

2/15/13 - Day 40 – Sydney Australia: This was our first day in Sydney, Australia on this world voyage. Sydney is located in the state of New South Wales (NSW) on the southeast coast of the Australian continent, as shown by the map on the right.



We arrived off of Sydney harbor before daybreak. When dawn brought a little more light the Amsterdam sailed into the harbor. Entering Sydney Harbor presents some of the most wonderful sights that a traveler can see. This morning the city was still shrouded in darkness with lights burning and it presented a different but beautiful view of the city, as shown below.



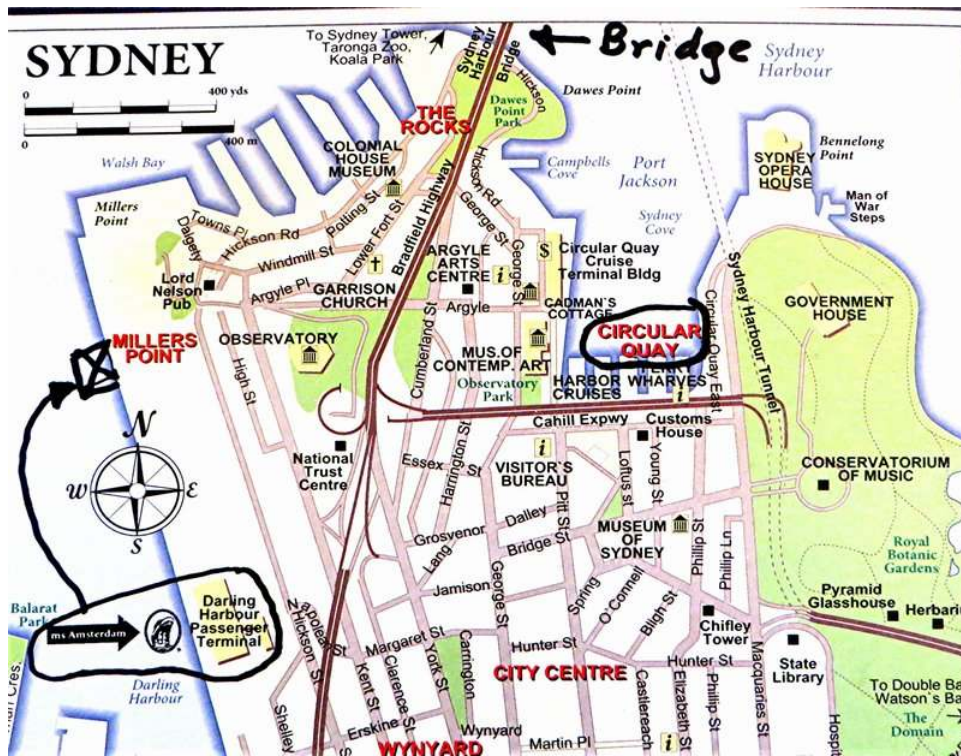
The ship was moving slowly and in a matter of minutes daylight had fully arrived and we got this picture, below. The tall slender Sky Tower is prominent on the left; the iconic Sydney Opera House and Harbor Bridge are on the right.



Here on the right is a better picture of the opera house with the large white cruise ship, Radiance of the Sea, tied up at the dock in Circular Quay (pronounced "key"). Circular Quay is the very desirable place where we have been docked on previous visits to Sydney. It is a few minutes walking time from attractive tourist facilities such as the Opera House, The Rocks, Botanical Gardens and the busy ferry terminal. On this voyage we were headed



further into the bay to a dock in Darling Harbour, as shown on the left.



When we got the Darling Harbor docking news last spring we were not too concerned because Darling Harbor is an attractive place. It contains the Aquarium, Wild Life World, Convention Center, various parks and lots of restaurants. It is also close to China Town and a permanent flea market known as Paddy's. However, we had not realized that the Amsterdam's Dock #5 location would be in the middle of the new cruise terminal



construction site (Barangaroo). There was about one mile of heavy duty construction underway between our gangway on the Amsterdam and the excitement of Darling Harbor as shown in the photo on the left and below.

At first we engaged in whining about our location relative to Circular Quay. Fortunately, we soon realized that this favorite pastime of pampered cruise ship passengers wasn't productive and looked on the bright side. A free shuttle bus service ran to Circular Quay frequently and once we walked through the construction zone there were well marked city streets and sidewalks that led to where ever we wanted to go. After all, we were in Sydney, what's not to enjoy!



We left the Amsterdam at 9am and caught the first shuttle bus to Circular Quay, about a 25 minute ride through busy city streets. We had mapped out a plan for the two days we had to tour Sydney. Our first objective in the Circular Quay area was to walk by the Opera House and then go through the Royal Botanical Gardens. The highlights of our touring over the next two days in Sydney are shown on the map below.



Walking around Circular Quay is always a lively activity with busy ferry passengers scurrying about and the myriad of shops, restaurants and exhibits to see. As we swung by the Opera House we got this picture on the right. Then there



was the Bridge that had to be photographed as shown on the left.



We soon were entering the Royal Botanic Gardens and came across this friendly sign shown below. The invitation to “Please walk on the grass” seemed to perfectly

characterize the welcoming attitude we found in all the Australians we met.

The following selected photos show some of the sights we had while wandering through this wonderful public garden.





At an information center in the Botanic Garden we struck up a conversation with one of the staff members. We saw an exhibit of a couple stuffed Fox Bats (aka Fruit Bats), as shown below. She pointed



to a nearby tree where most of the branches were either dead or broken. She said that there used to be a huge colony of fox bats in the Botanic Gardens and they weighed down the branches of some trees to the point that the branches broke and the trees were destroyed. The Garden management reluctantly captured the whole colony of Fox Bats and transferred them to some national parks far away. So far the bats have not come back.

There was a nice collection of Ibis birds decorating the grounds of the gardens. They were very tame and allowed us to come quite close.



Sydney is the only place where we have seen the Ibis which we normally associate with artwork on the walls of ancient Egyptian tombs. There is even a chain of Ibis Hotels in Australia. We have not found why the Ibis is popular here but maybe one of our Aussie friends will be able to clue us in.





This flowering shrub on the left was magnificent. We took a picture of its sign which identified it as Angel's Trumpet.

A passing Aussie lady saw Orlin taking the picture of the sign and stopped to make a comment. She said that in Adelaide, where she lived, they don't identify

this plant with signs anymore. The leaves have some narcotic effect and if they identify it with signs the "Hippies" will strip the plant of its leaves. We thanked her for the information and then with a sly look she said she would be keeping a close eye on us. Ya gotta love'em!



It had been raining off and on so when we finished our walk through the Botanic Gardens we went back to the shuttle bus pick-up station and returned to the Amsterdam. On the way through the large tent-like passenger terminal we saw a good backdrop for documenting Barbara's library card visit in Sydney, as shown in the picture on the left.

In the afternoon we ventured forth again and this time we took a walking tour. We headed south through the streets of Sydney to the market called Paddy's, shown on the right. This is a flea market kind of place, sort of like Stanley Market in Hong Kong. Here is what it looks like on the inside.



We limited our purchases to 3 pair of black socks for Orlin's formal night outfit. Then we went across the street to China Town.

China Town has a nice archway at one entrance as shown on the right. In this area we saw several groups of Chinese tourists under the care of an energetic leader waving a red flag.





We had never seen crabs as big as these fine creatures we found in a China Town market.

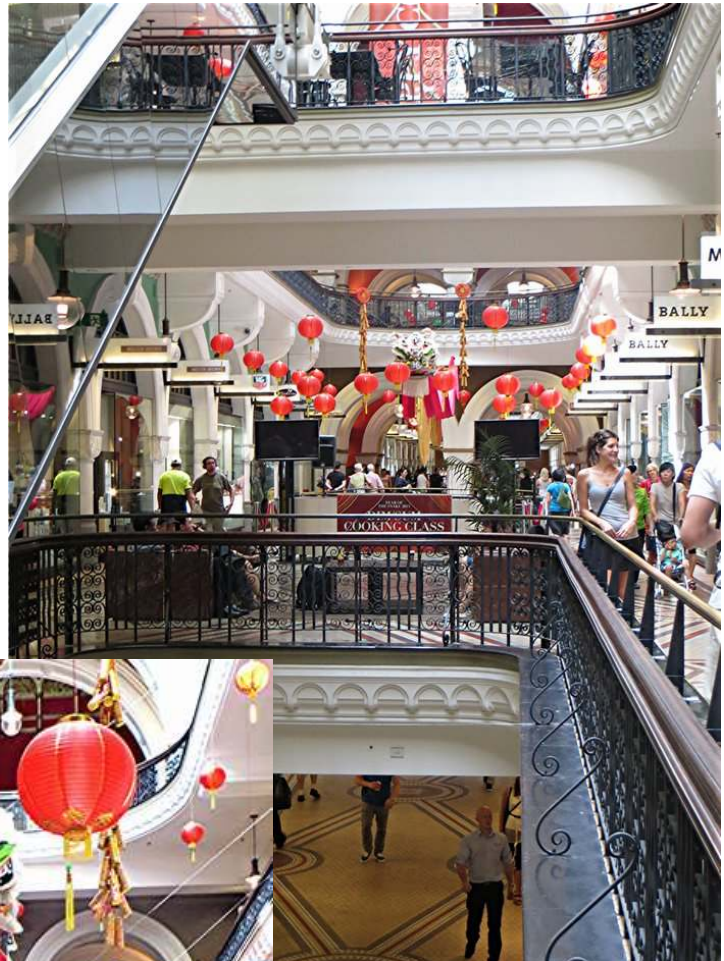


We headed in the direction of the Queen Victoria Building (QVB), carefully making our way along the busy sidewalks and streets. Like England, the vehicles in Australia drive on the left side of the road. It is important for pedestrians, like us, to keep this in mind because at an intersection when we step off the curb the cars are coming from a direction not normal for us. We had to just get used to looking both ways before venturing into the street. Even on the sidewalks there is a bit of a challenge. We try to train ourselves to walk on the left side of the sidewalk, like we presume the Aussies might do. However, a lot of the time the flow of people seems random and chaotic, maybe because of so many foreign tourists in this cosmopolitan city.

We successfully arrived at the Queen Victoria Building which is a special place for us in Sydney. It is an upscale shopping mall and on previous fall visits we have enjoyed the over-the-top Christmas decoration. Here on the right is the QVB with the regal lady presiding in front.



Inside the Queen Victoria Building they had grand decorations in celebration of the Chinese New Year.

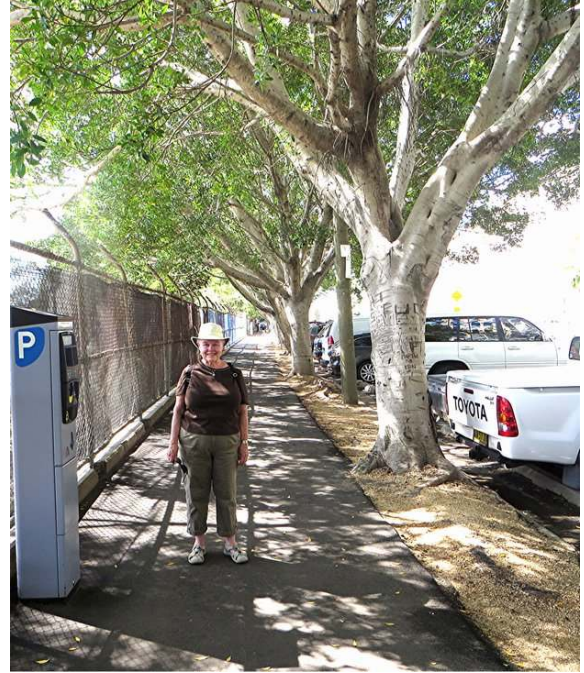


There was a ferocious dragon in an open atrium area, as shown below.



We finished our tour of the Queen Victoria Building and headed back to the Amsterdam. After the rain showers this morning the sun had come out and the walk back to the ship was rather warm. Fortunately there was ample shade along the way. It appears that where ever possible the good people of Sydney have trees growing along their city streets providing welcome shade.

We were walking across the construction area toward the Amsterdam when we met an engineer who had been working on the site. He was an Aussie in a talkative mood and we stopped and chatted for a while. He had traveled a bit in the US and was very complimentary about the Americans. As we talked he offered the opinion that Australia was



drifting in the direction of higher prices for everything and too hurried a life style. He preferred the way it was back in the 1960s. However, he was happy in his job and looked forward to an enjoyable life. He had a Norwegian name of Olav that he admitted was not normal for an Australian. We took a picture of Olav before we went our way after this chance encounter with another friendly Australian.

We returned to the comfort of the Amsterdam and got a little rest before dinner. Barbara claimed to have walked 8 miles today so we turned in early to get ready for tomorrow's adventure in Sydney. We plan to visit Circular Quay

again and take in the famous craft market at The Rocks that they have there every Saturday and Sunday.