

## Day 44 (Sunday, 11/02/08) Melbourne, Australia – Dandenong Mtn. – LPG Observations

It was not yet daylight when we got up so we could see what was happening as we entered the harbor at Melbourne, Australia. The humidity was low and temperatures were in the mid 50s at this early hour but climbed later in the day to mid 70s. Lights from towns on the shore were visible as we glided through the calm seas. Just after daybreak the pilot boat showed up and the pilot came on board the Amsterdam to assist in the arrival at Melbourne.

About 8:30am the Amsterdam approached the passenger terminal at Station Pier in Melbourne. The ship was about an hour late in arrival and the tour buses were already lined up next to the passenger terminal. The ferry to Tasmania, named the Spirit of Tasmania, was already tied up at the pier and the skyline of Melbourne was clearly visible in the background.

The following pictures show where Melbourne is located on the globe and where we were located in Melbourne.



The harbor at Melbourne is located at the mouth of the Yarra River which runs through Melbourne.



We could confirm the ship's location by use of the Google Earth website which clearly showed the "Welcome to Melbourne" sign on the passenger terminal roof.



We lost no time in using the large roof sign to show where Barbara's Oak Ridge, TN library card was located today.



As soon as we were docked we got our tour bus assignment and located it on the pier. We were taking a tour to a national park area in the Dandenong Mountains about 15 miles north of Melbourne. Our guide's name was Penney.

Melbourne has a fairly concentrated downtown high rise area that was visible from the harbor. The bus took us down the street along the harbor and we caught this view of downtown through the typical beach side apartments and businesses.



Looking in the direction of the pier the Spirit of Tasmania was visible with the Amsterdam tied up on the other side of the dock. The Spirit of Tasmania provides a vital connection with the island state of Tasmania which lies across a stretch of ocean south of Melbourne.



We drove through a beautiful city park area that included the Yarra River. In one section there were provisions for sculling on the river. This scene reminded us of the view of rowers from our home on Melton Lake in Oak Ridge.

We got another view of downtown from the park as shown below.

Similar to our experience in Perth, we felt that the housing and plant life around town reminded us a lot of San Diego. Some photos of typical houses and a strip mall are shown below.



Penney said that the Melbourne area was suffering through a prolonged drought.



They had just gone through what should be the rainy season and the city reservoirs were only 30% full. City residents were on a program of restricted water use for gardens, car washing and other non-essential uses.



There was a section of town with small houses originally owned by miners and dock laborers. Penney said that this part of town had recently become very trendy and there was a high demand for the small houses even though they needed extensive renovation to install modern conveniences like indoor plumbing. She said the houses may sell for as much as

\$600,000 Australian (~400,000 US) and require another \$300,000 US to renovate. The houses she showed us looked small but very neat and trim as shown below.



Housing prices, in general seemed to be comparable to those in the US large cities. We didn't see any real bargains.

The bus took a road called "Fern Gully" that led up into the Dandenong Mountains and the national park. The road got its name from the many tree ferns that grew along the side of the road in the eucalyptus forest.





The Dandenong Mountains were really just large hills several thousand feet high, sort of like the Cumberland Mountains in the US. Our first stop was at a place called Grant's Reserve where they had a wonderful collection of colorful birds that are native to

the rainforests of the region. They had grain available for people to lure the birds in close. It was a Sunday and many Australians from the area as well as tourists were visiting Grant's Reserve to see the birds.

Here is a picture of a Cockatoo shown below.



An Australian King Parrot is shown below.



The Crimson Rossella had some blue feathers among the red to help identify it.

The Golah had pastel pink coloring along its neck as shown below.



Apparently the Golah doesn't have a very good reputation. Penney said that if an Australian calls you a Golah, he means you

have just said or done something stupid.

There were some nice tree ferns at Grant's Reserve as shown on the right.

We drove through a tall eucalyptus forest like that shown below.



Penney said that even though these are eucalyptus trees the common name for them around here was "Mountain Ash". She said that the tall straight trees were sometimes used to replace the masts that had been broken as sailing ships fought their way through the fierce storms that often batter the southern coast of Australia.

Our next stop was called "The Observatory" and was located near the summit of Dandenong Mountain. It did not have telescopes but was a nice overlook for the city of Melbourne laid out in the flat land below. The guide said that the viewing conditions were more clear than usual but it was still very hazy. We were able to get this poor quality photo with the Melbourne skyline barely visible in the distance. Wherever we go the views in the distance are usually hazy. One has to value highly the clear crisp views that are occasionally possible.



We climbed back on the bus and drove a short distance to a charming village with the name of Olinda. If you have been to the town of Idyllwild, in the San Jacinto Mountains of California, you would see many similarities with Olinda, Australia. The town consisted of 2 or 3 main streets with small cafes and tourist shops lining the streets and alleys. The Sunday local visitors were there along with us tourists so there was plenty of foot traffic as well as cars parked along the streets.





We had been looking for one of the strange instruments called a Didgeridoo. It usually consists of an approximately 5 foot long tube about 3 inches in diameter made from some native wood and at least partially hollowed out by termites. The termite hole along the centerline is expanded by a carving and burning process. One end of the resulting tube is placed against the lips and the lips are vibrated something like playing a trombone or bass horn. A

low frequency resonance is set up in the tube producing an unusual sound, seeming to consist of only two different frequencies. The Aborigine men decorate the tube with native art and play the instrument at public gatherings. It is a big hit with tourists because of its unique Australian connection. We have been looking for one to decorate our home and perhaps learn to play. We spied a likely candidate in one of Olinda's stores called Mangana. We ended up buying it for \$195 Australian (\$130US) and hauled it back to ship on the bus. On the way back to the bus we ran across our friends John and MaryAnn, on the right, who were winding down their browsing. They took a picture of us and our new (bubble wrapped) Didgeridoo acquisition.





## LPG (Liquified Petroleum Gas) Observations

The issue of LPG has recently been brought forward in the US by TV ads sponsored by the oil tycoon T. Boone Pickens. He has made LPG related investments because that material is readily available in the US and if a significant portion of the transportation in the US were powered by LPG it would reduce US dependence on foreign oil imports. If his reasoning is correct and the US shifts in a major way to LPG then not only would Pickens make a lot of money but the country would be in a better strategic position to reduce the amount of money transferred to foreign countries to buy oil. This would be a good thing. The reason for belaboring this issue here is that we found Australia, at least in the Melbourne area, to be much further down the LPG path than is the US.

One of the big impediments to LPG use in large amounts is that the US infrastructure for delivering fuel to cars and trucks would have to be significantly modified. LPG is available in most cities and villages but there are very few outlets and that discourages people from buying vehicles that burn LPG. In order for LPG use to become common in US vehicles it would be necessary for outlets, like the neighborhood gas station, to start dispensing LPG like they do gasoline. We found that in the Melbourne area that widening of LPG availability has taken place.

The LPG situation came to our attention in the village of Olinda where we noticed several cars parked on the street had license plates marked with a red diamond and the letters LPG as shown here. (Victoria is the Australian State) This designation means the car is capable of burning LPG in the engine. Our tour guide thought the number of such cars was much less than 5% of the total but in our unscientific survey of the Olinda street there were at least 20% showing this red LPG diamond.



On the way back through Melbourne on the bus we took some pictures of price signs at service stations. There was the usual price of gas amounting to about \$4 US per gallon but there was also a price given for LPG in terms of Australian Cents per liter. We had not seen these signs before. In this example on the right the LPG is selling for 59.9 Australian Cents per liter. That amounts to about \$1.60 US per gallon. Here's another example below where LPG is selling for 62.9 Australian Cents per liter.



Apparently the conditions in this area of the world are such that the local gas stations are willing to invest in the infrastructure needed to dispense LPG.

Whether or not the US should or will make a significant switch to LPG is a political, economic and technical question, but at least there is a working example of movement toward LPG in

Melbourne Australia.

We got back to the ship from the tour and found that an Australian Navy helicopter landing ship had docked next to the Amsterdam. The sailors had stood at attention in their whites during the docking procedure but by the time we could get a camera focused on them they had been dismissed from that formation.

The skyline of Melbourne makes for an impressive backdrop.



Back in our stateroom we unwrapped our prized Didgeridoo and Orlin actually got one resonant low note. Barbara claims that someone told her only men were supposed to play the Didgeridoo so she has completely backed away from the challenge. We bought a CD with the Didgeridoo that gives detailed instructions on how to play the instrument. Neither of us have a scrap of musical talent so it is likely this piece of wood will end up being an "objet d'art" rather than a source of melodious sounds. Here on the left is Orlin displaying the Didgeridoo and his training CD.



We took this close up picture below to give a better view of the alligator pattern burned into the wood.



The Amsterdam got underway about 6pm and cruised out through the huge bay at Melbourne. Tomorrow is a day at sea and then we visit Sydney for two days. Barbara has been exercising since July to get in shape to climb the Sydney Harbour Bridge. We arrive on November 4<sup>th</sup> and

plan to buy our tickets to the bridge climb as soon as we land. November 4th is also the day of the Melbourne Cup horse race. Apparently this is a national event even more compelling than the football super bowl in the US. During the few minutes that the race is taking place we hear that nothing moves in Australia except the horses and jockeys. We are hoping that any dislocation in the tourist business will be resolved, especially issuing tickets for the Bridge Climb, when we show up at the ticket counter.