the hills of Coffs Harbour speckled with houses terraced among the trees and bushland.

Driving onwards the following day we hugged the coastline driving through Newcastle stopping for lunch at a lookout. Nineteen boats were moored in the harbour waiting to enter so they could dispatch their goods.

Gosford was our last stop before entering the mad world of Sydney. I must admit at the time I had no idea of where I was going or how I was going to get us into Darling Harbour into the heart of Sydney. We left ourselves a couple of days grace just in case we were to get lost and not find our way.

Next morning driving along the M1 Motorway heading toward Sydney, the closer we came to being there the worse it was to know ‘where the hell I was going’. We journeyed on with Gwen holding onto my hand tight for encouragement whilst I drove with the flow of traffic into the direction of Sydney Town.

We past signs – Parramatta –Hornsby this way. There it was the SYDNEY HARBOUR BRIDGE! I don’t know if we crossed the bridge or not, all I was looking for were signs to show me where to go to Darling Harbour. We stopped at one toll and paid our way and not far along we entered a tunnel (it’s the one mentioned in the news once or twice).

Driving through the tunnel we came out of the other side sighting a sign ‘Darling Harbour’. I was saved! At least I was driving in the right direction.

Down I drove from a major road seeing signs to ‘Darling Harbour’. We wanted to check out where we had to board the ‘Spirit of Tasmania’. Eventually I stopped to ask someone. A window cleaner gladly told me I was on the opposite side of the harbour and needed to go around to the other side of the harbour. It was all right for him to know where to go! Trying to be calm at all times I followed his instructions to the opposite side of the harbour. To no avail! I was still none the wiser!

If only I could find a parking area, park the car and navigate the area on foot. I now realize how our early explorers ventured into the Australian bushland with only their wits to guide them – I felt the same. We found an underground parking station and quickly collected the ticket from the box.

As soon as the arm rose for us to enter I drove down into the station listening to the screech of tyres against the floor. Hello! We were the only vehicles parked at the parking station. Not to worry I thought – we must be early. Parking the car and locking it we tried to ‘get out of the parking station’. This was a new building and in the heart of the city! Eventually we found the man who takes the money in exchange for your parking ticket who told us we needed to leave the parking station from the same entrance as we entered.

Following his directions at last we found daylight again. Not knowing where to go, we stumbled our way into Darling Harbour Entertainment Building. Walking about the parkland eventually found an Information Centre. All we wanted to know was ‘how’ to find where the ‘Spirit Of Tasmania’ birthed so we could return the following day and board it.

A very kind Customer Service Officer gave us a map of Darling Harbour explaining where we were and how to escape this ‘Hell Hole’ and find where we wanted to go. Actually after getting our bearings it would have been much easier for us to walk to where the ‘Spirit Of Tasmania’ was birthed rather than drive – but what were we going to do with our car?

Returning to the parking station, paying for the time parked, we escaped from the underground. Gwen was wonderful in her navigation of guiding us to where we were to board the ‘Spirit of Tasmania’.

At times we were in the thick of the city driving along one-way streets leading into two-way streets eventually finding the docking yards for the ‘Spirit Of Tasmania’. We’d finally arrived! Now to find suitable accommodation close by and relax! Easier said than done! Every hotel, motel had been completely booked out for the weekend because of the Australian Rules Grand Final.

Now you might say that the Swans, which are Sydney, were playing in Melbourne but every man and his dog wanted to celebrate the Grand Final in the inner city of Sydney.

It was time to contact my cousin Dan who had lived in Sydney most of his life. He was pleased to help me when I telephoned him but after he checked the website he also told us accommodation in the city area were unavailable.

Between the time I spoke to Dan about searching on the internet and the time he returned my call, Gwen and I decided to leave the city and drive to the outer suburbs in the hope of finding somewhere to stay. After driving for about half an hour Gwen saw the sign – Motel – shining brightly on top of a building. We checked in to find there was only one double room left. We now had somewhere to sleep.

Dan returned our call telling us that he had no luck! After telling him where we were, he commented ‘where are you!’ I told him we were at Gladesville Motel. Together with his friend Phil they visited us that afternoon to share coffee and catch up with old times. That night Gwen and I went for a walk along the main street of Gladesville – we each commented how dirty it looked. Buying fish and chips we retreated to our motel room. We were looking forward to boarding the ‘Spirit Of Tasmania’ the following morning.

Before leaving home our children told us in no uncertain terms to make certain ‘we keep in contact’ and ‘keep them up-to-date with what we were doing’. We certainly carried out their instructions to the letter of the law for each week they each received a telephone call from us plus two postcards describing our trip.

Finally our day arrived to board the ‘Spirit Of Tasmania’. Gwen previously had been on a cruise so she knew what lay ahead. As for myself this was my maiden voyage!

Not wanting to be late we arrived at the dock well and truly early enough so we wouldn’t miss the boat. This gave us enough time to walk along the pier of Darling Harbour admiring the many ferries and paddleboats moored there. Sydney Swans won the Grand Final so celebrations were continuing.

West Tigers were playing the Cowboys in Sydney for a final of the Rugby League competition giving way to more people traffic. At last we were allowed to enter the gates to take our place before boarding the ‘Spirit Of Tasmania’.

What a sight to behold on first seeing this huge ocean liner almost ten stories high and as long as a football field. A trap door opened in the front of the ship like a giant monster swallowing vehicles as they entered the bowel of the ship.

Parking our vehicle, locking it and taking a small bag of clothing for our cruise to Tasmania we made our way to our cabin. Gwen had prepared me for seasickness by feeding me seasickness pills every chance she had. ‘You’d better take them!’ She kept on saying whilst popping these pills into my mouth. All it did for me was to make me feel sleepy.

Sailing out of Sydney Harbour underneath the Sydney Harbour Bridge passing the Sydney Opera House was awesome.

People on deck used their mobile telephones to contact their relatives or friends who were waving to them from the shoreline. I felt like I was on the Love Boat sailing into the sunset on a romantic voyage of a lifetime.

Leaving behind us the sights of Sydney, especially the Sydney Opera House standing out as a icon of Sydney, we rested in our cabin until the dinner bell rang to make our way to level seven and take our place in the restaurant.

After a delicious meal we retired to our cabin for the voyage to Tasmania often looking through the porthole in our cabin to see our ship sailing smoothly through the waves. After twenty-three hours the shoreline of Tasmania appeared whilst the ‘Spirit Of Tasmania’ cruised into the Mersey River to the port of Devonport.

Cruising across Bass Strait was so smooth it is difficult to imagine how powerful it could become when tragedy struck during the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race not so long ago.

Birthing at Devonport Port, because we were one of the first onboard, we needed to wait for others to leave before disembarking. Eventually it was our turn leaving the ‘Spirit Of Tasmania’ with a much deeper knowledge of travel then we’d ever had before.

Devonport has a population of 25,000 people – one of the first sightings we saw on our disembarkment was the ‘Golden Arch Restaurant’ (McDonalds). Before leaving on our holiday Gwen’s friend Pauline wanted us to deliver some honey to her granddaughter at Rosebery. ‘It’s not far from Burnie’ Pauline advised Gwen. Understandably neither Gwen nor myself knew very little about Tasmania or where Rosebery was located only taking Pauline’s word of ‘It’s not far from Burnie’. We thought it might have been a suburb of Burnie.

Before leaving our home we obtained maps from the RACQ of Tasmania and the States we were going to travel. Unfortunately when I was driving close to Sydney I remembered leaving the package containing all of the maps in my office at home. It wasn’t until we were about to disembark from the ‘Spirit Of Tasmania’ that I purchased a map of Tasmania.

For the remainder of our first day on the shores of Tasmania we explored Devonport booking into a motel directly across from the Mersey River. That afternoon we walked along the banks of the river-sighting people walking, jogging and cycling. Some were canoeing on the river. My thoughts of the name Mersey flowed back to when I was a teenager listening to the song by ‘Jerry and The Pacemakers - Ferry Across The Mersey’ reminding me of the Mersey River.

Without very much planning we decided to leave Devonport the following morning and fulfill our commitment to Pauline by delivering the honey to her granddaughter at Rosbery.

Departing Devonport on our way to Burnie was only a short distance. Towns in Tasmania, particularly the northwest was very close together. Arriving in Burnie a population of 20,000 people we were no closer to finding Rosebery than flying to the moon.

Driving through the town of Burnie we stopped at the Botanical Gardens for morning tea. Nearby was a Penguin Sanctuary. Gwen wanted to see a Penguin in the flesh. The Sanctuary was built to a suitable Penguin environment being by the sea allowing the Penguins to come and go whenever they liked.

A high wooden fence with small holes allowing people to view the Penguins without disturbing them in their habitat allowing the Penguins to either swim in Bass Strait or furrow in their man made habitat. There was only one problem –no Penguins to be sighted. The town dogs had either chased them back into the sea or eaten them.

Missing out on seeing live Penguins we decided to search for Rosebery – we had the address but couldn't find any location at Burnie referring to Rosebery. Whilst we were having morning tea I decided to have a look at our map. Rosebery wasn't even near Burnie – it was located one hundred and twenty kilometers south of Wynyard, which was nowhere within cooee of Burnie.

It was my entire fault because we drove wherever the car took us without wondering where we were going. It was a great idea at the time because you haven't any idea where you're going and everything is a surprise when you final arrive. We were certainly surprised by the time we arrived in Burnie in not finding Rosebery. But that's life! We were having fun!

In fact, this was a trip of a lifetime driving along the highway not really knowing when to stop. If we saw something, which interested both of us, we stopped – if not we continued along on our way.

Like when we were leaving Burnie, we sighted a Cadbury Factory. We thought it may have been a chocolate factory but were surprised to find it was only a milk factory and no person wanted to speak with us – so we left feeling a little despondent. It was our intention to stop early in the afternoon to find accommodation and leave refreshed the following day. We both were so relaxed and felt FREE!

Leaving Burnie we journeyed onto Wynyard a population of 4,509 people. This time of year Tulips were in bloom. I must admit to being a little ignorant to my knowledge of the flower but Gwen's enthusiasm grew by the time we stopped at the local Tulip Farm.

It was time to 'Tiptoe Through The Tulips'. I am not a person who is fond of flowers but I must admit when I saw Gwen 'Tiptoeing Through The Tulips' my ideas changed immediately with the screeching voice of Tiny Tim echoing in my head. Each colour of the rainbow appeared on each flower in rows and rows of Tulips covered the land as far as the eye could see.

There were literally thousands of Tulips growing in rows and rows and rows. Our intentions for the day were to drive to the far north west of Tasmania to see the ‘Wind Farm’.

Before leaving the Tulip Farm a kind lady who charged us an entrance fee gladly offered us advise on what locations to ‘have a look at’ on our trip. One of these suggestions was ‘don’t miss out on Sisters Beach – it’s a little way off the main highway but you’ve got to see it’ she told us.

Heading toward the tip of northwest Tasmania to see the ‘Wind Farm’ we saw a sign to Sisters Beach. Leaving the main road following the signs we expected to see a beach similar to the ones we have here on the Sunshine Coast.

‘Are we in the right place?’ I asked Gwen weaving our way down to the shoreline of the so-called beach. ‘It’s nothing!’ was her reply. From that moment onwards we decided to follow our dream of discovering our **own** places we wanted to see and take no notice from others. It was such a disappointment! First we missed the penguins, second the Cadbury’s factory was not a chocolate factory and now a beach leaving us wondering how it ever got its name.

Returning to the main road to continue our journey to the ‘Wind Farm’ we were engrossed by the deep green lush pastures in Tasmania with each property grazing Black Angus cattle and sheep. Tasmania is small in comparison to the mainland of Australia but when you see the number of stock grazing in the paddocks together with the lush green pastures it is amazing.

Gwen commented how it reminded her of New Zealand when she visited there seeing the pastures growing down to the shoreline. Green lush pastures could be seen for miles and miles as far as the eye could see. What a wonderful place to visit. Gwen even commenting how she could actually live there – six months of the year in Tasmania and six months at home! I kept driving!

We journeyed on passing through the town of Smithton with a population of 3,495 people making our way to the ‘Wind Farm’. Smithton has the McCain Factory of ‘Mr. McCain You’ve Done It Again’ slogan.

Finally arriving at the northwest tip of Tasmania we found the ‘Wind Farm’ was closed for the day. That didn’t stop us from seeing the row of windmills lined along the western seaboard of Tasmania. An Information Centre provided information about the construction of the ‘Wind Farm’ showing that each windmill needed forty mile per hour wind to force each turbine to create sufficient electricity.

This Wind Farm provided electricity for up to ten percent of use for Tasmania. To think and see this ‘Wind Farm’ in action goes to show how working with the environment can reduce the cost and emission of gases into the atmosphere. It was truly a remarkable experience!

Returning along the highway to Wynyard we decided to travel down the middle of Tasmania stopping at Rosebery to drop off Pauline's honey to her granddaughter.

We sighted the sign of the town of Stanley. This town immediately gained my interest for it was this town and location of Stanley and King Island that Bryce Courtenay author of 'Brother Fish' used this location in the book.

I was excited at the thought of how an author converted the present small fishing village into a world-class novel. I was trilled to say the least! Stanley has a population of 600 people. It is a fishing port and historical town. It is noted for having a huge rock called 'The Nut' which protects the residence from huge gale force winds from Bass Strait. It is a very quaint and peaceful village.

Driving into Stanley Township we followed the perimeter of a lake. Stanley is situated on the northern end of the lake protected by 'The Nut' from Bass Strait on one side and the lake on the other. There is only one road in and the same road out.

We stayed at the most original motel we would ever stay in on our trip – it had been converted from the original Stanley Railway Station. Some people have certain talents and visions. Who would have thought to relocate the original Stanley Railway Station after the line closed, to the middle of the town and makes it a motel?

Someone did and it was the owners of this Stanley Motel! In front of the motel stood the original Stanley Railway Station, which had been reconstructed to its former glory with every detail of an exact replica of the original.

Walking into the ticket office used as the Reception Area for the motel, you'd swear you were purchasing a ticket instead of booking into the motel. The Station Master's office was as if nothing had been altered from the good old days. Beside the office was the baggage section and next to that the Dining Car with memorabilia of Stanley Railway Station displayed on the walls. This Dining Car is used as a community breakfast area for guests of the motel. They even converted the toilets into a laundry room for guests.

After booking into the motel we decided to explore and have a look around Stanley. History of early settlers dating back to the discovery of Tasmania still adored statues and replica of past by-gone era. Stories of bravery by locals in rescues of sailors in the tough seas of Bass Strait adored the many statues telling a tale of sacrifice and determination fighting against Mother Nature.

That evening we dined on fish taken from Bass Strait waters – it melted in our mouths. Earlier that day when we walked beside the lake at the rear of our unit of the motel the water was calm and smooth. The following morning we awoke to a sight of six-foot waves splashing the shores of the lake. The weather had changed so dramatically overnight that it reinforced the idea of the dangers of the sea and Bass Strait.

Leaving Stanley, journeying onto Rosebery we each felt a tenderness of despair after experiencing such a place like Stanley. It would remain in our memories for a long time and cherish the thought of how tough those sailors were in their battle to provide a livelihood for their families in fighting with the sea.

It's amazing while traveling throughout Tasmania, one part there are lush green pastures laden with sheep and cattle as thick as fleas on a dog's back, then suddenly there's wilderness – huge trees looking over a canopy of gorse a noxious weed.

Driving through this wilderness spurred thoughts of the immense diversity of change happening within a short distance. One would wonder at 'how' or 'what' good this wilderness would be to farmers, if any! We followed this wilderness for miles and miles through mountainous country ranges, across rivers finally reaching our destination of Rosebery.

Before searching for Pauline's granddaughter house. Pauline had been kind enough to draw us a mud map of where she lived. We saw a sign showing us that Rosebery had a population of 1600 people. It is a mining town on the West Coast with over a century of mining and still going strong.

That night we stayed at a guesthouse, which had been converted from the old Rosebery Hospital. When we were eating Dinner in the restaurant we were delighted to learn that, it was actually the original maternity ward of the hospital. The viewing windows still fixed in the walls where the babies were viewed by their excited parents. If only those walls could talk I'd bet they'd have plenty a story to tell with over one hundred years of history.

After delivering Pauline's honey to her granddaughter we drove north to visit one of the most advertised tourist attractions in Tasmania, Cradle Mountain. Returning to the wilderness of the landscape Cradle Mountain has a population of 321 people nestled on 161,108 hectares of World Heritage Area.

On the day we visited Cradle Mountain it was our luck to be raining and cold. On our way up to Cradle Mountain we stopped to have a look at a Château. 'Just have a cup of coffee at the Château' came the advise from the Manager of the guest house we stayed the night before. We took his advice!

Instead of coffee we visited an Art Gallery. Myself, I'm not really into art only the writing type but Gwen, well she actually HATES art, particularly a gallery where according to her comment 'there is too much space on the walls that is not used'. She almost fainted while looking at a photograph showing a dead tree, the frame a border of used termite eaten fence paling fastened at each corner by a piece of fence wire. The cost for this piece of art was \$660.00. Thus we left empty-handed continuing onto Cradle Mountain.

Cradle Mountain is a tourist attraction and with most tourist attractions is a souvenir shop selling those little nick knacks at an inflated price.

At least one of the good things they provided to the tourists at Cradle Mountain was a free shuttle bus service from the Information Centre to the base of Cradle Mountain.

As the driver negotiated each sharp bend in the road leading to the outlook she explained each attraction and history of Cradle Mountain. It was cold – and I mean COLD and blistery giving Gwen and myself enough sense to stay on the bus – return to our vehicle and get out of there as quickly as possible!

Returning via Rosebery we journeyed onto Zeehan a population of 1132 people noted for a once prosperous mining town. Between Rosebery and Zeehan over the last century mining has been the major source of income for the locals.

Gwen and I were exhausted from all of the traveling so we decided to have a couple of days break on our holiday. It may seem funny to think that we needed a break when having a holiday but honestly – WE WERE TOTALLY EXHAUSTED! Our two days off was spent in a wonderful seaside town of Strahan with a population of 597 people. It is situated on the Macquarie Harbour.

Driving into Strahan a quaint cottage caught our eye; it was the only one vacant at ‘Kitty’s Place’. We booked it for two days. Being self-contained with a lounge, television and kitchen those two days turned our minds into relaxation and comfort. It was sheer heaven!

With our bodies fully recharged we headed toward Hobart. Leaving the west coast heading inland directly through the centre of Tasmania. You wouldn’t credit the changes of the country from lush green pastures to wilderness into huge timbers and desert.

Yes! You wouldn’t think any part of Tasmania would be desert but driving through Queenstown, with a population of 3,368 people it is surrounded by naked hills of the copper mines. I commented to Gwen as we drove through the town and around the hills that it was as if an Atomic Bomb had hit the place wiping out all civilization and vegetation. It looked barren and desolate. Queenstown is the gateway to the Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park.

Blending our way down along the highway to Hobart often we crossed the Franklin River system sighting a hydroelectric plant. Up and down we ventured through mountains and gullies until we finally arrived at a small town named Ouse with a population of 158 people. It was lunchtime. Finding a park near a creek with willow trees growing along its bank, it was an ideal place to stop and put on the nosebag.

It wasn’t far before we reached the outskirts of Hobart spotting the first motel along the highway I stopped to book in for the night, ‘there’s no accommodation anywhere in Hobart – it’s the Thai Kwon Doe Championships and every motel has been booked’ came the reply from the Receptionist as I inquired about accommodation.

She was most helpful to find alternative accommodation for us suggesting we travel onto Kingston Beach where she arranged a motel room for the night. Thanking her for the trouble she went to, we drove onto Kingston Beach booking into the motel as pre-arranged. What a dump! It would have been one of the worst motel rooms we stayed in during our holiday. Thank goodness it was only for one night!

Originally we thought about basing ourselves in Hobart and doing day tours but when there was no accommodation we decided to drive to the most southern town, Southport covering all of the bottom section of Tasmania. We'd seen the northwest and now we wanted to have a look at the southern part of Tasmania. Driving through Hobart didn't really appeal to either of us!

Continuing along down the peninsula of Tasmania passing Snug, Oyster Cove and as far south as Gordon we stopped for morning tea. Sighting a magnificent house settled in amongst vineyards we stopped! It was the Panorama Winery at Cradoc.

If ever customer service were at its best, the owner of this Winery would have received a Gold Medal for providing the greatest customer service any person could ever receive. It was such a pleasure to be greeted and treated with warmth and courtesy. Naturally Gwen took part in a little wine tasting purchasing some wine before leaving. Visiting this winery became one of our many highlights of our holiday!

Continuing onto Huonville turning south to Geeveston passing Dover onto our destination of Southport. What a wonderful part of Tasmania. The Huon River slides up inside of this peninsula separating the southern western bottom portion of Tasmania.

It is a wonderful drive following the Huon River along the edge of the peninsula sighting vineyards on the banks actually leading down to the water's edge. Before crossing the Huon River Bridge to drive along the opposite side of the peninsula we stopped for lunch having it on the bank of the Huon River. It was a view with such splendor time seemed to stand still for us as we relaxed eating lunch.

Crossing the bridge following the road to Southport we drove along the opposite side of the peninsula with the Huon River beside us Gwen busily taking photographs at every opportunity every time something new came into sight.

Settled on the Huon River were what looked to us to be huge circular platoon rings floating on top of the water? There must have been at least a dozen of them. We didn't know exactly what they were and later discovered the Japanese use each platoon to breed salmon for breeding and sending off to Japan for sale. Each platoon cost one million dollars.

Finally we arrived at Southport with a population of 304 people. It's one of the oldest towns in the region and is primarily a seaside resort. Returning along the same road we'd traveled it was time for us to find a suitable place to stop for the night.

Dover has a population of 570 people. We stayed at Driftwood Cottages overlooking the calm water of the bay. That night we dined on pizza freshly cooked in an open fireplace while you wait. It's a very tough life holidaying – I can tell you!

Returning to Hobart along the Huon Highway we stopped at a Museum near Franklin. It was cold and raining as we walked into this old building housing an original apple coring plant. Where ever we visited in Tasmania the people absolutely 'went out of their way' to help us. Nothing was too much trouble.

This museum housed and displayed memorabilia from 'how' the original settlers coped on their land growing apples, skinning and coring them before dispatching their produce off to market. The owner kindly demonstrated how the skin and core of each apple was processed as early as the late eighteen hundreds.

Approaching Hobart rain continued with temperatures being thirteen degrees. It was cold outside of the car but inside we were warm. However we still needed to clothe ourselves in winter garments. Driving into Hobart, we didn't have any plans on what we were going to do.

Our thoughts were to pass through Hobart head toward Richmond where we planned to stay the night in a Manor. I was about to make a right hand turn into Hobart when Gwen uttered the words, 'There's Mount Wellington! Why don't we have a look?' 'Up there!' I said looking through the windscreen of the car to a huge mountain hardly visible from where we were. 'Up there!' She said, as I turned left instead of right following the signs to Mount Wellington.

Driving up Mount Wellington was steep, rounding bends on the narrow road only wide enough for two medium size vehicles to pass safely. Staggered at different heights of the mountain were gateways, which close the road off when snow had fallen preventing access to the top of the mountain.

Being the first few days into October one would think it was more likely not to snow. Up and up we drove higher and higher each time watching the temperature gauge drop from ten degrees to eight degrees and finally stopping at two degrees.

At this stage of the climb our car must have been almost on an angle of at least forty-five degrees steadily climbing to the top. Almost at the top we saw snowflakes splotching against the windscreen. Gwen excitedly saying, 'Pat it's snowing. We're in the snow. I'm ringing the kids'. She telephoned the kids telling them of her excitement whilst they told her it was forty degrees at home. She was truly excited!

Reaching the top of the mountain snow covered our car. We slowly descended. Half way down the mountain we stopped to have morning tea in the shelter of a hut obviously used in cold weather because there was an open fireplace and wood for making a fire.

Relaxing having our morning tea, we drank in all of our experience of seeing snow. What a holiday we were having – everyday gave us both a thrill of excitement and adventure. We hugged one another appreciating how important this time together deepened our love for one another.

Slowly descending Mount Wellington still with our heads literally in the clouds we drove through Hobart on our way to Sorell. Our intentions were to travel along the eastern coastline of Tasmania finally returning to Devonport. Arriving at Sorell with a population of 1732 people we couldn't find any accommodation. Richmond was only back up the road. That's the great thing about traveling around Tasmania because towns are not very far away from one another.

Before leaving on our holiday Doug our friend asked if we were near Richmond to buy him five jars of apricot jam. He strongly recommended we stay at Hatchers Manor.

Taking his advice we booked into the manor for a night. It was cold and raining but that didn't matter to us because the manor was luxurious with a fireplace slowly burning radiating warmth in the bedroom. We'd never stayed at a manor before and to have stayed there reminded us of how lucky we were to be having this holiday together with all of the trimmings. If there is a heaven then we were living the thought of being there!

It wouldn't be a visit to Tasmania unless you visited Port Arthur. It's just one of those places everyone talks about so we decided to make our way from Richmond to Port Arthur. After making our visit we both left very depressed with a hollow feeling after thoughts of that horrific massacre in 1996. That's all I want to say about our visit to Port Arthur but I don't think we'll be returning for a second visit!

Returning along the same road we traveled from Richmond, that night we stopped at Orford a population of 502 people. It's a holiday retreat located on the Prosser River, very pretty. Part of the town is on one side of the river whilst the business area is on the opposite side. We stayed at the Orford Riverside Cottages, which are self-contained overlooking the Prosser River.

After experiencing what we saw along the northwest coast of Tasmania we were expecting to see similar countryside along the eastern coastline. Unfortunately it was disappointing probably because the major highway followed the coastline inland.

Crossing mountains we arrived at Swansea with a population of 550 people. Instead of following the coastline further north we decided to go inland toward Campbell Town and onwards to Launceston.

Driving over mountain terrain it was time to stop for morning tea. There were no picnic areas to stop so we parked beside the roadway. It was very close to the edge of the mountain falling away sharply with only rocks and broken bottles on the edge. The only place for us to sit was on a huge log on the edge of the mountain. It was cold and windy forcing us to dress in a coat.

We prepared our coffee and a chocolate biscuit. Gwen walked over to sit on the log and I went to pick up my coffee and biscuit. As I turned to walk toward Gwen – SHE WAS GONE! I panicked, not knowing where she could have gone! I called out to her!

Hearing laughter quickly I walked over to the log. Gwen was laying on her back on the other side of the log. Hearing her laugh I knew she was all right! All I could hear her say was, ‘Get the camera. Get the camera!’ I couldn’t believe what I was seeing. Gwen was spread eagled lying on a dried dead wattle bush, which saved her from falling onto rock and broken glass and over the mountain. ‘How am I ever going to get you out of there?’ I said in disbelief.

She continued laughing about what had happened to her. She told me that when she was about to sit on the log, a gust of wind picked her up, blowing her over the log over the edge of the mountain. Imagine me telephoning Melinda and Stephen telling them I’d lost their mother after a gust of wind blew her off the side of the mountain. No one would have believed me!

For the remainder of the day I was in disbelief of how close I came in losing Gwen. What if she hadn’t fallen onto the dead wattle bush and landed onto rocks and broken glass and continued down the side of the mountain? What if she’d injured herself? Lucky for me she didn’t do any of these things and thankfully we both survived the ordeal.

The event certainly made for good conversation over the following couple of days each time laughing at what had actually happened! After that eventful incident each time we stopped for a break I didn’t stop on the side of the roadway only at a designated picnic area.

Finally arriving at Launceston we stayed the night reminding ourselves of how lucky we were to have driven this far. Launceston is Tasmania’s largest northern city with a population of 66,747. It is at the Basin of Tamar River, which flows south from Bass Strait. Our plan was to explore the northeast corner of Tasmania. The following day we journeyed onto George Town following the Tamar Highway north along the Tamar River.

Arriving in George Town with a population of 5,592 people we visited Geoff and Val who Gwen knew when they lived at Imbil before moving to Tasmania. It was windy and very cold. Saying goodbye to them we drove east to Bridport with a population of 1,234 people. Bridport is a fishing port and overlooks Anderson Bay.

It was very cold and windy, so windy that a National golf tournament needed to be cancelled because of the windy conditions. We were not very impressed with Bridport driving south to Scottsdale.

Now there is a place one could unroll their swag and stay for a while. With a population of only 2,000 people it is the middle of a rich agricultural, dairy and forestry district.

It has very pretty deep red soil country with mountains, farms, forest and sheep. It was absolutely beautiful country on the eye to savor the moment of seeing what locals describe as a 'part of Scotland'.

Climbing the range to the top of the mountain we decided to stop for afternoon tea. There were no picnic areas and this time I parked the car off the roadway telling Gwen NOT to go far because it was near the edge of a mountain and I didn't want another failed heart beat if she got blown off this mountain. Further on we stopped at a lookout speaking to other fellow travelers who were as gob smacked as we were at seeing such beautiful scenery.

Returning to Launceston along the Tasman Highway we landed in Launceston on Show Day, a public holiday. Most of the shops were closed except a Noodle Shop in the city. Returning to our motel after buying two noodle meals that tasted fantastic we settled in to a night of television.

Have you ever asked for directions and been told, 'Just around the corner and go north. It's not far!' Everything seemed to be 'just around the corner'. Finally discovering the **right** corner to turn, we followed the Tamar Highway north to Beaconsfield following the Tamar River on the opposite side from where we'd traveled a couple of days previously when we visited George Town.

Geoff and Val told us to make a visit to the Swiss Village after leaving Launceston. Pulling off the main road following the signs to 'Swiss Village' our minds focused on suddenly driving onto a miniature Swiss Village. How mistaken we were arriving at a Swiss Village but in the larger version, a replica of a typical Swiss Village in Switzerland with villas and resort complex.

Having never visited Switzerland it looked all right to us. It gave us an opportunity to buy some presents for everyone! On top of a huge mountain was the lookout giving an optical view of the whole village from above. Gwen challenged me to climb to the top of the lookout. We finally made the climb making it a wonderful opportunity for some photographs.

Onward we traveled through Exeter making our way to Beaconsfield. It was our desire to reach West Head so we could say that we'd been to see Bass Strait. We had lunch on the beach but there were only small waves. Journeying along beside the Tamar River, we looked across and saw George Town. It was only a stones throw from Beaconsfield.

A couple of days before, we'd booked our berth on the 'Spirit Of Tasmania' for our crossing of Bass Strait to Melbourne. We had another two days before our departure.

Returning down the Tamar Highway to Exeter we decided to cut across country to Westbury. The only section of Tasmania we hadn't seen was the area between Launceston and Devonport. Arriving at Westbury with a population of 1,280 people we booked into Fitzpatrick's Inn. What a delightful place to stay. It was a typical old fashion English Inn dating back to Cobb & Co days.

Speaking to the owners we learned that they were traveling around Tasmania some years before finding this quaint Inn for sale. After purchasing the Inn they have refurbished it to its former glory. Staying at Fitzpatrick's Inn will remain in our memories forever and was definitely a highlight of **Our Holiday**.

One good thing about traveling in Tasmania it's not very far between towns. We'd only travel for about three hours per day passing through sometimes ten towns before stopping for the night. Leaving Westbury passing through Deloraine on our way to Port Sorell with a population of 788 people, we found it to be a quiet sleepy hamlet with beautiful rich country grazing cattle and sheep. It was most impressive again sighting lush green pastures.

Shortly after leaving Deloraine on our way to Port Sorell we stopped at a Chocolate Factory. It was raining and cold. Unfortunately, many other people thought of the same idea to have a break but the chocolate wasn't what we wanted so we left disappointed.

One of the most important highlights of our visit in Tasmania was visiting 'David Foster's Axeman's Museum' at Latrobe. For a small entrance fee we strolled through the museum swallowing up the atmosphere of that GREAT AXEMAN David Foster showing his deeds as a WORLD CHAMPION AXEMAN. After seeing his achievements it's hard to believe that one individual could achieve so much in one lifetime – but he has and continues to wheel the axe at shows and exhibitions.

Returning to where we started at Devonport some fourteen days before having traveled the length and breadth of Tasmania it was with sorrow that we now had to leave. Sitting in our car parked on the banks of the Mersey River we watched the world go by saying to one another how 'lucky' we were to be given an opportunity of seeing such a wonderland of lush green pastures, rolling mountains, and history of Australiaia.

At nine o'clock that night we boarded the 'Spirit Of Tasmania' for our journey to Melbourne across Bass Strait to the mainland of Australia. Seven-thirty the following morning the 'Spirit Of Tasmania' birthed at Melbourne. It was a very smooth crossing keeping in mind that Bass Strait can at times become rough.

We had no idea of where we were going after birthing in Melbourne, only that we wanted to go onto the Great Ocean Road. Fortunately on board the ship they sold mud maps of 'how' and 'where' to leave the vessel weaving your way onto the Great Ocean Road. Fifty cents for the mud map proved to be gold showing us where to go!

Maneuvering our way out of Melbourne in morning peak hour traffic we reached Geelong turning left following the signs to the Great Ocean Road. Our plan was to follow the Great Ocean Road to Adelaide.

Passing through Torquay onto Lorne we stopped for lunch, continuing onto Apollo Bay staying the night. Driving along the coastal strip with the Southern Ocean sweeping its waves directly toward where we were driving was an awesome sight, never to be forgotten.

Many times we stopped just to experience the thrill of seeing the ocean from the many lookouts positioned along the road. Gwen was busily taking photographs at every available opportunity. It was something neither of us had ever seen before or experienced.

Continuing along the Great Ocean Road we finally came to the twelve apostles. I expected to see a huge sign showing us *we were there* but instead all we saw was a sign showing an Information Centre in the middle of no where. We actually drove past it returning to the Information Centre. We were guided to a tunnel underneath of the highway leading onto a pathway out to the edge of the ocean. There they were, only about nine apostles left.

It was raining and very cold so wanting to get back to the car quickly as possible shortened our visit. Continuing along the Great Ocean Road was spectacular sighting huge waves lashing against the high walls of Australia showing deep blues; light blues, dark green with white caps.

Regularly we stopped to view different locations like blowholes where the ocean had ripped open cavities into the wall of sandstone wall making way for the forces of the ocean to form a blowhole. It is when the force of water is pushed at such a pace through the cavity it creates a spiral effect reaching to the sky. It is very spectacular.

That night we stayed at Portland. Our accommodation was a Bed & Breakfast type in a two-story house. Our unit overlooked the ocean making sunset and sunrise a view not to be forgotten. It was wonderful!

Up until this stage of ***Our Holiday*** we'd experienced so many events and sightings it was difficult for us to know what was the best part both agreeing that **all** of it was worth seeing! Everyday we wanted to pinch ourselves just to know we were not imagining ***Our Holiday***.

Journeying along the Great Ocean Road we left Victoria crossing the state border of South Australia. Around this area was forestry and logging regularly passing trucks laden with logs. Arriving in Mt Gambier we visited a friend of mine Moira Oxley. She was delighted in seeing me again and thrilled to meet Gwen.

Following the ocean road, we journeyed onto Millicent with a population of 4,717 people. After settling into our accommodation we walked along the streets sight seeing. Often, when we stayed the night in a town it was easy for us to 'take a walk' to see for ourselves different shops, businesses and acknowledge that some of these country towns were doing it tough.

Population has a huge bearing on the economy of each town. Some towns were very active than others whilst smaller country towns endured that 'country hospitality' of welcoming visitors. Millicent was one of those country towns, which relied on fishing.

Driving along the coast road finally stopping at Meningie with a population of only 897 people, which goes to show the difference between towns based on their population. There wasn't much to see along the coast road only a few farms mixed with a few orchards. Sighting the BIG LOBSTER we continued on our way north. Up until this point we lived in jeans and warm clothing because of the rainy and cold conditions. From now on we'd return to our more casual attire by wearing shorts and tee shirts.

Without sounding ungrateful to the many people who along the way strongly suggested to us 'make certain you visit 'this' place and 'that' place', one of those places was Hahndorf.

Swinging off the main road to Adelaide we followed signs to Hahndorf with a population of 2,000 people. It is a quaint village reminiscent of its German ancestry. Stopping at a jam factory to the entrance of the village we sampled various jams and noted they made those small jars of jam often found in gift baskets.

Actually Hahndorf didn't impress us very much. It may have been okay if we'd been interested in Art Galleries but after our experiences of the Art Gallery at Cradle Mountain in Tasmania we were not about to stop.

Onward to Adelaide! Our plan was to drive through Adelaide onto the Barossa Valley visiting as many Wineries as we could. Adelaide is a place where we found it difficult to escape. All we wanted to do was to find highway 21 and follow it to Gawler.

We drove around and around sighting highways 20, 22, 23 and even 24 but never sighting highway 21. Eventually discovering we were lost it was time to make a study of the map. Poor Gwen in all of this time never had an opportunity to see any of Adelaide because she was constantly looking at the map trying to find out 'where in heaven's name we were'.

If we'd only driven another two hundred metres in the same direction we were going would have joined highway 21 to Gawler. Instead we drove around and around until presto we found highway 21 continuing onwards to Gawler.

At this point of *Our Holiday* all we wanted to do was to visit Barossa Valley. Had we'd been a little smarter when we drove through Gawler it was an opportunity of seeing the set of McLeod's Daughters which is one of Gwen's favorite television shows. Every Wednesday night at seven-thirty we've got to watch the girls.

My greatest failure on *Our Holiday* was leaving the maps at home. We had no idea of where we were going, there were no signage indicating Barossa Valley or any information boards to show us where to go. I imagined seeing a huge sign.

Turning off the main highway after seeing a sign Seppeltsfield that reminded of the name of a wine, I thought we must have been heading in the right direction. For miles and miles all we could see were vineyards.

‘Wouldn’t it be nice to stay at one of those flash Bed & Breakfast places for the night?’ I commented to Gwen as we turned the car into the nearest one we sighted. After looking at the price of almost \$550.00 per night for the both of us I quickly reversed from the driveway heading to another place for accommodation. We checked a couple of more places deciding to continue onto the nearest town, which happened to be Nuriootpa with a population of 3,865 people.

After booking into the motel for a comfortable night’s sleep, Gwen arranged for us to go on a tour of the Barossa Valley. They would pick us up at the front of our motel at nine o’clock the following morning.

It turned out after all that; apart from the driver we were the only two people who had booked a tour that morning. What a stroke of luck! The driver was most accommodating with his storytelling of the region.

There are three towns, which encompass the Barossa Valley. They are Nuriootpa, Tanunda and Lyndock. Spieling off his knowledge of history since the first settlers came to the valley he showed us firstly through the three towns, which make up the valley predominately settled by Lutherans who first settled in the valley followed by Germans.

When he showed us the lookout overlooking the whole of the Barossa Valley, it was a breath taking experience. Seeing rows and rows of grape vines as far as the eye could see. In this area wine is grown commercially explaining the expanse spread of grape vines.

Occasionally there may be a boutique style of winery. Slightly below the lookout were sculptures of various shapes and sizes. According to our tour guide these sculptures were commissioned by the Government of the day to invite Sculptors from all over the world to visit Barossa Valley.

They had to create their own sculpture. Comments made by the tour guide was that the Sculptors may have drank too much of the local product before making their masterpieces. His comments were not too far from the truth. They appeared odd looking!

Ever since I can remember I’ve always wanted to visit ‘Lindsay Park Horse Stud’. It is famous for the Hayes family, particularly Colin Hayes who created a Disneyland for his horses. Driving along a dirt road I noticed horses galloping together on a track, which I made comment of to the tour guide.

Quickly he replied it was Lindsay Park Stud. I almost went into raptures trying to hold onto my excitement of seeing for myself this famous piece of Australian Thoroughbred Racing paradise. I couldn’t believe it! Actually driving alongside, on the road, seeing thoroughbred horses working. The property comprised of three thousand acres situated on the outskirts of the Barossa Valley. Seeing Lindsay Park Stud was one of my many highlights on *Our Holiday*.

We visited Angus Park Shop where they sold dried fruit and plenty of souvenirs. Colin Hayes was one of the founders of Angus Park Shop. It was now time to do a little wine tasting. Wolf Blass Winery was one of the first places we visited.

It's not like our wineries near home. These were huge! Owned by Fosters Brewery millions upon millions of dollars have been spent on upgrades in the production of the famous wine. Whilst Gwen tasted the fine Wolf Blass wines and ports I wallowed in my thirst for knowledge about the founder – Wolfgang Blass.

Fosters have made a museum of Wolfgang Blass showing his expertise in being able to produce a very fine wine. Gwen thoroughly enjoyed her wine tasting eager to tell me that she actually tasted port from a bottle costing \$98.00. She only tasted it and never purchased the bottle.

After visiting a couple of other wineries we settled on Beer Brothers Winery, which happened to be a strange name for a winery. It was a quaint little boutique style winery overlooking a large lake filled with fish for guests to 'go fishing'.

After a wonderful tour we returned to our car driving onto our next destination of Mildura. All throughout *Our Holiday*, apart from booking on the 'Spirit Of Tasmania' we didn't book ahead only hoping to find accommodation. Our reason for not booking ahead was because at times we didn't even know ourselves what we were doing and places where we were going to visit.

At times we were lucky to find accommodation whilst other times we needed to travel onto the next town. As was the case when we left the Barossa Valley on our way to Mildura. After searching for accommodation at three major towns all accommodation was booked out owing to the demand for the country 'sheep dog trials'.

Finally we found the last room of a motel at Paringa a small town on the highway to Mildura. Comparing all of the places we'd stayed during *Our Holiday* it would have had to be one of the worst, but when you're tired and want a bed anything looked good.

I'll tell you how ancient the motel was, the television set didn't even have a remote control. I wanted to watch the Rugby League Test and was unable to so. What was most impressive in the town was a local Antique Store. Looking at some of the items they had for sale almost laid us in the aisles. A small cup and saucer set, which Gwen commented that she also owned a similar set, was advertised to sell for \$125.00.

That night we visited the hotel/motel restaurant. Gwen ordered crumbed steak. When her meal arrived at the table it overlapped the sides by inches of her large plate piled on top were chips and vegetables. After devouring my fish I helped her with the crumbed steak so between the both of us we devoured everything from both plates of food.

Traveling onto Mildura we saw paddocks growing grain crops ready for harvest. The recent season must have been one of their best in history.

Listened to the local radio station hearing complaints from the locals about the importation of citrus fruit from overseas, we crossed the South Australian and Victoria border reaching Mildura.

Once again we were the last to book into a motel where the town's accommodation was completely booked out. This time it was a conference! Our thoughts of Mildura were that we would take a two-day cruise along the Murray River. Unfortunately it was too late to book a cruise but instead enjoyed a lunchtime cruise on the Murray River on a paddle steamer. The banks of the Murray River are lined with ancient gum trees, also dotted along the bank in terrace formation are mansions.

In fact some of our fellow passengers who dined with us actually own and live in these mansions. We thoroughly enjoyed lunch by dining on olive spread with cream; seafood risotto; baked salmon and egg plant; the salmon was baked in egg white; capsicum; lettuce; zucchini; then afterwards enjoyed a cheese platter with mud cake, orange cake and moose finished off with coffee all for the price of \$49.00 each. It was fantastic!

Before going on the cruise we sat on the bank of the Murray River enjoying the sight of houseboats and fauna. Gwen said, 'Is that a crocodile swimming across the river?' I looked in the direction she was pointing and it looked to me to be like the shape of a crocodile head. I didn't think crocodiles were down as far as Mildura, I thought to myself.

The shape of the head with its eyes poking out of the water actually resembled the head of a crocodile. As the shape came closer to where we were seated on the bank I thought to myself that if it was a crocodile then its possible that it might continue up the side of the bank and attack us. It looked very real.

Fortunately as the shape came closer it fell apart showing that the shape we saw was two large ducks, mother and daddy with fifteen little ducklings. No one would have believed what we saw so there was no need telling anyone.

The following morning before leaving Mildura we visited the Mildura Scrapbooking Shop. Gwen was like a small child being lead into a lolly shop for the first time. She was beside herself with so much excitement in 'shop until you drop' in a shop which gave her everything her heart desired in choosing craft for her card making. After about four hours scanning through all of the glories in the shop we left to continue our journey onto Hay.

Leaving Mildura we crossed the New South Wales border driving alongside of the Murray River. Before we left Mildura people told us about how dry the 'Hay Plains' were from Mildura to the township of Hay. Driving along the Stuart Highway we saw the countryside at its best. It was not boring sighting mile after mile of grape vines, lush green pastures, citrus trees mainly orange trees.

Finally arriving at Hay we visited the Shearer's Hall Of Fame on the edge of town. All of the time we traveled throughout Tasmania Gwen kept asking me for a 'lambie'.

She kept saying, 'Come on Pat, pull over and get me a lambie'. She meant one of those white lambies we saw in the paddocks with their mothers. Not wanting to disappoint her for the life of me I couldn't understand 'why' she would want a lambie. Couldn't she wait until we arrived home when I could possibly try and find one for her as a pet?

All I could think of was seeing Gwen looking after a lamb growing into a sheep. Before we left the Shearer's Hall Of Fame, Gwen sighted miniature stuffed lambs in the shop. She bought one naming it 'Eanie' placing it on the dashboard of the car.

Not being satisfied with only one lambie, we returned the following morning to buy three more to have a family of 'Eanie, Meanie, Minie & Mo'. We finally had our family and Gwen was happy! Now the four of our family live on the dashboard of the car and travel with us wherever we go!

Our next major stop was staying at Dubbo particularly to visit the Dubbo Zoo. Gwen had never before seen or visited a zoo. Leaving Hay we were bombarded by flies, those little black flying creatures that seem to know your every move by aiming at your eyes stinging them until they watered. Each time we stopped to have a break it was a fight between the flies and my mouth to see how much I got into it.

They are the most annoying creatures I know. There were pastures for miles, crops of wheat and barley that I've never seen before only after a great season of rain. That night we arrived at Forbes with a population of 7,450 people. After settling into our motel we walked along the streets of the town. There must have been a pub on every corner. It was a dirty town.

Heading off the following morning reaching Dubbo, we visited the Dubbo Zoo to enquire about accommodation. Again luck played into our hands when we were offered the last remaining lodge in the zoo. When you stay at the Dubbo Zoo your accommodation is Zoofari Lodge.

Our accommodation was upgraded from the lower level to the highest level at the cost of the lowest – if that makes sense. In other words we received the Penthouse accommodation at Dubbo Zoo as we did at Conrad Jupiter Casino at the beginning of *Our Holiday*. We were upgraded to *Serengeti Lodge*, which resembles the actual accommodation you would receive if you visited Africa.

Making our way to Zoofari Lodge we were met by a Zoo Keeper and escorted to our tent. Yes, it was a tent style accommodation, but we did it tough! The tent was in the shape of a house with canvas sides and top. A double bedroom with a queen size bed together with sufficient space to house up to ten people.

It contained all of the niceties include on-suite, lounge and coffee making facilities. In all, there were twelve tents each with their own identity to resemble a park animal. Our tent was named Meercat, those funny looking creatures which stand on their hind legs and look around. Surrounding the tents was a compound, which was securely locked each night even having a security guard.

At 2pm we booked into our accommodation with one hour to spare before going on an afternoon tour of the park. In all we went on three tours, one during the afternoon before dinner, and another after dinner at night and a finally one before breakfast the following morning.

If ever you have an opportunity to visit the Dubbo Zoo, take it from Gwen and I that it is an added bonus to stay at Zoofari for the night. It's a little costly but the experience far outweighs the cost. During dinner at Zoofari Lodge we sat at a table with the name of our Lodge on it, which was Meercat. The Zoo Keepers who attended at our tables treated us as if we were royalty. While we ate, soft sounds of African music played making the scene so realistic to make us think we could in fact be in Africa.

After dinner our Zoo Keeper drove us on a tour of the park in a tour bus seeing animals in their natural habitat. Like the Black Rhinoceros wallowing in their man made lake. Later seeing a Tortoise that was only thirty-five years old. Last for the night was a Wombat that played up to the guests.

Retiring to bed that night we couldn't believe what we were doing – sleeping in a compound surrounded by Lions, Tigers, Elephants and all of the other animals in the Zoo. At seven-fifteen the following morning the tour bus was leaving to feed the animals.

Gwen loved handing a carrot to a Giraffe craning its long neck over the high fence bringing its long lips closer to Gwen's hand taking the carrot from her with its poised lips showing a wrinkle in its eye as if to say, 'Thank you!' Returning to Zoofari Lodge we were greeted and indulged in a delicious breakfast of bacon and eggs with the works finished off with coffee. It was an experience both Gwen and I will never forget!

Leaving Dubbo Zoo behind us our next port of call was Gilgandra with a population of 2,900 people. After booking into our accommodation we surveyed Gilgandra by walking the streets looking at the shops in the town. It's a grain growing area. We've never seen so many trucks laden with grain, cattle and sheep.

Next morning we started off to our next destination of Tamworth – The Country Music Capital Of Australia. Tamworth has a population of 31,850 people. We decided to stay a couple of days at Tamworth giving us an opportunity to see everything there is to see about country music. Both Gwen and I enjoy country style music.

First of all we visited the lookout driving to the highest viewpoint of Tamworth overlooking the total countryside. Next was the Tamworth Information Centre, which had an added attraction of 'Walk A Country Mile'.

For a small fee we walked 'A Country Mile'. I'd never seen anything like it in my life before. Narrated by John Laws he explained Australia's history of country music dating back to 1920. He told the story of country music in Australia in sectors of twenty years until the latest of today's music.

We were gob smacked and stunned to see such a history in one place. By the end of two hours our minds were completely clogged with the wonderful thought of Australian country music being recognized. At the end of the walk we sat and watched the life stories of Slim Dusty, Lee Kerrigan and other famous Australian Country artists.

Our next stop was to see the Golden Guitar. It stands twelve metres high painted gold and is at the front of the country music wax museum. It was truly wonderful to see our country music artists displayed in their true identities. Next door was the newly constructed Golden Guitar building.

Huge rocks some as high as two metres were systematically scattered in front of the building. Each rock displayed a bronze plate illustrating the name and life history of each country and western artist who has gone to the 'Hall Of Fame' above.

Being the final leg of *Our Holiday* sadly we had to return home. We didn't want to! But life has to go on and our next holiday can't come quick enough. Gwen and I spent a total of 39 days together on *Our Holiday*. When broken down into seconds it is 3,369,600. In all we traveled 6,500 kilometers.

On behalf and Gwen and myself I want to thank you for reading *Our Holiday* and hope you have enjoyed traveling along with us. We certainly have enjoyed it!

Thank you!

Pat & Gwen.