

## Days 46 & 47 (Tuesday-Wednesday, 11/04-05/08) Sydney-Bridge-Opera House-The Rocks

The day started with temperatures in the mid 60s, broken clouds, light breeze, and calm sea. At 5am we were making an approach in the open sea to the outer harbor of Sydney. It was still dark and the lights of Sydney were visible in the distance decorating the hillsides.

The map on the right shows where we were located on the globe. We visited Sydney in 2007 and a description of that time is on Days 31 and 32 of the blog at the address of <http://2007gwv.thestansfields.com/> .

For this cruise in 2008 the map below from Google Earth shows Circular Quay (pronounced "Key") in Sydney with a large ship tied up where the Amsterdam was now docked next to the Overseas Passenger Terminal building.



When we were in Sydney in 2007 our emphasis was the Opera House and a tour of the city including Bondi Beach. Since then we had learned of a unique Sydney opportunity called "The Bridge Climb". Barbara

was particularly fascinated by the challenge of this activity which involves walking on top of the girders of the Harbour Bridge up to the summit where the flags are flying. As part of the obsession about the event we had added to our physical exercise routine last summer to be in shape for the Bridge Climb. Our friends, Jack and Evelyn, had taken the climb in 2007 and planned to do it again on this cruise. Barbara had been chatting about the Bridge Climb plans on the [www.CruiseCritic.com](http://www.CruiseCritic.com) website with Evelyn (itravel2much) ever since signing up for the cruise. Today was to be all about the Sydney Harbour Bridge Climb.



The Harbour Bridge in Sydney was completed in 1932 and is the largest single span bridge in the world. Apparently this is one single span bridge about 3 feet longer (in the US) but it isn't as wide and doesn't weigh as much as the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Consequently, Sydney brochures usually refer to the Harbour Bridge as being the "largest" single span bridge instead of the "longest" single span bridge. The Harbour Bridge was constructed by riveting plates of steel together using the best technology of the 1930s and it appears to be in fine shape. There are large concrete and granite pylons on each end of the steel span. We climbed up the 200 steps inside the southeast pylon to get a view of climbers on the bridge and check out the museum explaining the design and construction history of the bridge. Entrance to the pylon costs about \$10 Australian (~\$6.50 US) unless you have a free pass that you get when you purchase the "Harbour Bridge Climb". Here are some views from the top of the southeast pylon.

The Amsterdam was visible with the shops in The Rocks district further to the right.

However, at this time our main interest was the bridge climbers walking gingerly up the steps on the steel girder of the Bridge, as shown below.



This next bit of text and pictures may only be of interest to people with an interest or curiosity about mechanical things.

The people in the photo on the left are walking between 4 foot high pipe railings attached to the bridge top girder. They are attached by a strong belt and flexible "personal" cable to a continuous long "bridge" cable that runs along the vertical steel stanchions of the pipe railing. There is an absolutely ingenious device at the end of the personal cable that slides over the continuous steel cable. This device slides easily along the continuous cable. The ingenious design enables the device to slide over the two steel retainer loops that are welded to both sides of the vertical stanchions and hold the continuous bridge cable in place.

Shown below is a picture of two of the devices which are made by a company called Latchways that markets Fall Protection Systems. We'll call the device a "Latchway".

Looking at the top Latchway on the right, the loop is attached to the personal cable of the climber's belt. The Latchway is then held and (at the beginning of the climb) the long continuous bridge cable on the pipe railing stanchions is inserted through the Latchway. The bridge cable passes between two sets of sprockets that rotate about the center axis of the circular yellow piece. The Latchway can then slide along the continuous bridge cable as the climber moves. When the climber comes to a vertical rail stanchion the crescent shaped piece of steel inserts into the steel retainer loop on the stanchion parallel with the bridge cable. As the Latchway slides further along the bridge cable the retainer loop on the vertical stanchion contacts the sprocket teeth on either side of the crescent shaped steel piece. At this point a miraculous event takes place as the sprocket teeth rotate over the steel retainer loop and the Latchway passes easily past the stanchion. Obviously the Latchway incorporates some engineering features that allows the personal cable of the climber to remain attached to the bridge by detaching and reattaching in a sequence that assures the Latchway will never be released from the bridge cable. The Latchway web site shows the device in action and the address is:



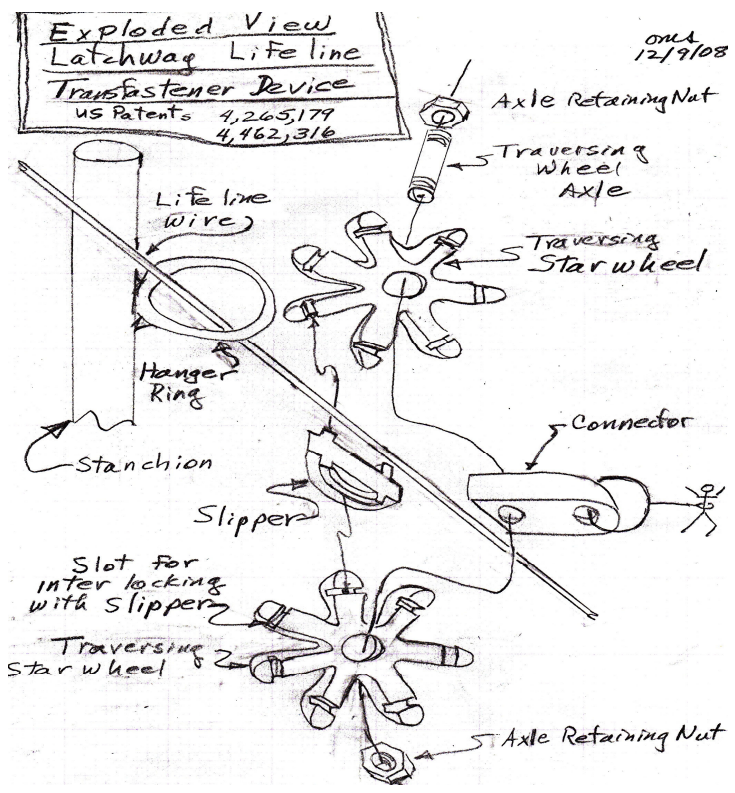
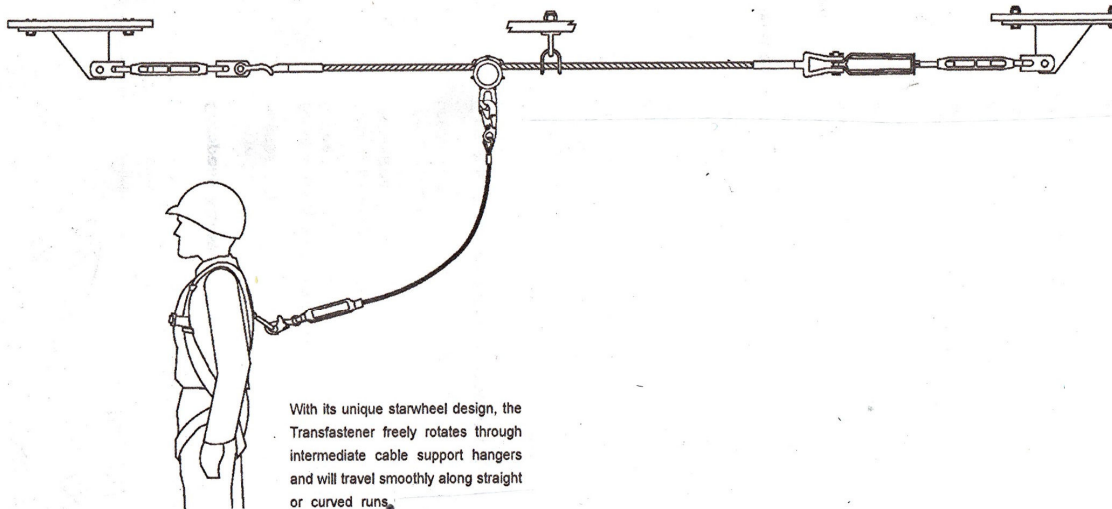
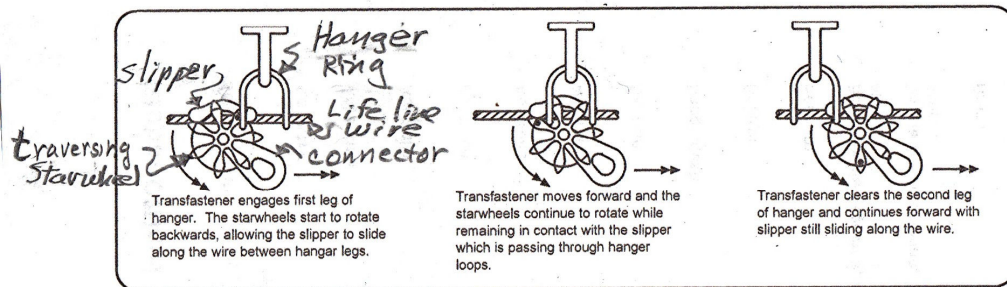
<http://www.height-solutions.co.uk/default.aspx?item=39> .

Here is a picture from the Latchway website showing two joyous bridge climbers, with no concern for their safety, firmly attached to the bridge cable by their personal cable and the Latchway device.



For those unfortunate people who, like Orlin, can become obsessed with obscure technical subjects, the following two drawings were added to this blog entry in December 2008 to show some more about how the Latchway device is designed and how it works.





Now, back to The Bridge Climb!

The Amsterdam tour department offered a Bridge Climb tour package for a cost of \$395 US each. The Bridge Climb can be purchased directly from BridgeClimb at [www.bridgeclimb.com](http://www.bridgeclimb.com) for about \$189 Australian (~\$126 US) each. The decision to go with a direct purchase was a "no brainer". Jack and Evelyn had suggested that instead of buying the tickets on-line, we wait until we arrive in Sydney and then if the weather is right we go for the Bridge Climb. The Bridge Climb goes in all weather except lightning storms and extremely high winds. We didn't want to take a chance on having to climb in the rain so we waited until the Amsterdam arrived in Sydney to buy our tickets. We were among the first to leave the Amsterdam after it docked and along with Jack and Evelyn we headed for The BridgeClimb Sydney office. The BridgeClimb office is located under the approach to the bridge in The Rocks district of Sydney next to where the Amsterdam docked.

We arrived before the doors opened at 8am. Here is a picture we took of our eager little group as we waited. Finally we were able to go in and buy our tickets for the adventure. At 9am we got in with a group of 8 other tourists along with Rebecca "Beck", our guide. Larry, who is a Cruise Critic friend (webecruisinnow), also happened to be in our group. His wife, Carol, took the job of photography from the top of the southeast pylon while Larry did the climbing.



The preparation for the climb was rather time consuming. We had to leave our wristwatches in the locker so couldn't tell the time very well. We probably spent about 45 minutes in the following activities:

- filling out a medical questionnaire,
- getting our breathalyzer test for alcohol,
- putting all gear except glasses in a locker (no cameras allowed – sniff, sniff),
- putting on a coverall jump suit – we could leave our street clothes on underneath.
- Barbara had worn open sandals to the event so she needed to put on a pair of BridgeClimb provided sneakers for the climb. The rest of us wore our own sneakers.
- the personal cable, with associated heavy duty belt
- hat, rain jacket, fleece cloth jacket (these were in small pouches) attached to our jumpsuit with a cloth strip and spring loaded hook. A handkerchief was held on the wrist with an elastic band.
- Each of us got head phones and radio power pack for receiving the commentary of Beck as the Bridge Climb proceeded.

Our guide, Beck, took us to a mockup of a ladder up and ladder down structure which had a simulated Bridge Cable incorporated. We all threaded out Latchways on to the Bridge Cable and went up and down the ladder to see what it felt like. There was complete freedom to negotiate



the stairs even while tethered by our personal cable to the bridge cable. Everyone was checked out and we were ready to go.

Beck took us outside and we walked briefly down the street to an entrance for the catwalk that took us out under the roadway to a point beyond the southeast pylon. At that point Beck said we should get together with someone we liked because once we hooked ourselves into the Bridge Cable it would not be possible to change positions. We all slid our Latchway over the Bridge Cable attached to the railing on the right hand side of our pathway. Then we climbed a series of ladders until we arrived on top of the top steel girder of the bridge. The picture on the right shows the catwalk under the roadway and some people who have just emerged from climbing the ladders to the top girder on the east side of the bridge.



From this point on we walked up the gradual slope of the girder on steel steps that were welded to the top of the girder. As we went along Beck identified various landmarks that were visible in the distance and nearby around the bay. About half way up the arch to the top Beck stopped us and then went up and down the line asking if we were feeling okay and if we had any questions. During these forays back and forth Beck was tethered to a separate Bridge Cable attached to the handrail on the left hand side of our pathway. When observing bridge climbers earlier we had noticed that the line of climbers always paused about halfway up the slope. Now we knew what was going on at the time. The wind was blowing 20 mph or so but we were comfortable in our jumpsuits which ballooned nicely in the



wind. This pause was great for just looking around and taking in the view. Beck got out her trusty digital camera and took pictures of individual people and couples at key spots in the itinerary. The first photo opportunity was at the summit beneath the Australian

flag. The stock picture above is one they gave us later when we bought the pictures Beck had taken of us.

Here, on the right, we are celebrating the accomplishment with the Amsterdam and Sydney skyline in the background.



Beck also took a picture at that point with the famous Sydney Opera House in the background.



After all the individual pictures were taken Beck had us all cozy up together and she took this group picture shown below.



The Cruise Critic folks are the last five on the right, Orlin & Barbara (tenncruisers), Jack & Evelyn (itravel2much), and Larry (webecruisinnow).



We then crossed over to the west side of the bridge and got another picture on the way. We were near the tail end of our group and you can see the next group of climbers waiting with their guide to make the crossing.

We walked down on the west girder and at the bottom we had to slow up to allow one



person at a time to go down each of several ~20 foot ladders to a catwalk under the top girder. From the top of the southeast pylon we took a picture of some other climbers making this transition as shown on the left.



The ladders were steep but not vertical and no one had a significant problem with them.

We were making our way along the catwalk under the top girder when Beck took this final picture of the happy climbers.



When we got back to the sidewalk at the end of the tour, our Latchway slid off the Bridge Cable and we were free again. Beck took us back to the change room and we went through a very organized routine for helping each other unsnap the hooks and deposit the accessories in the proper bin. It was about 12:30pm by the time we were ready to go. The Bridge Climb had put us in a no-rest-room condition for about 3.5 hours so we were glad we had gone light on liquids in the morning.

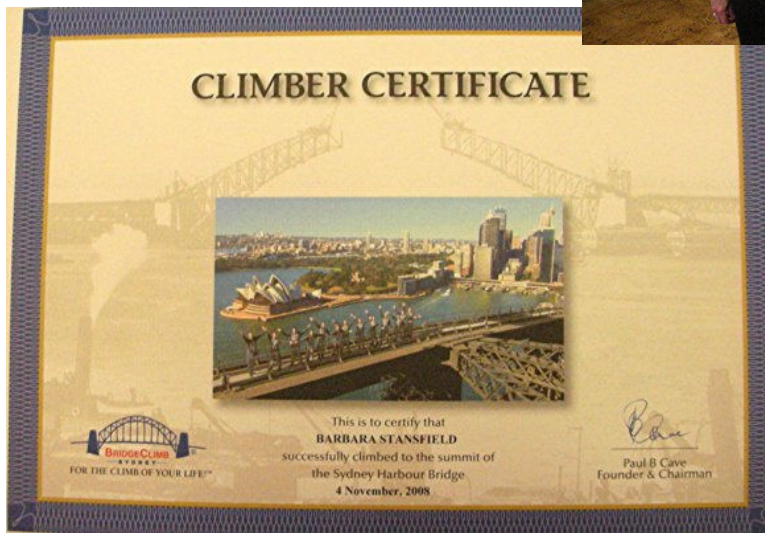
After getting all of our things together again we went out to the room where the photographs taken during the climb were displayed on monitors for the climbers to review and purchase if they wanted them. As we entered Beck handed us the complimentary photo of the group taken at the top along with a Climber Certificate for each of us showing that we had made the Bridge Climb.



We got Beck (Rebecca) to pose for a picture.

We liked the photos of us and bought the package deal which included a CD with our pictures and some stock BridgeClimb photos on it. It was pricey at \$64 Australian (~\$43 US).

We also bought several tee shirts to commemorate the climb. A photo of Barbara's certificate is shown below.



After the excitement of the climb and working our way through the photo and tee shirt buying experience Jack suggested we find a pub and celebrate with a drink. Today happened to be the day of

the Melbourne Cup horserace which is a really big deal in Australia, sort of like the Kentucky Derby and Super Bowl in the US happening on the same day. Australians were celebrating in the streets and pubs with the ladies wearing fancy hats. Some pubs had people standing in line to get in. Eventually we found room at a pub in the Rocks district. We enjoyed a drink and the satisfaction of completing our long time goal of The Bridge Climb with good friends.



The staff of the BridgeClimb in Sydney was well trained and friendly. We went back the next day because Orlin wanted to examine the Latchway device and find out more about it. The staff was very helpful. Arrangements were made for Elaine to bring out one of the Latchways and she also showed an alternate model that we had not used.

In the afternoon we wanted to spend some time exploring The Rocks district of Sydney. The Rocks is a collection of mainly brick buildings that stand on the site of the first settlement of British guards and convicts in Australia. The existing buildings were constructed in the late 1800s and early 1900s as Sydney was growing in commercial importance. Several years ago there was an effort to replace the old buildings with modern high rise construction but that move was defeated in favor of restoring the old buildings. Now The Rocks is a nice blend of shops, cafes, and pubs that makes the narrow streets and alleys a pleasure to explore.

An example of an old city feature that has been retained was this antique mailbox on one of the streets. Another reminder of the past was this narrow passageway through a building to enable people to walk around the densely built up and somewhat unplanned neighborhoods.

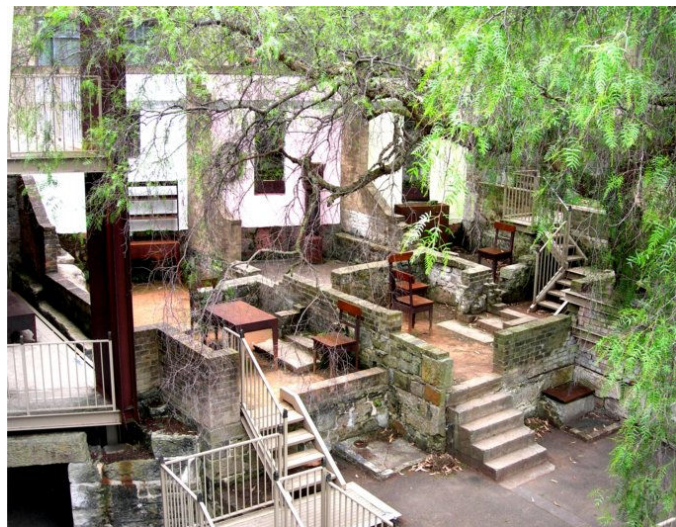


Note that we are both proudly wearing our "Bridge Climb" tee shirts in celebration of our earlier conquest of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.



Another interesting artifact of The Rocks district was an unobtrusive display of household furniture made of steel and arranged within the partial walls of what must have

been one of the early buildings that clung to the rocks of the hillside. The exhibit, as shown on the right, gave some idea of how at least one of the early homes was laid out.





Walking down George Street in The Rocks we came across a tasteful group of shops in the Metcalfe Arcade. The most interesting one that we visited was called the Natural Selection Souvenirs. Barbara found several tee shirts and souvenir towels. The proprietors of the shop are Michael and Aviva Lacey. On our first visit we met Aviva and thoroughly enjoyed discussing things Australian and current events in Sydney. Aviva was wearing one of those hats that are the fashion on Melbourne Cup Day in Australian cities. Since her store emphasized natural things and particularly images of wildlife her hat carried out that theme. Here, on the right, is a picture of the saucy lady and her hat which is decorated with a brown lizard (mouth agape) while she wears a tarantula spider broach. On our next trip to Sydney a visit to Natural Selection Souvenirs will be a "must" on our list of things to do.



In the evening of our first day in Sydney we had reservations for a play in the Sydney Opera House. The play was not in the large Opera Theater but in a smaller theater on the ground floor. The name of the play was "Anatomy Titus Fall of Rome" by Heiner Muller. We had not heard of the play but booked it on-line just for the experience of attending a play in the Opera House. The Amsterdam was selling the play as a tour for \$289 US and we thought the on-line price of \$45US was a nice bargain.

We are not usually up for heavy drama type plays and although Barbara is showing a brave smile, this billboard out front gave us a little pause. We thought that if it was really bad we could leave at the intermission. At 7:30pm we were in our seats and wondering why the walls and floor of the stage were smeared with a red paint-like material. The play started and soon the seven actors were killing and maiming each other. They did these deeds by dipping red liquid out of a 5 gallon plastic pail and smearing each other with the symbolic blood colored liquid. What a mess! To make matters worse it was all done in

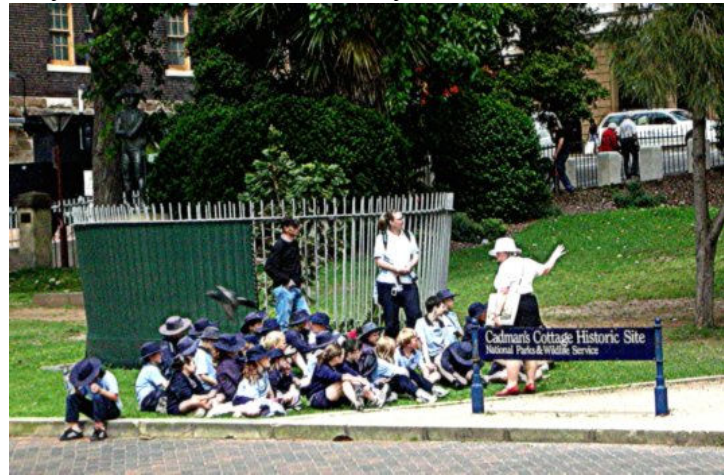


Shakespearian English. We got more bad news as it became obvious that there was no intermission. The play ground on for 2.5 hours without a break. Finally at about 10pm the play ended and we walked out, thankful for our freedom. We joined a stream of people coming out of the main Opera Theater which had been sold out when we bought our tickets for the play we attended. We have heard our friend, Anne (ansalberg), offer a suggestion for a situation like this. She would say, "Next time we will just pay someone to beat us with a stick".

It was a beautiful night to be walking within view of the Sydney Opera House, the lights of the Sydney skyline, and the Amsterdam in her dock. Soon our spirits were restored as we walked back to the Amsterdam.

Our second day in Sydney was bright and cheery and we set out early with plans to just walk around and eventually catch a Hop-On, Hop-Off (HOHO) bus to see the main highlights of Sydney. The first sight that caught our eye was in the Circular Quay Park near the Amsterdam.

A group of school children in blue uniforms was having an outing and were assembled on the lawn of a historic site. They were all wearing the broad brimmed hat that is required for school children in Australia. There is a hole in the protective ozone layer in the southern hemisphere that lets in excessive harmful radiation from the sun. Schools must ensure that children are protected from the cancer causing radiation so there is a requirement to wear the broad brimmed hats. It would appear that the little fellow on the far left has other things on his mind than what the leader may be saying.



We couldn't immediately find a HOHO bus so we walked down George Street in the direction of the Queen Victoria Building (QVB). The QVB is an elegant building with Victorian architecture and exquisite shops distributed over 4 floors. After about 30 minutes of walking we arrived at the QVB with the unmistakable architecture shown in the photo on the right.





We entered the QVB and immediately saw the Christmas Tree that extended up through the entire four stories of the store foray. By going up to the fourth floor we were finally able to see the tree top ornament as shown here.

We browsed through the shops in the QVB. The shop that specialized in Aboriginal Art was the most interesting but we didn't find anything that we wanted to buy.



A bus stop was located near the entrance to the QVB so we waited for the next HOHO bus there. Finally one of the open top double decker buses arrived and we bought tickets (senior) at \$20 Australian each. The tickets are good for 24 hours and as many hop ons and hop offs as you can work into the 24 hour period. We took a seat in the exposed upper section and settled back for an enjoyable tour of the highlights of Sydney. We didn't get on and off the bus but just stayed with it. There was an audio commentary and the ride lasted for over an hour as it wound its way past 22 stops at various sites throughout Sydney.



The Darling Harbour area, shown on the left, appeared to be a very upbeat area with a lot going on.

As we neared The Rocks district we saw the now familiar Sydney Harbour Bridge and then we passed under the approach to the bridge.

As the bus passed through The Rocks it stopped near the Amsterdam and we got off. We walked around the business district at the Circular Quay. A man dressed as an Aborigine had set up a position on the Quay and was playing a Didgeridoo as shown below. He had a



sound system that blended in bird and other animal sounds with the primitive drone of the didgeridoo. He was doing a thriving business with the people from the ferry boat landing and passengers from the Amsterdam which was docked nearby. His didgeridoo technique made for an unusual sound that was pleasing so we bought one of his CDs for \$10 Australian (~\$7 US).

About 11pm the Amsterdam got underway for the city of Noumea on the island of New Caledonia. We were sitting on our verandah enjoying the sights when we noticed that over the



Sydney Opera House was a large flock of seagulls wheeling around the sky. With the glistening shells of the Opera House and the white birds overhead it was a beautiful sight. We took a picture in an attempt to record the image. What we got was not perfect. The seagulls are barely visible as white smudges but it was enough to remind us of this beautiful sight as we sailed out of Sydney Harbour.



The next two days will be spent at sea on the way to Noumea.