

Lusitano's 10-Day Tour of Australia Melbourne, Cairns & Sydney Visited

By MICHAEL MCDOUGALL

Saturday, November 12: Melbourne

Shortly before noon on Saturday, November 12, my wife Dawnna and I were among the members of the Lusitano party who arrived in Melbourne after traveling 7,800 miles on a "red-eye" flight from San Francisco with a stopover in Sydney. In the group were Lusitano president Maria Roliz, husband Hunter Choi, Bonnie Braga, and her mother Fabia.

Bonnie, a travel agent who had arranged the previous well-received club-sponsored tours of China, Portugal and Brazil, organized the present trip to Australia with an optional tour of New Zealand on which six members would go. This group would grow to 22 when others who came earlier, joined us here.

After clearing the Australian immigration and customs, we were met at the airport by Lesley Bryden, our local guide, who welcomed us and led us to a chartered coach to take us to our hotel. As we went on a quick tour through of the central part of the city she gave us a lively introduction to Australia and Melbourne. A longer tour was scheduled after lunch.

Bryden passed around a map of Australia superimposed on that of the lower 48 United States at the same scale showing that they were about the same size. But whereas the U.S. has 296 million people distributed over the country, Australia has 20 million, almost all living in cities at its coasts. Its interior, called the Outback, is desert because rain sometimes does not fall for years. This vast area contains few paved roads and towns, but in its landscape contains some of the most spectacular geological forms and landscapes accessible only for the adventurous with off-road vehicles or helicopters.

Melbourne is named after Lord Melbourne who was the British prime minister who announced to Victoria then 18 that she had become queen, and who became her favorite. The early growth of this city was largely due to the fortunes made during from the gold rush of 1851 – Australia had several. The next year, 370,000 immigrants came in search of gold. A third of the world's gold was mined in this state. In just two years Victoria's population had grown from 77,000 to 554,000.

Many of these were Chinese who were discriminated against. After World War II Australia admitted sizeable numbers of immigrants from Italy and Greece, many of whom came to Melbourne, which has the largest community of Greeks after Athens. In the fifties, the country softened its "White Australia" policy and admitted many Asian immigrants though giving preference to Europeans, a policy only rescinded in 1966. Today Melbourne has an ethnically diverse population of 3 million, second only to Sydney with 4 million.

Melbournians like most Australians, are mad about sports especially cricket, the various forms of rugby, tennis – the Australian Open was held here recently– swimming, and the Formula One auto racing. Work stops when the Melbourne Cup horse race is being run in which millions of dollars are waged. In 1956 Melbourne hosted the Olympics.

Bryden said proudly that Melbourne was voted the world’s most livable city this year, displacing Vancouver BC, last year’s winner.

We checked in at our hotel at the edge of Chinatown, and grabbed a quick lunch at one of the Asian restaurants and sidewalk cafes outside the hotel, and resumed our guided tour. Fortunes made during the gold rush led to the building of proud civic and commercial buildings and a planned downtown. Until 1927 Melbourne was the nation’s capital until it was moved to Canberra. It is also Australia’s largest financial center. This early in November, Christmas decorations festooned its downtown department stores, shops and glass-enclosed gallerias.

Melbourne is also known as the Garden City for the many public parks, the wide streets lined with shade trees, and the green corridor of the Yarra River that runs through its heart.

We visited Fitzroy Gardens to see its Conservatory, and its large mature trees. Here in the Southern Hemisphere the late spring was showing with spectacular purple jacarandas, Golden rain (*Koelreuteria elegans*), and poincianas (known in Hong Kong as “Flame-of -the forest”). A popular attraction here is Captain Cook’s cottage which belonged to his parents in Yorkshire. It was moved stone by stone to the present location in 1934. But, some doubt exists that the great navigator ever lived there. Memorabilia and maps of his sea voyages and explorations are displayed.

Our bus driver then took us through several neighborhoods including some lovingly restored terrace houses with Victorian filigree wrought iron balcony railings, similar to those in New Orleans’ French Quarter.

We stopped at the Shrine of Remembrance, the war memorial on a rise in the Botanic Gardens, and on axis with Swanston Street, one of the city’s main streets. The architecture of the Shrine of Remembrance was inspired by descriptions of one of the Ancient Wonders of the World, the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus in Asia Minor, now Turkey. We peeked in the entrance of new starkly modern underground Visitor Center where memorabilia from Australia’s wars are displayed. As a World War I & II history buff, I would have liked to have spent more time here but it was near the shrine’s closing. We took pictures of the everlasting flame and the poppies placed at the plaza where the previous day, November 11, Remembrance Day (formerly Armistice Day) was observed. At 5 PM, a soldier in a World War I uniform played the haunting *The Last Post* on his bugle while another hauled down the Australian flag. I found myself standing at attention, thinking about places like the Somme, the Marne, Gallipoli, El Alamein, New Guinea – famous battlefields where the Aussies fought with distinction in service of their country. Of the 331,781 Australian troops who served during World War I, 64 percent

were casualties including 60,000 killed. Seven of the nine Victoria Crosses, the highest honor for bravery, were awarded to Australian soldiers at Gallipoli, Turkey.

Later in the evening we were driven to the Southbank Arts and Leisure complex overlooking the Yarra River. At the lively and attractive riverside esplanade people gathered around the restaurants, bars and shops or strolled beneath the trees enjoying the setting. We had an excellent dinner at the Deck Restaurant at an upper level.

Sunday, November. 13: The Great Ocean Road, Victoria

Early this day we boarded our coach which headed for the coast south of Melbourne towards the Great Ocean Road, which we were told was “carved into the cliffside as a memorial to those who served Australia during World War I,” and “is one of the great coastal roads of the world,” some 160 miles long.

We first rode on the west side Port Philip Bay where cruise ships coming to Melbourne are docked, past the industrial port city of Geelong before reaching the small town of Torquay at the coast where we turned west along the Great Ocean Road. In the sunlight and blue skies, the coast seen over a winding road with many switchbacks was peaceful and beautiful with its dramatic cliffs and beaches, but the area is known as the “Shipwreck Coast.”

After we stopped at two picturesque small coastal towns, Lorne and Apollo Bay where Dawna picked up a map from one of the visitor-oriented shops showing the location of 48 wrecks caused by perfect storms, uncharted rocks shoals, inaccurate charts or human error. Most were sailing ships; the rest, steamers. How many lives were lost?

One of the main attractions on the Great Ocean Road are the famous monoliths within the Port Campbell National Park called the Twelve Apostles. These picturesque freestanding rocks are what remains after steady erosion of the cliffs. When we arrived at the parking lot leading to the Twelve Apostles, it was filled with busses, cars, and hordes of people walking on the boardwalks to and from the viewing points on cliffs where the monoliths can be seen. But the best light for photography was in the early morning, not at mid-day when we came.

After the long day, we were back at our hotel by 8 PM when Dawna and I rushed off to a Chinatown restaurant nearby to enjoy a dinner hosted by Bosco and Frank Correa and their wives, Vivienne and Marilyn. I hadn't seen Frank and Bosco since our Hong Kong days. Neither Dawna nor I had met their wives. Our reunion was all-too-short.

Mon., Nov. 14: Melbourne – Cairns

We took an early flight for Cairns (population: 93,000) in Northern Queensland, the gateway to the Great Barrier Reef, big game fishing in the Coral Sea, the tropical rainforest, Cape York Peninsula and the outback. Cairns was first settled in 1876 as the port for the newly discovered Hodgkinson (sounds like a disease!) Goldfield in the interior.

At noon we landed in Cairns airport where a chartered bus took us into town for lunch and then took our luggage back to the Lakes resort where we were to stay for the next three days.

During the short drive into town, we noted that the landscape and vegetation was quite different compared to the flat terrain and gum trees in the Melbourne countryside. Steep, lush mountains, yellow sugar-cane fields, palm trees, ferns, jacarandas, poincianas, and hibiscuses as well as the vivid emerald green, turquoise and indigo waters reminded us of Hawaii.

Lunch was prearranged at the Red Ochre Grill restaurant in the downtown. It has the reputation for developing part of its menu using Australian native ingredients. Some tried an appetizer dish consisting of emu paté, crocodile wun ton with capsicum (green pepper) jam, smoked kangaroo, smoked Tasmanian sea trout (a mild-tasting salmon), omelette and roast capsicum roll, which they found flavorful. Sorry, nothing tasted like chicken! Nicky Wu tried a grilled kangaroo sirloin with Guandong chili glaze and sweet potato galette, and found it a bit tough as kangaroo meat has little fat. I had a fillet of Barramundi, a delicate white fish, with pineapple and wild lime salsa.

After lunch some of our group, addicted to shopping, made a beeline for a mall that turned out to offer the same stuff one finds in any Bay Area suburban center.

Dawna and I wandered, like Noel Coward's "mad dogs and Englishmen" in the 90°F., humid "noonday sun" through Cairns downtown. Intrigued by a long green strip called the Esplanade on a city map, we headed in that direction, passing a large multi-storied domed casino-resort, hotels, condos and shops as well as the Trinity Bay terminal for the large catamarans, and vessels that take tourists to the Great Barrier Reef, the small islands on the Coral Sea for big game fishing and other aquatic activities.

The Esplanade is a half-mile long linear shoreline park which has become a Cairns' focal point and gathering place. It has something for everyone: extensive lawns with shade trees, a large band shell for concerts and a place for gatherings and rallies, a continuous boardwalk system for jogging and exercise, picnic areas with barbecue grills, a children playground. Dawna cooled her feet in the shallow end of a popular filtered seawater swimming lagoon which can hold as many as 1,000 people, with kiosks overhanging the pool to give bathers shade. The Esplanade includes a skateboard ramp, snack booths and an ecological interpretation center, and a memorial garden. Workers from hotels, offices and shops can bring brown bag lunches here, or eat at the several open air restaurants and cafes lining the Esplanade's peripheral road.

In the late afternoon we took a taxi to the Lakes Resort to freshen up before going out to dinner with my cousin José Ozorio and his wife Susan who live here. (José's two-part article on his camping adventures in the outback appeared in our fall and winter 2002 issues.)

The Lakes Resort is large condo-like development consisting mostly of three-story buildings in an attractive landscaped setting with meandering waterways including four

swimming pools. In the resort were two restaurants, including the Rambutan where we would eat breakfast during our stay. Our second floor unit consisted of a living-dining room with balcony, a bedroom, bath, kitchen, and washer-dryer. Bonnie Braga had placed all of us in a first-class place.

At 6 PM José and Susan Ozorio picked us up and drove us to a vantage point in the surrounding hills and pointed out to us the city's landmarks, its downtown, districts, and Trinity Bay, before we went to have dinner at a restaurant near the Esplanade.

Tuesday, Nov. 15, Great Barrier Reef

Today we were going to the Great Barrier Reef, a network of 2,900 reef systems along the Queensland coast from Cape York to Bundaberg, a distance of 1,400 miles. It is a World Heritage marine sanctuary with areas for different uses, but not for fishing or collecting.

An 80 -mile coach ride north from Cairns along the two-lane curving scenic coastal Captain Cook highway brought us to Port Douglas (pop. 4,000) where we boarded a sleek Quicksilver catamaran with other tourists to take us to the Great Barrier Reef. The port's marina was filled with pleasure craft, big game fishing boats, and ferries connecting to the surrounding areas. Once a terminal for exporting gold, silver, sugarcane and logs, Port Douglas now caters to the holiday trade.

In beautiful warm sunny weather and a calm sea, our vessel sped north along the coast past several low-lying rain-forest covered islands, then it turned east towards the Agincourt Reef, a group of small reefs about a mile and a half from the edge of the continental shelf where it drops to a depth of 1,600 feet. Here the clean, clear water from the depths washes over the coral and promotes the growth of marine life – what we came to see.

During our trip, a talk by a marine biologist was shown on the TV monitors discussing on the nature and ecology of the Great Barrier Reef, and the imperative to maintain its pristine environment.

The catamaran soon came alongside a large double-decked platform pontoon anchored on the Coral Sea. It had a galley, dining tables and chairs, decks, and partially submerged enclosures for feeding fish, training novices in snorkelling and scuba diving, anchored on the Coral Sea. According to the Quicksilver brochures, the platform was installed under strict supervision,” and monitored to “detect any visitor impacts.”

Some passengers donned snorkelling or scuba gear to go under water to look at the reef life, while others swam in the warm waters. A few took helicopter rides to have an aerial view of the extensive reefs and Coral Sea. Dawnna and I and about ten others went down below sea level inside a glass-sided submersible, while a marine biologist crew member pointed out the various corals, fishes and other creatures as we cruised slowly by. The water was not as clear as I expected.

Up on the platform others just lazed around, enjoying the beautiful setting, and the rare opportunity of being at a world-class natural resource.

At noon a buffet lunch (including rice for the Asian visitors) was laid out for all on the Quicksilver platform.

At 2:40 PM a blast on the ship's horn signalled time to return to the catamaran, followed by a passenger count to ensure that everyone was accounted for before the vessel left the platform.

Not long after we were under way, Doreen McKissack told us that she and some others were organizing a barbecue at our resort that evening, and would we be interested. We, FMs are so food-oriented that while we are eating at one meal, we are always thinking about the next one! Though we had promised our cousins to call them to arrange a get-together on our return, Doreen said, "Invite them!"

Later on our return trip, Maria Roliz asked us to go to one of the tables at the back of the sitting area where there were two cakes she had quietly purchased before leaving Cairns in order to give Dawnna and Hunter a surprise joint birthday party. Dawnna was appreciative and greatly touched by this thoughtful gesture. (Maria said that she was careful not to crush the cakes kept in her backpack while en route to the catamaran.) We returned to Cairns at about 6 PM via Port Douglas, by the same way we came.

That evening, our colleagues put together a delicious barbecue at the swimming pool and patio near our rooms. Maria Roliz, Hunter Choi, and others hailed a taxi and went out of our complex to buy all the necessities for yet another splendid meal. My cousin José Ozorio, wife Susan and daughter Reneé were delighted to join us at the pleasant and salubrious poolside patio. (In their customary holiday letter to friends and relatives, the Ozorios wrote that they were happy "being made to feel special by all the Lusitano Club who invited us to dine by the pool, and did all the purchasing, preparation and cooking." Dawnna says that she will never forget her birthday at the Great Barrier Reef, followed the dinner around the pool with congenial friends and relatives at the Lakes Resort in Cairns.

Wed., Nov. 16, Cairns – Kuranda

Our bus took us to the Kuranda historic train terminal in Cairns where we boarded a 19th century train and railway that had been built to transport gold from the Hodgkinson Goldfield to Cairns. The train winds its way on steep and difficult terrain through 15 tunnels, past Barron Gorge and Falls, and Stoney Creek Falls, to reach Kuranda Station. Some 23 confirmed deaths, and a possible nine others were part of the human cost in its construction.

On our arrival at the Kuranda Village Nature Park, which was filled with visitors, many from the Far East, we transferred by coach to the Rainforestation where we were introduced to Aboriginal culture. (There were some 750,000 Aborigines speaking 300 different languages when the first Europeans came to Australia in the 17th century.)

First, four strapping members of the Pamagirri Aborigine troupe performed vigorous native dances accompanied by traditional instruments.

Next, in a clearing they demonstrated boomerang-throwing. (The first boomerangs were straight; only much later did the native Australians develop the familiar curved ones that would return to the thrower, and were used against airborne flocks of birds.) When many of us tried our hand at throwing the boomerang, the missiles went wide, hit the roof or the chain-linked protected sides of the walkways.

One native showed us how to blow the didgeridoo, a hand carved tube made from the termite-hollowed out core of a tree, and which emitted a deep bass sound. and another, mentioned in the Guinness Book of World Records, showed his distance spear-throwing prowess.

After lunch we piled into a World War II era amphibious DUKW vehicle for a tour of the 100-acre Rainforestation and its pond. Its original gasoline engine had been modified to run on cleaner burning fuel in keeping with the imperative of conserving the rainforest. Our guide, a sun-tanned Aussie, looked at us and said, "In California, you have the Governator, but here you have Crocodile Dundee!" As he drove the DUKW into the rainforest, he gave us a humorous and informative guide to its wildlife, and some of the most significant trees, ferns, palms, and flowers, many used by the Aborigines. He singled out an innocuous looking plant with palm sized heart-shaped leaves that stings to the touch, citing the instance during the war when a U.S. servicewoman found herself in the jungle without toilet paper, and used the plant to her detriment, the pain flaring up over six months.

In the afternoon we boarded the Skyrail, a system of small glassed-enclosed gondolas suspended from cables connecting a series of pylons built over the World Heritage rainforest canopy. Construction of the pylons was by Russian-made heavy duty Kamov helicopters to avoid building any roads that would disturb the forest with its rich and rare vegetation. During the construction of the pylons, workers had to walk over an hour to the construction sites.

Our Skyrail gondola ferried us, four or six at a time, magic carpet style, over the rainforest cover, giving us an unusual close-up view below, and the distant landscape, to the terminal at the bottom of the mountain where our bus awaited us to take us back to our resort.

This evening we had dinner at the Ozorio home in Cairns, meeting other members of their family, while the rest of our tour group gathered at the patio around the pool, and finished off Tuesday's leftover barbecued steaks.

Thu. Nov. 17: Cairns – Sydney

We caught the noon flight to Sydney, arriving there at 5 PM. During the aircraft's descent we had an aerial view of Sydney's magnificent harbor which, together with those of Hong Kong, Naples, and Rio de Janeiro, are regarded as the world's most beautiful.

Sydney is also famous for its Harbor Bridge known to natives as the “coat-hanger,” its Opera House, and its surfing beaches.

With a population of 4 million, Sydney is New South Wales’s capital and oldest city. It was founded in 1788 when 750 convicts, 210 marines and 40 women and children, settled in the Rocks area, sometimes referred to as “the birthplace of Australia.”

After our arrival at the airport, a coach picked us up, and its driver gave us a running commentary of the city as he drove us in rush hour traffic to an old restaurant for dinner. The historic Phillip’s Foote pub-restaurant is one of the oldest in the Rocks district, which, with the Circular Quay area, straddle the southern end of the Sydney Harbor Bridge.

The Phillip’s Foote building was restored in the 1970s to its original Colonial flavor by a descendant of one of the original convicts, and was named after Capt. Arthur Phillip, the leader of the fleet which carried the convicts to Sydney in 1788, and was probably the first white man to set foot in Australia. Phillip’s Foote; get it?

Our dinner a bit complicated: it entailed going down from a private dining room on the second floor past the bar, through a courtyard, and up to a room that included a salad bar, and a separate butcher’s counter with a variety of cuts of steaks to choose from, then barbecue the steaks at a grill in another courtyard.

After dinner, we walked from the restaurant a few blocks to our hotel, the Malaysian-owned Art Deco-styled Grace Hotel, which was General Douglas MacArthur’s headquarters for his South Pacific operations in World War II.

Friday, November 18: Sydney Tour

Today’s itinerary consisted of an all-day tour of Sydney including its famous Opera House, a luncheon harbor cruise, and a drive through the city’s most interesting districts. Our bus dropped us off at the Opera House’s vast forecourt from where the Harbor Bridge can be seen to the left. The Opera House’s sail-like roofs loom over its monumental stairs where spontaneous outdoor performances have taken place. The bridge and Opera House combine to form arresting and indelible image.

A guide met our group at the Opera House lobby to give us a tour. She led us upstairs and showed us several of the five auditoriums, lobbies, and foyers and a glimpse of the cavernous space where much of the work on props and scenery are made. We could not see everything in this 1,000 room building not only because of its size, but also because rehearsals, set construction, remodeling, and maintenance were going on, and besides, we had limited time.

The original Opera House was completed in 1973, but has been remodeled since. It is actually a performing arts center holding some 2,400 events a year including 1,700 performances. It comprises the Concert Hall which seats 2,679, the 1547-seat Opera Theater, the Drama Theater with 544 seats, the Playhouse which seats 398 people, and

the 364-seat Studio Theater, There are also five rehearsal studios, two main halls, four restaurants, six bars, foyers and lobbies, and numerous souvenir shops.

The Opera House is Sydney's – some say Australia's – icon. It was part of the 2000 Olympics festivities, the Millennium celebrations, and many other events loosely or unrelated to its usual functions. Thousands of people with no interest in opera, music, ballet or theater, come to Bennelong Point to look at its Expressionist architecture, the panoramic views of the harbor and downtown skyline from the promenades, terraces, steps, open spaces, lobbies, restaurants, cafes, and shops.

Our guide gave us a brief description and history of the Opera House, the need for which was seen in the 1940s. In 1955 an international architectural competition drew in 233 entries. Eero Saarinen, a prominent American architect, and a member of the jury to pick a winner, arrived late in Sydney. He looked at the submissions the jurors had selected as possible finalists, did not like any, and retrieved from the rejected pile of entries, the design by Jorn Utzon, an unknown Danish architect.

Saarinen was impressed at how Utzon's roof forms on the prominent site recalled the billowing spinnakers of a flotilla of sailboats, while contrasting well with the Sydney Harbor Bridge nearby. The roofs also concealed the bulky fly towers which contain scene backdrops directly over the two auditoriums below. He persuaded the jury to award First Prize to Utzon despite some jurors having qualms about the structural feasibility of the roofs.

Utzon called in Ove Arup, a well-known Danish structural engineer based in London, to collaborate. But Utzon's parabolic roof shell designs were beyond the engineering technology of the time. For several years the team wrestled with this problem until in 1961 Utzon revised his roof design to comprise heavy ribs formed from a sphere of the same radius (similar to segments of an orange) while still keeping the same exterior shapes.

When the podium and roofs of the building were completed, major delays partially due to unforeseen difficulties, disputes over the interior furnishings, as well as huge cost overruns occurred. When new leadership of the New South Wales government changed, they threatened at times to withhold payment of fees and to install a supervising architect over Utzon. And when it did so, Utzon resigned and returned to Europe, while the government appointed a local firm of architects, with Peter Hall, an inexperienced 33-year old architect as lead designer, to replace him.

After Utzon left, the program radically changed: the original multipurpose hall became solely a concert hall, while the smaller hall was remodeled to include opera to its other uses, causing specialized stage machinery already purchased to be dumped. Three new smaller auditoriums were added within the podium.

From the beginning Utzon developed the concert hall around good acoustics. When his designs for the interior of the halls were scrapped completely, the acoustics in the

remodeled halls were found to be imperfect. (Utzon's original design was later computer modeled and shown to be superb.)

The original cost estimate of the complex in 1957 was A\$7 million. In 1973 Queen Elizabeth opened the Opera House, ten years later than the original government's estimated date of completion, and at a cost of A\$102 million. But by 1977 the total construction amount had been paid off by a lottery.

With the Opera House's universal acclaim, Utzon's reputation received a boost when in 1999 he was recalled to make changes to Peter Hall's Brutalist style interiors of the reception hall and Opera Theater to that of his original design. Utzon, now in his 80s is unwilling to leave his home in Marjorca, Spain, and has designated his son, also an architect, to shuttle between Majorca and Sydney and supervise the renovation.

The controversial Opera House broke all rules, yet it is one of the most striking and beloved modern buildings in Australia.

Before going on a cruise of Sydney harbor our bus stopped briefly at the historical Mrs. Macquarie's Chair, a scenic point in the Botanical Gardens for some postcard views of the harbor and landmarks.

We arrived just before noon in time to board a sleek multi-decked vessel run by the Captain Cook cruise organization. Our two-hour cruise of Sydney harbor took us from the King Street Wharf east to the harbor opening to the Tasman Sea, and back in a wide loop giving us great views of the downtown skyline, all city major landmarks, the surrounding areas, the upscale houses on the many inlets, peninsulas, and islands. As our vessel left the dock, we were treated to a buffet spread which included the small Bluepoint oysters, prized at Hong Kong eateries in the old days.

The rest of the afternoon consisted of a bus tour of Sydney's most interesting residential districts including the exclusive suburbs of Double Bay and Rose Bay. We stopped to stretch our legs at Watson's Bay and the popular Bondi Beach on the eastern coast, the latter famous for its surfing. Before returning to our hotel we were driven through Paddington, with its beautifully restored colonial terrace houses, and their delicate filigree wrought ironwork.

As the tour schedule gave us a free evening, most of the group went out on their own while Bonnie and Fabia Braga, Orlanda da Costa, Dawnna and I were guests for dinner at Therese and Alvaro Alonço's home in the suburbs, about 40 minutes from our hotel. The evening was enjoyable with news and gossip of relatives and mutual friends, and reminisces of old times. Though we ate well throughout the tour, the excellent feijoada and capella Therese prepared was just the Macanese comfort food we craved.

Saturday, November 19, Sydney

In the morning a half of our group went to Featherdale Wildlife Park in Doonside, some 40 minutes away from the city center, to see some of the more than 2,000 native animals such as kangaroos, koalas, emus, wombats, reptiles and birds in a bush setting.

The rest of us wandered around the city center, the waterfront or went to the beach. Some went to the 1,000 ft. high Sydney Tower which offers stunning 360° views of the metropolis. Below its observation deck are three levels of restaurants, two which revolve, and a coffee shop.

Dawna and I visited the nearby Queen Victoria Building, an ornate 19th century glass domed and roofed four story shopping arcade which occupies an entire block, is lively with people, and contains 200 upscale shops and cafes. Pierre Cardin, the French fashion designer, called it “the most beautiful shopping center in the world.”

Dawna and I first wandered around the upper floor galleries from where one could see the shops across the open central space, and below – all open to the roof – before grabbing a sandwich at a cafe on the ground floor. A marvellous people place.

Later we had afternoon tea at our hotel with some of Hong Kong University architectural alumni now retired in Sydney.

In the evening our tour group went to the Waterfront restaurant in one of the refurbished 19th century Campbell Storehouses at the Circular Quay near the base of the Sydney Harbor Bridge for a seafood dinner.

Sunday, November 20, Sydney

On an overcast day, with no events scheduled until the evening, Dawna and I visited Darling Harbor and Cockle Bay, west of our hotel. In the 1980s this former industrial and shipping district was successfully redeveloped into a cultural and visitor-oriented area including the Sydney Aquarium, the National Maritime Museum, the Motor Museum and Gallery, the Powerhouse Museum, the Convention and Visitor Center, supporting hotels, the Harbourside Shopping Complex, the Imax movie theater, and the Chinese Garden of Friendship. These uses were tied together by a system of promenades, pavilions, parks and fountains and ponds, wharves, docks, interspersed with indoor and outdoor restaurants and cafes.

Among the exhibits we saw at the National Maritime Museum were those on Australia’s early navigators; Kay Cottee’s Blackmores First Lady yacht which she sailed alone around the world, and Ken Warby’s Spirit of Australia – the fastest boat in the world. Another exhibit on Passengers – the Long Sea Voyage covered the conditions in which convicts, migrants, refugees, World War II Displaced Persons, luxury passengers encountered coming to Australia. It traced what difficulties newcomers to this country faced, how they survived, and ultimately prospered.

We then walked south along the Cockle Bay promenade which was busy with people enjoying being at the water’s edge, or grabbing a bite at the many cafes and restaurants, and where views of the downtown skyline could be seen. A local music school’s big

band, seated in a pavilion, played 40s and 50s jazz and dance arrangements to an appreciative audience.

We walked past the Harbourside Shopping Complex, an attractive tall, glass-enclosed galleria, towards the Convention Center. We stopped momentarily watching a glib magician exhorting a reluctant crowd to participate in some trick. Then we meandered past the IMAX theater complex oriented to a large reflecting pond, to a kiosk where two clowns on stilts had a crowd laughing, before we found a quiet spot under jacaranda trees in bloom to rest.

We found and lingered a while at the walled Chinese Friendship Garden which was a gift to Sydney from its sister city Guangzhou (Canton) in 1988 to mark the Australian Bicentennial. Chinese gardens are conceived as places of contemplation and tranquility, and their changes in level, planting, and waterways represent mountains, forests, valleys, lakes and oceans in microcosm.

Only 2.5 acres in area, the garden seems bigger because Guangdong Landscape Bureau's designers have skillfully arranged a progression of changing visual experiences with ponds and open spaces that disappear behind picturesque rocks, pavilions, a tea-house, bridges and hills, giving the illusion of more space than actually exists. Photographs don't do justice to show off this splendid garden. It has to be experienced by walking through it.

In the evening our group were guests at a "Welcome Lusitano Tour" – Christmas banquet hosted by the Casa de Macau at the Marigold Restaurant in Chinatown. Over 250 people filled the large barrel vaulted room. Guests at the head table included the Portuguese Consul General, Chinese Consular officials, and representatives of the Macau Tourist Office .

Yvonne Herrero, president of the Casa de Macau National Macanese Association in Australia and other casa representatives welcomed us. Lusitano president Maria Roliz and Yvonne Herrero exchanged gifts on behalf of their clubs. Our tour members were asked to stand on the dais to be recognized and photographed with Sydney and Australian state casa representatives.

Australia's Casa de Macau was originally founded in Sydney and based there. Traditionally New South Wales which has the largest membership, now 370, makes up committee members. Other states have representatives who, in the main are nominated, not voted in hence they do not vote; their main function being to coordinate between their state and the Casa's committee. Current membership: Queensland, 110; Victoria, 90; South Australia, 60; Australian Capital Territory (Canberra), 40; Western Australia, 25; and Tasmania, 7.

Our Lusitano group were reacquainted with old friends and relatives, some they hadn't seen in years. Dawnna and I sat at a table which included Alvaro and Teresa Alongo (she helped arrange the banquet). Carlos Remedios, and his wife Charita. I also met Stuart

Braga, a new Bulletin contributor (his father taught me building construction at H.K.U.); Sunti Rozario, a former officer and still active in her casa; Minas and Adrienne Carasellos.

For the children, Santa Claus came earlier than usual to present gifts to them. John Paul Ware was Santa's helper. This happy event, for which we must thank our hosts, for the banquet and entertainment was the final event of our tour.

When we returned to the hotel, we found the rest of our group sitting in the lobby as if no one wanted to see the tour end. Most of us were strangers at the beginning, but now, we had developed a camaraderie. Before leaving the Casa de Macau party Dawnna had said that we needed a nightcap for the next day most of the group would be returning to California, six were flying to New Zealand, while she and I would be heading to Perth.

The bar was closed but Miguel Roliz "miraculously" pulled out a bottle of port while others found glasses. We toasted each other. Someone began singing Christmas carols with Miguel and Zella Kotala belting out all the lyrics and leading the cacophonous pack, filling the darkened lobby for half an hour before everyone bid each other Godspeed, went upstairs to pack, and go to bed.

It was a fitting end to a terrific trip which exposed us to Australia and the Aussies. I admire their great country, their cities, their love of sports, their sense of humor, their can-do attitude, their down-to-earth qualities, their bravery in war, and them.

A bouquet to Bonnie Braga for her meticulous tour arrangements, and for her flexibility in accommodating changes requested by participants. We saw marvellous places, stayed in excellent hotels, ate fine food, and had reliable transportation. We also thank her for the use of her photos in this account. We are grateful to Maria Roliz for initiating the tour, coordinating with Bonnie, and for their many kindnesses to us during the tour. END

PHOTOS!!!

Portugal with Lusitano - April 2001, Casa de Macau Australia 2002

<http://community.webshots.com/album/55931298cJqOeE>

Australia November 2005

<http://community.webshots.com/album/514920096eDToaS>

Australia II

<http://community.webshots.com/album/548242994afHEXs>