



Australia and New Zealand

2014

(Part 1)

On January 18, 2014, Richard and Carolyn embarked on their farewell tour of Australia and New Zealand. We had been to Sydney twice before, loved the city and its environs, and wanted to make one more trip there before beginning to restrict our overseas travel.

Unfortunately, Richard didn't think that he and his long legs could handle the 15 hour flight from Los Angeles to Sydney, so they decided to use most of the airline frequent flier miles they had been accumulating for 10 years, and fly Business Class.

The airlines have made it extremely difficult to use miles to fly popular routes, necessitating taking a circuitous route there and back.

After spending many days on the computer, researching various air options, Richard found and booked flights to and from Australia.

The trip was quite an adventure, but 28 days was WAY too long, and I have promised the cat that we will never again be gone that long.

When we left home on January 18, we flew to Los Angeles on one of those little puddle-jumper airplanes, the kind that looks like it might be powered by a giant rubber band.

We spent the night in a motel near LAX and ate dinner in a very good Mexican restaurant right across the street from the motel.

(Scroll Down)

The next morning we went to the airport and boarded our Business Class Asiana flight to Seoul, Korea. The plane was a 747, and I had managed to book our seats in the upper section, which is very quiet, with none of the hubbub that goes on down below. Before the plane took off, all three flight attendants stood in the aisle, in a line, and bowed in unison to us.

Because there are only approximately 30 seats in the upper section of the 747, the 3 flight attendants were constantly about, tending to us. Shortly before the flight ended, the senior flight attendant came over to us, knelt down in front of us (there's a LOT of room in Business Class), and asked us if there was anything more they could have done for us to have made the flight more comfortable.

The seats in Business Class fold down almost completely flat, which allowed us to fly across the Pacific sleeping on our back or on our side.

We changed planes in Seoul and flew to Sydney in Economy Class, which was a little different from Business Class, to say the least. It was like Economy Class on any other airline.

(Scroll Down)

We spent 7 wonderful days in Sydney, doing a lot of walking, riding the ferries, and drinking beer; our favorite beer was Boag's, brewed in Tasmania. Then we went on a 12-day cruise from Sydney to Auckland, with many port stops in between.

I love those Aussies and Kiwis. They are extremely friendly, and they actually like Americans, perhaps because of our shared heritage of having been abused and mistreated by the English empire.

At the end of the cruise, we flew from Auckland back to Melbourne and spent several days there. And that's where the problem began.

Because I had been confused about when our flight home left Melbourne, I woke up at 7:00 AM on February 13 with the sinking feeling that we had missed our flight. After checking all the paperwork, I realized that my subconscious had been right, that our flight had left 7 hours earlier, at 12:30 AM.

I was once again coming down with bronchitis (third time in last 4 trips), I was fighting off a cold, and both of my eyes had some kind of infection or condition that made me look as though I had just lost a boxing match.

(Scroll Down)

Both of my eyes were extremely bloodshot, the bags under my eyes had new bags of their own, and my eyes were swollen half shut.

Anyway, after spending 1.5 hours on the phone with a nice lady at United Airlines Australia, I was happy that she was able to get us on a new routing back to the States (\$124 flight change fee; Carolyn and I refer to things like this as a Stupid Tax), leaving in 5 hours.

The flight routing was worse than the one we had missed, although this one, too, was all Business Class, except for the leg from San Francisco to Tucson:

- Melbourne to Bangkok: 9 hours
- 3 hour layover
- Bangkok to Tokyo: 6 hours
- 12 hour layover
- Tokyo to San Francisco: 11 hours
- Overnight in a motel near the airport, where we could take our first showers in 2 days
- San Francisco to Tucson (with a stop in Los Angeles): 3 hours

For the entire trip, we were on 8 flights.

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I have several comments about flying Business Class. Asiana Airlines Business Class (Los Angeles to Seoul) was absolutely wonderful: the flight attendants, the Business Class cabin, the food, the drink, everything was excellent. Thai Airways Business Class (Melbourne to Bangkok to Tokyo) was only a small step beneath Asiana's Business Class, still excellent service. HOWEVER, United Airlines Business Class (Tokyo to San Francisco) was borderline atrocious. The flight attendants were surly and unsmiling, the food and drink were barely adequate, the Business Class cabin was dingy and in need of serious upgrading.

I hope you enjoy looking at the pictures on the next pages. And maybe you can tell me who the old, fat guy is, the one who appears in many of the pictures.

(End of Narrative)

(Scroll Down to See the Pictures)

Carolyn relaxing in the Business Class lounge at the Los Angeles airport, waiting for our flight to Seoul and then on to Sydney.

9:30 AM was a little early in the day to be drinking, but it was 2:30 AM in Sydney, so what the heck.

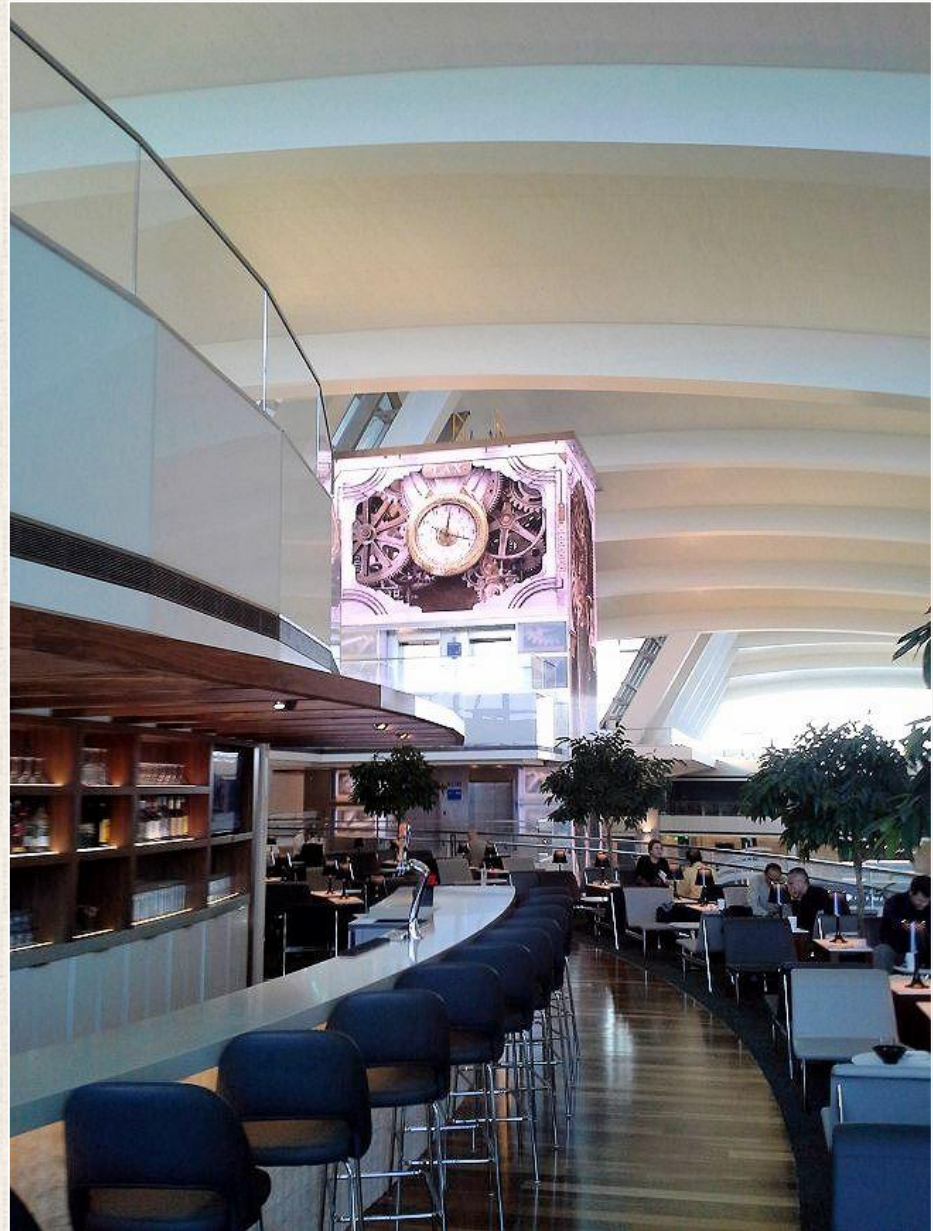




Richard relaxing in the Business Class lounge at the Los Angeles airport and enjoying a Korean beer.

Fantastic clock tower in the Los Angeles airport. The 'clock' is actually a video projection, and the type of clock changes every few minutes: a classic clock with the innards displayed, a modern clock, etc.

Note the bar area in the Business Class lounge.



A close-up of the projected clock.





The Sydney Harbour Bridge, as viewed from the stern of a ferry boat.



Another view of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.



And yet another view of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Note the Sydney Opera House on the left, and our cruise ship, the Diamond Princess, on the right.



David and Valda, whom we met in Zion National Park last September. They picked us up at our Sydney hotel and gave us a tour around Sydney.



Here's the first picture of the old, fat guy I mentioned earlier. Why does he have his arm around Carolyn? Coincidentally, he resembles my father.



Note the rule about nudity being allowed ONLY on the beach. The only nudes we saw were men. Yuck! Although Carolyn was pleased.

Carolyn saving a seat for someone on the ferry boat. Turned out it was for me, since Rafael Nadal was not available.





Some pervert hiding in the bushes and taking pictures of unsuspecting beachgoers.



A couple of tourists (us) with Sydney in the background.



A beautiful golden sand beach near Sydney.



Enjoying 2 beers and some French fries ('chips' as the Aussies call them) at Watsons Beach Club. Thanks to the devaluation of the US dollar, the cost was \$25 for 2 beers and a few French fries.



The Sydney Opera House with a ferry boat passing in front of it.



A closer view of the Sydney Opera House.

Waiting to board our ferry boat to Darling Harbour, where our hotel was located.





A view of the hotel where we stayed in Sydney, the Astral Tower and Residences in the Star Hotel and Casino. Our room is circled in red.



January 26 is Australia Day, much bigger than our 4th of July, and we could see fireworks from our balcony.



Another view from our balcony. Sydney is truly a spectacular city, even more so at night.

On Australia Day, many cars are on display on Sydney's streets, from old cars to Lamborghinis.

In this picture, a blind woman is offering her car up for sale. Not only is she blind, but her right arm is shorter than her left arm. Poor woman.





Even the police horses are excited about Australia day. Note the Australian flag sunglasses and the Australian flags.



The next 3 pictures are of Sydney and were taken from the balcony of our hotel. I used the panorama picture feature on my new Smarty Phone. The pace of technology is incredible.







The Luna Park ferry stop. It has been in operation, off and on, since 1935.

In Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens, Carolyn is examining a rose in one of her favorite colors.



After several bus rides and walking up and down hills in Balmain, a suburb of Sydney, we finally found the pub where, 9 years earlier, we had drunk our favorite Aussie beer, James Squires. The beer was not as good as we had remembered it, but memories are frequently better than reality.

Our new favorite Aussie beer is Boag's, brewed in Tasmania.

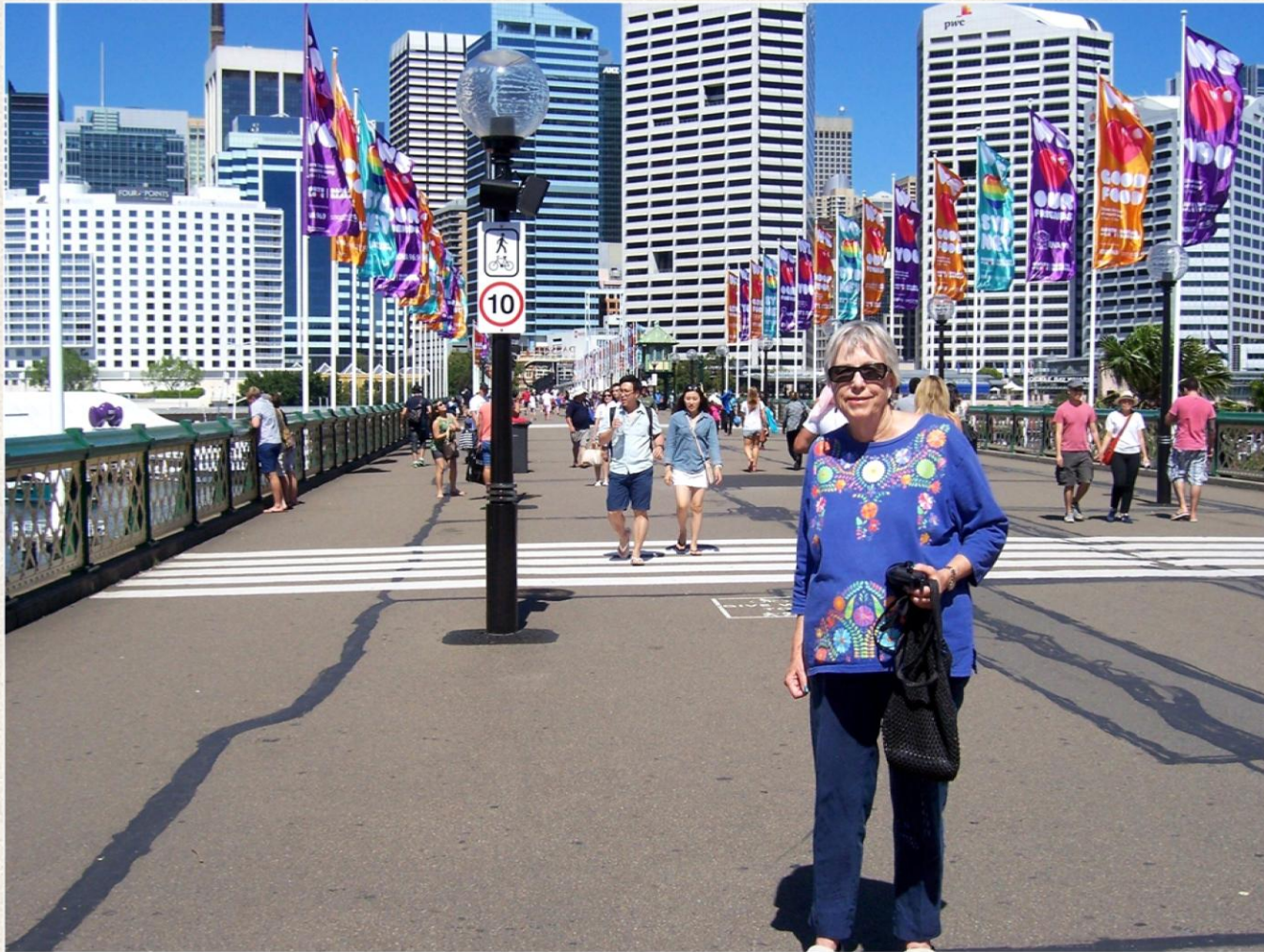




In Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens on Australia Day, January 26.



Our favorite pub in Sydney, P. J. O'Brien's. After 9 years, it took some wandering around to find it. \$17 for 2 beers.



Carolyn standing on the Pyrmont Street bridge, near our hotel



Having two wonderful pizzas at a local, non-tourist pub, The Gallon.



This is one of our favorite buildings in Sydney. It's an apartment building next to a ferry stop.



We went on a wine-tasting tour in the Hunter Valley, probably Australia's premier wine-producing region. After 3 wineries and about 30 tastings, it was a good thing that we were on a bus and not driving.



Carolyn doing her best to keep the bar from flying away at one of the tasting wineries.



As the day - and the tastings - went on and on, we became happier and happier.



The hubbub at the Circular Quay, the major ferry building, located in downtown Sydney. The location is extremely convenient.



Our ship, the Diamond Princess, as seen from a ferry boat.

These next 4 pictures are of our cruise ship. We had 3 hours to kill before we could board the ship.











From our balcony on the Diamond Princess.



From our balcony on the Diamond Princess, with Circular Quay in the background.



Some studly guy Carolyn picked up in Sydney.



From our balcony on the Diamond Princess.

The sun is setting, and the ship is underway, heading for Melbourne.



Heading out into the harbor.





Goodbye to Sydney. We had a great time.



Docked in Melbourne.



Carolyn holding up a wall in the Dandenong Mountains, outside of Melbourne.



Having tea and scones with Devonshire cream.

Wild cockatoos in the Dandenong Mountains.





Waiting to go on a steam train ride in the Dandenong Mountains.



Puffing Billy, the steam train.



Puffing Billy.



Our ship docked in Hobart, Tasmania.

At a wildlife park in Tasmania where visitors are free to wander amongst the kangaroos and wallabies.









Don't take candy from strangers.



And they don't get any stranger than this guy.



2 parrots in the wildlife park.

According to the Koala handler, the Koala has the smallest brain of all the marsupials. In other words, the Koala is the Tea Party member of the marsupial world.



Remember, Koalas are dumber than dirt.





A Tasmanian Devil. It doesn't look like the one in the Warner Brothers cartoons.



Carolyn and a young wombat (the gray, hairy thing, not the thing in the green shirt).

Apparently 'Roo Poo is somewhat valuable.



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This is the end of the first part of the Australia and New Zealand pictures presentation.

To see the second part, which includes many more cruise pictures, New Zealand, and Melbourne, go back to the 'Australia 2014' pictures selection page, and select 'Australia 2014 Second Set of Pictures'.

You may close this PDF window.