

2/18/13 - Day 43 – Hobart, Australia: It was just after daybreak that the Amsterdam pulled in to the harbor at Hobart in the island state of Tasmania, Australia. Hobart is the capital of Tasmania and the large city spread over the hills surrounding the harbor, as shown in the picture below.



Although it is a salt water port, the city lies on the Derwent River and is several miles inland from the sea. There are two long bridges, like the one shown below, that cross the harbor.



We had signed up for a tour in Hobart organized by Pauline Hall, a fellow member of Cruise Critic (www.cruisecritic.com).

About 7am our group of 11 folks met on the Amsterdam and tramped off the gangway. Our tour company name was, “**let’s show you Tasmania tours**” and we soon located our guide/driver, John, and his van shown on the right. We loaded ourselves into the van and were on our way through Hobart and the countryside. Our first destination was Mount Field National Park where we were to take a walk through an ancient forest and then view the beautiful Russell Falls.



John gave a nice running explanation of what we were seeing as we went along. Here are some photos of typical houses we saw along the way.



We asked John what houses like these might cost. He estimated that they would cost in the neighborhood of \$600,000 AU (\$630,000 USD). This trip to Australia was making the price of housing back home look better and better.

We left the city of Hobart and our surroundings became more rural. Suddenly Barbara yelled “SHEEP” and asked John to slow down so she could get her first picture of sheep in Australia.





Next we drove by some hop yards where the hop plants had been trained up on wire trellises, as shown on the left. John said the hops on these vines were several weeks away from ripe for harvest. When harvested they would be delivered to a beer brewery in the north of Tasmania.

We passed some grape and berry fields that had netting placed over them to keep birds from eating the crop.



There were also entire cherry tree orchards under netting to protect them from the birds. There were many dry stubble covered fields that appeared to have been recently mowed. John gave the surprising explanation that they had been filled with poppy plants that were harvested to produce opiates for the pharmaceutical industry of Australia. We were getting the picture that the farmers around the countryside of Tasmania were very productive and knew how to get the maximum harvest out of their labor. Here below is a typical view we had of the verdant countryside.



After about 1.5 hours of driving we arrived at the Mount Field National Park. We purchased entrance tickets for \$12 AU (\$12.60 USD each) and started an enjoyable walk through a forest that was in its pristine natural state. The sun was out but at this higher altitude a light jacket felt good



as we hustled along a paved path. John had said that if we were lucky we might see a small type of kangaroo called a potoroo. Soon after we started our walk the first potoroo was sighted, as shown below. They were about the size of a rabbit. We saw several more by the time we finished our visit to the park.



With the sunlight filtering down through the tree tops the old growth timber and ferns along the way were beautiful.



After about a 15 minute walk we came to an observation platform in front of Russell Falls which is one of the visual gems in the park. A photo of Russell Falls is shown below. The flow of water over the falls was normally much greater. However, we had arrived at the end of a dry summer season so the flow was much reduced. Nevertheless, we thought it would be hard to improve on what we saw today.



On the walk back to the van we had some fun with the remains of huge forest giants that had fallen years ago. Here on the right are Irma and Pauline hamming it up in the middle of an old tree stump.

We couldn't resist the opportunity and did our bit with a huge tree trunk that had been hollowed out by forest insects and decay.



After returning to our van we left Mount Field National Park and headed for the Bonorong Park – Wild Life Centre near Hobart. The highway followed along the route of the Derwent River that flows down to Hobart.



Along the way we stopped for lunch in a town called Brighton. Next to the restaurant where we ate was a British Petroleum



station with gasoline prices clearly posted, as shown on the left. They were selling unleaded regular gas for 155.9 Australian cents per liter. At current conversion rates that is equivalent to \$1.64 USD per liter and at about 4 liters per gallon that works out to \$6.56 USD per gallon of gasoline.

Also listed on the price sign was “autogas” which, at 89.9 Australian cents per liter, was about half the price of gasoline. Autogas is a liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) mixture of primarily propane and some butane. Under adequate pressure autogas can be safely kept as a liquid at typical vehicle temperatures. While the price per liter of autogas appears attractive relative to gasoline, the price advantage is tempered by the fact that it has

an energy content per liter that is 30% to 40% less than gasoline. In other words you get 30% to 40% fewer miles out of a liter of autogas compared with gasoline. However, if the price of autogas is more than 40% lower than gasoline then it makes economic sense to buy it if your vehicle is designed for LPG use. The autogas was selling for 89.9 Australian cents per liter compared with the 155.9 Australian cents per liter for gasoline. At these prices this autogas was 42% cheaper than gasoline but may deliver 30% to 40% fewer miles per liter. There would be some cost savings with autogas but the savings would not be nearly as much as a simple comparison of price would suggest. However, aside from possible cost savings, one of the arguments in favor of autogas is that it produces less air pollution than gasoline when burned in your car. It was interesting that, at least in this community, there had been an investment in the equipment needed for mass distribution of autogas (LPG).

Not letting the gasoline price issue divert us from our objective, we proceeded on to the



Bonorong Park and Wildlife Centre. The entrance tickets here cost \$18 AU (\$19 USD each) and well worth it. A “friendly” Tasmanian devil decorates their sign.

The park was located on a hillside overlooking the Derwent River Valley with a central lawn surrounded by animal pens with 3 to 4 foot high fencing. A view across the central lawn area is shown on the right.



As the sign in the photo on the left indicates, the management here has been innovative in making the best use of their animal products. Kangapoo may be just what our Tennessee soil needs but we couldn't cope with the storage and luggage problems involved with getting a bag of it home.

After getting some food pellets from the staff at the entrance we approached the kangaroos that were very tame. They eagerly took the food pellets that were offered by our team of tourists. The photos below give some notion of how this scene went down.

Gayle gave kangaroo feeding a try.



Food Chain

Then Barbara found a nursing kangaroo mother and joined the food chain.

On the right, Aldona joins the fun. The kangaroos were gentle and apparently well fed. They definitely liked the food pellets but no one lost any fingers in the process.





Even Orlin couldn't resist feeding the furry little critters.

The Tasmanian devil was the next Australian animal on our route

around the park. This guy on the right was about the size of a medium sized terrier dog and was taking a walk around his enclosure.



There was a sign warning us not to put our hands inside the fence because "Tasmanian Devils bite".



The business end of this tough, macho little creature shows up on many Tasmanian logos, like the Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service symbol shown on the left. In addition to the sharp

teeth and a willingness to use them, the Tasmanian Devils can let out a terrifying howl when the mood strikes them. None of them were in the mood while we were at the park today.

Several emus were in an enclosure with the kangaroos



Fortunately, a park attendant held up this Blue Tongue Lizard for us to see.

Finally we came to the Koala exhibit. This passive, furry little animal is loved by most people. Today they were all taking naps while we visiting them today. One of the park attendants was doing his best to show off one of their koalas without causing the little beast too much stress.



On the left is our best picture of the koala today.

Before we left, Barbara cautiously sidles up close to the sleepy little koala.



After about an hour everyone had pretty much saturated their need for togetherness with these unique Australian animals and it was time to go. We loaded ourselves back into the van and John headed for Mount Wellington to get a bird's eye view of Hobart and the surrounding area. Shown below is a picture of Mount Wellington with the outskirts of Hobart creeping up its foothills. A close look reveals the concrete antenna at the peak of the mountain.



It was a steep grind up the mountain that took about 30 minutes. We finally arrived at the peak with everyone's car sickness pretty well under control. It was windy at the top as we expected. After all, this part of the world is known as "the roaring 40s" because at 40 degrees south latitude there is a constant and vigorous wind from the west.

Some people had clambered up over the bare rocks that formed the peak of the mountain. The concrete radio/TV antenna we had seen from down below seemed even bigger than we had expected. John called it the Hobart rocket ship. Next to the concrete antenna was a small dish type antenna where some brave



soul can be seen exploring up-close. Hopefully no vital organs got fried in that adventure with microwaves. There were signs posted that the high intensity of radio signals in the area might interfere with the electronic locking mechanisms on some cars. Suggestions for how to cope with this problem were offered. John said he had never had a problem with the locks on his van. After taking in the sight of the actual peak of the mountain we turned our attention to the view of the surrounding area.

There was a glass enclosed viewing area with helpful maps explaining the scene below. Of course, we went for the exposed platform with the refreshing breeze to get our view. Shown below is the main part of Hobart and the port with the Derwent River flowing through town left to right. Seen from this vantage point Hobart appeared to be an even larger city than we had expected.



Shown on the right are Pauline, Mike and Aldona enjoying the view and fresh air with us.



As shown below, the Amsterdam could be seen tied up at the dock in Hobart harbor.



After about 30 minutes we took our last photos and got back into the van. The trip down Mount Wellington seemed shorter than the grinding ordeal going up. We were soon

down in the foothills and passing through an upscale neighborhood. Here are a couple photos of attractive houses we passed.



We wound our way through Hobart and arrived back at the pier where the Amsterdam was docked. John had been a wonderful guide and we got this photo of him as we parted.

One detail remained to be accomplished on this visit to Hobart and Tasmania. That, of course, was the documentation of Barbara's library card to this fine place. Even though the "All aboard" time of 3:30pm was fast approaching we set out to find a good photo opportunity in the nearby city streets.

We eventually found the Tasmanian Maritime Museum sign and snapped this picture with Barbara and her well worn card. A nice plus was that the sign included a welcome for us visiting cruise ship passengers.

On the way back to the Amsterdam we caught one last photo of this whimsical



scene of dogs and a photography session set up on the pier in the form of bronze statues.

We boarded the Amsterdam and soon the captain was announcing final preparation for getting underway. About 4 pm we left the pier and were headed out to sea on our way to Adelaide on the south coast of Australia. After one day at sea we will be arriving in Adelaide on Wednesday (2/20/13).